

Is Christmas Christian?

“What a strange question,” most would object. “Of course Christmas is Christian! Why, it commemorates the birth of the Savior of the world—Jesus Christ—doesn’t it?” Does it really? Or is it something we have been unconsciously spoon-fed and taken for granted? Do not make up your mind before you examine the facts.

By Lloyd W. Cary

There is no time that is more nostalgic than Christmas. It reminds us of home, of family, of “the good old days” when we were children. We think back to Norman Rockwell-like settings of sleigh bells, Christmas trees, Yule logs burning in the fireplace, caroling, and of children shouting in glee as they unwrap presents “Santa” has brought them for being good. It may come as a shock to most to learn that, despite all these warm, fuzzy feelings, Christmas has *PAGAN* origins and is not a Christian festival at all.

Many have an immediate emotional reaction when confronted with this truth, but we must remember the proverb that says, “He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him” (Proverbs 18:17). In other words, if one is steeped from childhood in the belief that Christmas is a Christian holiday, the information that it is indeed pagan will tend to be vociferously rejected. Another proverb states, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Proverbs 18:13). We need to examine these facts with open minds, searching out the truth, not with minds clouded with emotion and tradition.

The plain truth is that nowhere in the Bible are believers in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or of Jesus Christ, required to celebrate Christmas. You may search your Bible from cover to cover only to find that it just isn’t there. Upon close examination you will find that the early Christian church not only did *not* celebrate Christmas, but instead God’s people kept the sacred festivals that God ordained in the Bible as outlined in Leviticus chapter 23.

What the experts say

Consider these amazing facts from historians and reliable sources:

“Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church...the first evidence of the feast is from Egypt” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911 edition).

December 25 was celebrated in ancient days as the birthday of the unconquerable SUN god (variously known as Tammuz, Mithra, Saturn, Adonis, or BAAL) centuries *before* Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem.

“Christmas customs are an evolution from times that long antedated the Christmas period—a descent from seasonal, pagan, religious and national practices, hedged about with legend and tradition....In the beginning many of the earth’s inhabitants were sun worshippers because the course of their lives depended on its yearly round in the heavens, and feasts were held at its return from distant wanderings. In the south of Europe, in Egypt and Persia the sun-gods were worshipped with elaborate ceremonies at the season of the winter solstice, as a fitting time to pay tribute to the god of plenty, while in Rome the Saturnalia reigned for a week....The exact day and year of Christ’s birth have never been satisfactorily settled, but when the fathers of the church in A.D. 340 chose the day of the *winter solstice* which was firmly fixed in the minds of the people and which was their most important festival” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, article “Christmas”).

“In a famous letter to Augustine, Pope Gregory directs the great missionary to accommodate the ceremonies of the Christian worship as much as possible to

those of the heathen, that the people might not be startled at the change, and in particular the Pope advised Augustine to allow converts to kill and eat at the Christmas festival a great number of oxen to the glory of God, *as they had formerly done to the Devil*” (*The Story of Christmas*, by Michael Harrison, page 28).

“It is nevertheless almost certain that the 25th of December cannot be the nativity of the Savior, for it is then the height of the rainy season in Judaea, and shepherds could hardly be watching their flocks by night in the plains....Not casually or arbitrarily was the festival of the nativity celebrated on the 25th of December. One of the principal causes, that co-operated in fixing this period was that *almost all the heathen nations regarded the winter solstice as the turning point of the year—the beginning of the renewed life and activity of the powers of nature, and of the gods who were merely the symbolic personifications of these*. In more northern countries this fact must have made itself peculiarly palpable—hence the Celts and Germans, from the oldest times, celebrated the season with the greatest festivities. At the winter solstice the Norsemen held their great *Yule-feast* in commemoration of the fiery sun-wheel, and believed that during the twelve nights from the 25th of December to the 6th of January they could trace the personal movements and interferences on earth of their great deities, Odin, Beretha, etc. *Many of the beliefs and usages of the old Germans, and also of the Romans, relating to this period, passed over from heathenism to Christianity, and have partly survived to the present day*” (*Chambers*

Encyclopedia, 1908 edition, vol.11, page 222, article "Christmas").

