

The Israel of God Bible Study Class

2515 E. 75th Street

Chicago, IL 60649

(773) 374-6413 or (800) 96-BIBLE

CHRISTMAS: SHOULD IT BE CELEBRATED OR REJECTED? YOU DECIDE!

"Tis the season to be jolly." Peace on Earth and Goodwill to all men. These are sayings associated with Christmas, the day that Jesus the Christ was born; **or was it?** Certainly this could be a description of Christmas. Celebrations such as these were taking place among non-Christians centuries before Jesus Christ was born! Such customs do not come from the Bible. They have nothing to do with the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not originate them, nor were they observed by the prophets (Old Testament) or the apostles (New Testament). We're going to examine **Christmas**, its origin and customs, and see if in fact Christmas is of **God** or **Pagan**. Should it be **Celebrated** or **Rejected**?

Peace on Earth and **Goodwill** to all men. Why, because we feed and shelter the less fortunate on this **one day** called **Christmas**? Shouldn't we care for the less fortunate all year long? Retailers **increase** the prices on merchandise, to try to recover from poor sales from the 1st three-quarters of the fiscal year.

Was It The Birth Of Christ?

Christmas (December 25th) is taught to be the day that **Jesus** the **Christ** was born. The fact is Jesus was not even born in the winter season. When Jesus was born, "there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." (Luke 2:8). This could never have occurred in Judea in the month of December. The shepherds always brought their flocks from the mountainsides and fields and corralled them no later than October, to protect them from the cold, rainy season that followed. Notice in Songs of Solomon 2:11 and Ezra 10:9, 13, that winter was a rainy season and typically the herds would most likely not be out in the rainy winter season. "It was an ancient custom among Jews of those days to send out their sheep to the fields and deserts about the Passover (early spring), and bring them home at commencement of the first rain," says the Adam Clarke Commentary (Vol. 5, page 370, New York ed.) Continuing, "During the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As..the first rain began early in the month of Marchesvan, which answers to part of our October and November (begins sometime in October), we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole summer. And, as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, Jesus was not born on December 25th, when no flocks were out in the fields; nor could He have been born later than September, as the flocks were in the fields by night. Therefore, to celebrate Jesus' birth date on December 25th is not scripturally sound. Any encyclopedia will tell you that Christ was not born on December 25th. The exact date of Jesus' birth is entirely unknown, as all authorities acknowledge - though by reading the scriptures, it strongly indicates His birth was in the early fall, probably September, approximately six months after Passover. This can also be found in the Catholic Encyclopedia 1967.

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Some may say, "It does not matter when He was born. I am just celebrating His birth."; whereas others may say "Jesus is the reason for the season." Is that really the case? If Jesus is the reason for the season, then why didn't He let us know when to celebrate his birth? We claim we love Jesus so much but why don't we observe his death as he commanded us. Luke 22:19, "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and break it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."

He commanded you to observe the Passover, not Easter, which is also a pagan holiday associated with wild sexual orgies. Jesus commanded us to observe the Holy Days in Leviticus the 23rd chapter but we ignore those days and observe traditions that have nothing to do with Jesus. (Matthew 15: 1-9).

1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

3 But he answered and said unto them, **Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?**

4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, **teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**

Where Did Christmas Come From?

World Scope Encyclopedia (1960 vol.3) states, "**Christmas**, the festival observed by the Christian Church on the **25th day of December in commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ. No certain knowledge of the birthday of Jesus Christ exists** and its observance was not established until some time after the organization of the first churches. The 25th day of December was advocated by **Julius 1, Bishop of Rome** from 337 to 352, **as the most suitable time to commemorate the birth of Christ.** The day was finally placed on December 25th, which made it possible for all nations to observe a festival of rejoicing that the **shortest day of the year has passed.** The end of December was an especially significant time in the northern hemisphere. Days were short; nights long. The sun was at its lowest point. This called for the celebration of special festivals of thanksgiving and encouragement to the waning sun. When at the winter solstice in late December, the days began to lengthen once again, there was great festivity lasting into the first part of January. The reason was that the declining sun---the light of the world--had been reborn and began to gain in strength. Moreover, the newly converted peoples found it convenient to get a kind of substitute for their **original celebrations** of the

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solstice". The birth of **Jesus the Christ** was **assigned the date of December 25th**, because on this day, as the sun began its return to the northern skies, the **pagan** devotees of **Mithra** (the Persian's Sun God) celebrated the **dies natalis Solis Invicti (birthday of the invincible sun)**. The history book a Pictorial History of the Italian People states, "**Saint Gregory** was repelled by Graeco-Roman civilization and, paradoxically, did more than anyone else to facilitate the **absorption of pagan residues into Italian Christianity**. Through that process of **absorption**, any **paganism** hostile to Christianity remaining in Italian rural communities faded away".

The simple fact is that, as more and more people from throughout the Western Roman Empire became converted to an increasingly popular Christianity, they brought many of their favorite customs with them. "The pagan [winter festivals of the] Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence... The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit or in manner... Christians of Mesopotamia accused their western brethren of idolatry and sun-worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival. Yet the festival rapidly gained acceptance and became at last so firmly entrenched that even the Protestant revolution of the sixteenth century was not able to dislodge it..." (The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Volume III, article "Christmas.") You see this going on in churches today. Churches are constantly recruiting new members from other denominations and they often bring some aspect of their previous church to the new one. If you notice, many Christians today celebrate the Roman Catholic tradition of Lent. Historically, Lent, was not celebrated by Protestant churches.

Even **Kwanza**, founded 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, which people are starting to celebrate and mingle into the church is based on the **Nguzo Saba (seven guiding principles), one for each day of the observance, and is celebrated from December 26th to January 1st**. A **Kinara** (candle holder); **Mkeka** (placemat preferably made of straw); **Mazao** (crops, i.e., fruits and vegetables); **Vibunzi** (ears of corn to reflect the number of children in the household); **Kikombe cha umoja** (communal unity cup); **Mishumaa saba** (seven candles, one black, three red, and three green); and **Zawadi** (gifts that are enriching). Its focus is said to be on these traditional African values. **It's been said that Kwanza is a time of reaffirming African-American people, their ancestors and culture. Kwanzaa, means "first fruits of the harvest" in the African language Kiswahili. But the Lord has a harvest festival called the Feast of the Tabernacles. Why don't African-Americans, as well as all Christians, celebrate it?**

Leviticus 23:34-41

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

36 Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein.

37 **These are the feasts of the LORD**, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer

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an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day:

38 Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD.

39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, **when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days:** on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.

40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.

41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

So exactly where did Christmas come from? World Scope Encyclopedia (1960 vol.3) states, "**Christmas**, the festival observed by the Christian Church on the **25th day of December** in **commemoration** of the **birth of Jesus Christ**. **No certain knowledge of the birthday of Jesus Christ exists** and its observance was not established until some time after the organization of the first churches. The 25th day of December was advocated by **Julius 1, Bishop of Rome** from 337 to 352, **as the most suitable time to commemorate the birth of Christ**. The day was finally placed on December 25th, which made it possible for all nations to observe a festival of rejoicing that the **shortest day of the year has passed**. Moreover, the newly converted peoples found it convenient to get a kind of substitute for their **original celebrations of the solstice**". The birth of **Jesus the Christ** was **assigned the date of December 25th**, because on this day, as the sun began its return to the northern skies, the **pagan** devotees of **Mithra** celebrated the **dies natalis Solis Invicti (birthday of the invincible sun)**. The history book *A Pictorial History of the Italian People* states, "**Saint Gregory** was repelled by Graeco-Roman civilization and, paradoxically, did more than anyone else to facilitate the **absorption of pagan residues into Italian Christianity**. Through that process of **absorption**, any **paganism** hostile to Christianity remaining in Italian rural communities faded away". Check your history, you'll find that the **customs** associated with **Christmas** were **celebrated some 2000 years before Jesus**.