"There is no authoritative tradition as to the day or month of Christ's birth...The winter solstice was regarded as the birthday of the sun and at Rome a pagan festival of the nativity of 'sol invictus' was introduced by the Emperor Aurelian on the 25th of December, 274. The church, unable to stamp out this popular festival, spiritualized it as the feast of the Nativity of the Sun of Righteousness. When Christianity spread northwards it encountered a similar pagan festival also held at the winter solstice—the great Yule feast of the Norsemen. Once again Christmas absorbed heathen customs. From the various sources came the Yule log, the Christmas tree introduced into England from Germany and first mentioned in 1789" (*Chambers Encyclopedia*, 1970, page 538, article "Christmas").

As you can see, there is no shortage of historical evidence that Christmas long antedated Christ. Scholars have known these facts for centuries. They can be easily confirmed in any reference library. In short, we see that each year on December 25, the ancient pagans held a festival in honor of the SUN god. In order to win Gentile converts to the Christian faith, the Roman Church, centuries after times of the apostles, *adopted* this ancient pagan winter festival of the SUN god and renamed it the "Mass of Christ"—or, in its shortened form, "Christmas"—mistakenly thinking that the play upon words would shift the honor to the *SON of God*, the Savior of the world.

What, then, does *God* think of this pagan honor bestowed upon Him? "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" (Jeremiah 10:2). He then goes on to mention one such custom. "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" (verses 3-4). Do you know of any such custom today?

Again, in Deuteronomy 12:30-32 God

warns, "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire *not* after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.' Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which He *hateth*, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: *thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.*"

As shocking as it may seem to most, there in your very own Bible God says He *hates* those pagan customs that are attributed to Him! (Be sure to send for our free booklet, "*Facts You Should Know About Christmas.*")

More authoritative quotations

Now that we understand our Savior was not born on December 25, but in the autumn of the year (perhaps on the Feast of Trumpets or during the *Feast of Tabernacles*), let us consider further what various historians say about how the December 25 came to be celebrated as the Savior's birth.

In *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon says, "The Roman Christians, ignorant of his [Christ's] birth, fixed the solemn festival to the 25th of December, the Brumalia, or Winter Solstice, when the Pagans annually celebrated the birth of Sol" (vol. ii, p. 383).

Grolier's Encyclopedia says, "Christmas is the feast of the birth of Jesus Christ, celebrated on December 25....Despite the beliefs about Christ that the birth stories expressed, the church did *not* observe a festival for the celebration of the event until the 4th century... since 274, under the emperor Aurelian, Rome had celebrated the feast of the '*Invincible Sun*' on December 25. In the Eastern Church, *January 6*, a day also associated with the winter solstice, was in Italy preferred. In [the] course of time, however, the West added the Eastern date as the *Feast of the Epiphany*, and the East added the Western date of *Christmas.*"

"The festivals of Rome are innumerable; but five of the most important may

be singled out for elucidation—viz., Christmas-day, Lady-day, Easter, the nativity of St. John, and the Feast of the Assumption. Each and all of these can be proved to be Babylonian" (*The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hyslop, page 91).

"...[W]ithin the Christian Church no such festival as Christmas was ever heard of till the third century, and that not till the fourth century was far advanced did it gain much observance. How, then, did the Roman Church fix on December 25th as Christmas-day? Why, thus: Long before the fourth century, and long before the Christian era itself, a festival was celebrated among the *heathen*, at that precise time of the year, in honor of the birth of the son of the Babylonian queen of heaven; and it may fairly be presumed that in order to conciliate the heathen, and to swell the number of the nominal adherents of Christianity, the same festival was adopted by the Roman Church, giving it only the name of Christ. This tendency on the part of the Christians to meet Paganism half-way was very early developed....Upright men strove to stem the tide, but in spite of all their efforts, the apostasy went on, till the Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan superstition. That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival, is beyond all doubt. The time of the year, and the ceremonies with which it is still celebrated, prove its origin. In Egypt, the son of Isis, the Egyptian title for the queen of heaven, was born at this very time, 'about the time of the winter solstice'" (ibid., page 93).

"Even where the sun was the favourite object of worship, as in Babylon itself and elsewhere, at this festival he was worshipped not merely as the orb of day, but as God incarnate. It was an essential principle of the Babylonian system, that the Sun or Baal was the one only God. When, therefore, Tammuz was worshipped as God incarnate, that implied also that he was an incarnation of the Sun. In the Hindoo mythology, which is admitted to be essentially Babylonian, this comes out very distinctly. There, Surya, or the Sun, is represented as being incarnate, and born for the purpose of

subduing the enemies of the gods, who, without such a birth, could not have been subdued.

"It was no mere astronomical festival, then, that the Pagans celebrated at the winter solstice. That festival at Rome was called the feast of Saturn, and the mode in which it was celebrated there, showed whence it had been derived. The feast, as regulated by Caligula, lasted five days; loose reins were given to *drunkenness* and revelry, slaves had temporary emancipation, and used all manner of freedoms with their masters. This was precisely the way in which, according to Berosus, the drunken festival of the month Thebeth, answering to our December, in other words, the festival of Bacchus, was celebrated in Babylon....The Christmas tree, now so common among us, was equally common in pagan Rome and pagan Egypt. In Egypt that tree was the palm-tree; in Rome it was the fir; the palm tree denoting the Pagan Messiah, as Baal-Tamar, the fir referring to him as Baal-Berith" (ibid., pages 96-97).

When was Jesus born?

If Christmas is a pagan custom that long preceded Jesus Christ, when, then, according to Scripture, was Jesus Christ born? Let us search the Scriptures (John 5:39).

To begin with, let us plainly state that *the Scriptures do not give the precise date of the Savior's birth*. Think for a moment! If God had intended for us to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, why then didn't God *reveal* the exact date to us in the Scriptures?

Upon close examination of various passages in the Bible, however, we will see plainly that most certainly Christ was *not* born on December 25, but some time in the autumn of the year. Here is how we arrive at that opinion.

Let us accurately investigate the circumstances of the birth of Jesus Christ. What does the Bible *say*? Read Luke 1:5-19:

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and

her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, 'Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' And Zacharias said unto the angel, 'Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.' And the angel answering said unto him, 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.'"

This passage tells us that the angel Gabriel visited Zacharias "*during the course of Abia*." What is meant by "*the course of Abia*"?

We establish from 1 Chronicles 24:7-10 that the "*course of Abia*" (*Abijah* in Hebrew) was the eighth of 24 courses during a 12-month year. Each group of priests (all but the most senior, who were on duty more often) officiated in the Temple for *two weeks* every year. Zacharias' turn of duty came when the

eighth group (*Abijah's*) attended, which was during weeks 15 and 16 after the start of the year.

A year in the sacred calendar begins with the *new moon nearest the spring equinox*. Consequently the new year starts in March or very early April. For the purpose of this study we will work with the equinox date of the twentieth of March. Fifteen weeks, or 105 days, after the twentieth of March brings us to early July. In other words, *in early July* the angel Gabriel told Zechariah that his aged wife Elisabeth would conceive and bear a son, whose name was to be *John*. *Six months into Elisabeth's pregnancy*—that is, in *early January*—Gabriel informed the virgin Mary that she *also* was to conceive and bring forth a son, *the Son of the Highest*—the long awaited *Messiah*! When *Mary* said that this was not possible as she had never had sexual intercourse with a man, *Gabriel* told her that her cousin, the aged *Elisabeth*, who had been barren for many years, was *already* six months pregnant—another apparent impossibility with man, but not with God, for with God nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:37).