But if we got Christmas from the Roman Catholics, and they got it from paganism, where did the pagans get it? Where, when, and what was its real origin? It started and originated in the original Bablyhon of ancient Nimrod. Nimrod, grandson of Ham, son of Noah built the tower of Babel. Nimrod married his own mother, whose name is Semiramis. After Nimrod's, Semiramis claimed a full grown evergreen tree sprang overnight from a dead tree stump, which symbolized the springing forth unto new life of the dead Nimrod. On each anniversary of his birth, she claimed Nimrod would visit the evergreen tree and leave gifts upon it. December 25th was the birthday of Nimrod. This is the real origin of the Christmas tree.

Through her scheming and designing, Semiramis became the Babylonia "Queen of Heaven," and Nimrod, under various names, became the "divine son of heaven." Through the generations, in this idolatrius worship, Nimrod also became the false Messiah, son of Baal the Sun-god. In this

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false Bablyhonish system, the "Mother and Child" (Semiramis and Nimrod reborn) became chief objects of worship. This worship of "Mother and Child" spread over the world. The names varied in different countries and languages. In Egypt it was Isis and Osiris. In Asia, Cybele and Deoius. In pagan Rome, Fortuna and Jupiterpuer. Even in Greece, China, Japan, Tibet is to be found the counterpart of the Madonna, long before the birth of Christ. The Lord God of Israel made reference to the worshiping and sacrificing to the "Queen of Heaven" in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 7:18 The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the **queen of heaven**, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

Myths Concerning Jesus

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the entire world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, **the days were accomplished that she should be delivered**. And she and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn". (*St. Luke 2:1-7*)

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of **Herod the king**, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. **When Herod the king** had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he **demand**ed of them **where Christ should be born**. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, **inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared**. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come **into the house**, they saw the **young child** with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh". (*St. Matthew 2:1-11*)

The bible record of the **birth of Jesus doesn't give a date for his birth**. Even **Herod, the King of Judea**, didn't **know the date of Jesus birth**; so how can we know it? The wise men (maybe 2 or 300), the bible didn't give a number, found the **young child** (not infant) in the **house** (not the manger). Well, so much for that fairy tale.

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Let's look at some of the **absurd** things applied to the **day** that **man has set** for the birthday of the **Son of God, Jesus the Christ, our Savior**. Santa Clause, Ole Saint **Nick**, that jolly old fat man that lives in the North Pole, runs a workshop with Elves (little people) and ride on a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer. He is reported to deliver gifts to all good children around the world on **Christmas**, beginning at **midnight** and being done before **morning**. Entering houses by landing his sleigh on the rooftops and descending down the chimney with his bag of toys on his back. Once in the house, he puts the toys around the Christmas tree, eats the cookies and drinks the milk that is left for him before going to the next house. Sometimes taking time to get a kiss from mommy. Well, according to history, **Saint Nicholas**, who they portray **Santa Clause**, or **Ole Saint Nick** after, was a **4th century Bishop of Myra**, which is located in **Asia Minor**, on the southwestern coast of the **Mediterranean Sea**. A long way away from the North Pole! Also, according to Webster student dictionary, the definition for Nick, "**The Devil**" **usually Old Nick**. Now, is it possible to travel around the world in **less than 24 hours** stopping at **every** house? Reindeers don't **fly**; Christmas takes place in **winter**, so there's **fire** in the fireplaces to keep the house warm. What do you think would happen to a fat man trying to come down a chimney with a bag of toys on his back with a fire in the fireplace? If it's **suppose** to be **Jesus birthday**; why do we have to buy each other presents and what do we give him? A day filled with **drinking**, resulting in **drunkenness**, a day with a lot of **fornication** and **adultery** taking place. A day filled with **lies** pertaining to him. And what do a **decorated tree, mistletoe, Yule logs, fire and lights** **have to do with Jesus?**

The modern Christmas tree can easily be traced back to seventeenth century Germany; branches of holly and mistletoe were likewise displayed. Not only did these plants remain green through the winter months, but they also bore fruit at that time, thus symbolizing life in an otherwise dead season.