The Gospel of Luke goes on to tell us, "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, 'Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.' And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, 'Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.' Then said Mary unto the angel, 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?' And the angel answered and said unto her, 'The

Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible” (verses 26-37).

From the above passage we observe three vital facts: (1) Elisabeth conceived in early July; (2) Mary conceived some six months after Elisabeth, probably some time in early *January*; (3) Jesus was born just over nine months later, which brings us to an autumn date in *late September or early October* at the very latest. Thus, we see from the Bible plain evidence that Jesus Christ was not born on December 25, but in the *autumn of the year*. Now this is an amazing fact, because late September or early October coincides with the *Feast of Tabernacles*, the most sacred week in the sacred calendar (Leviticus 23:23-44). The week of the *Feast of Tabernacles* is a memorial of Israel's forty years in the wilderness when the nation dwelt in temporary dwelling places, booths, or “*tabernacles*.” We also find that God took up residence in a “*tabernacle*,” which was pitched in the center of the camp. That is the low-level memorial of Tabernacles. The high-level reality of Tabernacles was when Jesus Christ, the Messiah, came to this earth and took up residence in a frail human body. In other words, God “*tabernacled*” with men!

So how did Christmas get into the Christian Church?

The *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* gives a clear explanation in the article on “Christmas”:

“How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia (December 25th) following the Saturnalia (December 17th-24th), and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the ‘new sun’...cannot be accurately determined. The pagan 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 and in manner. Christian preachers of the West and the Near East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia *accused their western brethren of idolatry and sun worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival*” (emphasis mine).

The Roman Empire had been totally pagan, and prior to the fourth century, Christians were few in numbers and persecuted by both the government and pagans. Then the Emperor Constantine professed Christianity, placing it on an equal footing with paganism. Christianity suddenly became popular.

However, most of the “converts” had been brought up in pagan customs, the chief of which is December 25. They enjoyed this festival of joy and merrymaking, and they did not want to give it up!

The pagan Manichaeism identified the SON of God with the physical SUN, giving the new “converts” an excuse to call December 25 (re-birth of the SUN) the birthday of the SON of God.

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, some Latins, as early as A.D. 354, may have transferred the birthday of Christ from January 6 to December 25, which was then a Mithraic feast or birthday of the unconquered SUN. The Syrians and Armenians who clung to January 6 accused the Romans of sun worship and idolatry, claiming the December 25 festival was invented by the disciples of Cerinthus.

Many “gods,” same birthday

Upon examination, we find that there were many others who celebrated December 25 as the birthday of *their* gods before it was agreed upon as the birthday of Jesus. These gods, according to some authorities, include Mithras, Horus, Osiris, Hercules, Bacchus (or Dionysus), Adonis, and Freyr. These were the gods of the pagan Persians, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Scandinavians, and others.

The Christmas tree, Santa Clause, and other accouterments

The concept of the **Christmas tree** originated around 3000 B.C. in ancient Egypt with King Osiris and Queen Isis. After the untimely death of King Osiris, his wife Isis propagated the demonic doctrine of the survival of Osiris as a spirit. She claimed a full-grown evergreen tree sprang overnight from a dead stump, symbolizing the new life of Osiris' spirit. On each anniversary of Osiris' birth, which was the date we now know as December 25, Isis would leave gifts around this tree.

During the Middle Ages, the Germans believed the evergreen trees were especially imbued with life since they remained green throughout all of winter. Greenery was prominent in pagan winter celebrations in honor of the tree spirit, or spirit of fertility.