Many of our present Christmas traditions and symbols have historical roots in ancient paganistic rites related to Celtic, Druid, Roman or Nordic. Druid ceremonies were based on an eight-fold year. Four were solar and the other four were lunar. The **Yule** celebration is Dec. 22 or Winter Solstice. Yule is one of the eight festival days of the pagans. The Roman and Nordic invaders of Ireland had an influence on the prominence and significance of Yule. Yule, in both old Roman paganism and in Norse tradition, was the start of the New Year. Yule comes from a Nordic word meaning "wheel." The Christmas **wreath** is a symbol of the wheel of the year. Yule altars throughout paganism show the influence of Ireland and the Druids with their holly, pine and mistletoe coverings. Yule rituals enact birthing rites, ask for the sun god's return, and beseech that the wheel of the year be turned again.

The very word "Druid" means wise man of the oak, or "One who has knowledge of the oak." The custom of lighting a Yule log is an ancient Druid practice. A log, usually of the god-related oak tree, is carved into a small section which is brought into a dwelling. Holes are drilled into the log and candies inserted. The entire log is then decoratively covered with holly and evergreens to represent the intertwining of god and goddess, or male and female elements. Hopes for fertile crops, herds, and families are invested in the Yule log image.

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Consider the habit of **putting up lights**. The profusion of lights on house and tree at Christmas time is a carry-over of the candles and fires lit in sympathetic magic to lure back the waning sun. Today it's still an Irish custom to leave lights burning all through the house on midwinter night to honor the sun's return. **Fires and lights, symbols of warmth and lasting life, have always been associated with the winter solstice festival of the pagans.**

The **mistletoe** was a sacred plant in the pagan religion of the Druids in Britain. It was believed to have all sorts of miraculous qualities: the power of healing diseases, making poisons harmless, giving fertility to humans and animals, protecting from witchcraft, banning evil spirits, bringing good luck and great blessings. **In fact, the mistletoe was considered so sacred that even enemies who happened to meet beneath mistletoe in the forest would lay down their arms, exchange a friendly greeting, and keep a truce until the following day.** From this old custom grew the practice of suspending mistletoe over a doorway or in a room as a token of good will and peace to all comers. The kiss under the mistletoe; the token of good will and friendship; the omen of happiness and good luck and the new religious significance.

Holly has been used in Christmas tradition for almost two thousand years. It's older, pagan origins began at least as early as ancient Rome, when **holly was associated with Saturn, the sun god**. In Druidic and other related pagan traditions, holly leaves were placed around homes in the winter in the belief that the fairies would use it as a shelter against the cold. **Early Christians in the British Isles adopted this tradition at first to avoid persecution, but holly was eventually reinterpreted with Christian symbolism.** The pointy edges represent the crown of thorns which Christ wore during his crucifixion. The red berries represent Christ's blood which he shed during His torture and death.

Why can't we **find** the word **Christmas** in the **Bible**? Why don't we see in the Bible where **Jesus, the apostles, or anyone else for that matter, celebrating his birthday**? The Bible tells us to remember his **death** (which is the Passover); it says nothing about **celebrating his birth**. It doesn't even tell you **when he was born**.

"Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, **Learn not the way of the heathen**, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. **For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go.** Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? **For to thee doth it appertain:** forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. **But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities.** Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men. **But the LORD**

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is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightning's with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. **Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish".** (*Jeremiah 10:1-15*)

Now the Bible tells us in (*Isaiah 1:18*) "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:" After reading this, and hopefully doing some research on your own, ask yourself:

**Should Christmas be Celebrated or Rejected?
You Decide!**