The Romans trimmed the trees with trinkets and toys at this time of year. The Druids tied gilded apples to tree branches. Many reasoned that a tree decorated with orbs and fruit-like objects symbolized the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

Ancient pagans used the mistletoe at the festival of the winter solstice because it was considered sacred to the sun. The mistletoe supposedly had miraculous healing powers, probably due to the fact that not only did the plant remain green throughout winter, but it actually bore fruit during this time, a type for fertility spirits! This led to the tradition of “kissing under the mistletoe”—occurring early in the night of revelry and drunken debauchery, celebrating the death of the “old sun” and birth of the “new sun” at the solstice.

Holly berries were also considered sacred to the sun-god. Holly was revered along with the mistletoe, with decorations of those greeneries prominent in buildings and places of worship during the winter festival—leading to the holly wreath that we have today.

The burning of the **Yule log** originated with the Druids and their ritual burning of a carefully chosen log during the winter. The word “Yule” is derived from the

old Anglo-Saxon word "*hweol*," which means "wheel"—a pagan symbol of the sun. Indeed the "Yule log" is in fact the "Sun log"!

The lighting of candles, bonfires, the Yule log, and other such things is nothing new. It originated long ago when pagans lit fires and candles during the solstice season. It was meant to encourage the waning sun-god as he reached the lowest point in the southern skies.

The modern practice of decorating trees and buildings with flashing electric lights seems to be a logical extension of the lighting of candles and bonfires at Christmas time.

"Santa Claus" is a corruption of the name "Saint Nicholas," a Roman Catholic bishop who lived in the fourth century. He was a saint honored by the Greeks and Latins on December 6, for the legendary bestowal of dowries on the three daughters of an impoverished citizen—said to originate the custom of giving gifts in secret on the eve of St. Nicholas (December 6), later transferred to Christmas Day. Also known as "Father Christmas," the myths and legends surrounding Santa Claus are a mixture of pagan customs from many differing regions.

An important part of pagan festivities involved good and bad spirits—much like Halloween, followed by All Saints Day. In many regions, visitors, being either good or bad spirits, made their appearance during winter. Because of the blending of pagan legends with traditions about saints, there emerged certain figures with similar personalities. Such figures are recognized today in different cultures as Santa Claus, Father Christmas, St. Nicholas, St. Martin, the Weihnachtsmann, Pere Noel. These figures—the Christianization of German deities—perpetuate the themes of rewards and punishment being dealt out to celebrants of the festivals. Throughout the centuries, these customs came to be centered around children. If it is "for the children," the eternal reasoning goes, it must be okay.

The legend of Santa Claus entering the house through the chimney relates to the ancient superstitions around "hearth spir-

its." The Chinese and others would traditionally sweep and scour the house in preparation for the visit by the hearth spirit. Dressed in a pointed red cap and red jacket, this fire-god traveled from the heavens above, visiting homes to distribute favors or punishments.

Each Christmas season, children are retold the lie about Santa Claus coming down the chimney to bring them gifts if they behave themselves. Children soon see through such subtle forms of bribery. Sooner or later, when the children perceive that this fable is designed to manipulate their behavior, many become disillusioned. Such deceptions are easily transferred to the beliefs in God and Jesus Christ, whose names are loosely associated with their Christmas customs. The reasoning goes, "If Santa Claus doesn't exist, then perhaps God and Jesus also don't exist either." It is not without reason that Scripture plainly states, "Thou shalt not bear false witness" (Exodus 20:16).

Exchanging gifts on Christmas

Some, desperately seeking justification for continuing their customs, claim they are just doing what the wise men did. Is this a valid excuse? Again, let us go to the Scriptures, and not be taken in by vain tradition or to Madison Avenue advertising hype.

"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.' 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" (Matthew 2:1-2,11).

Notice that the wise men gave gifts unto Him, Jesus, because He was a KING of the Jews—it was not because it was His birthday. This event took place some time *after* His birthday. It was customary to give gifts to a king, just as it is in many cultures today. Also, notice that they

gave gifts *unto Him*, not to each other!

Adam Clarke's Commentary, volume 5, page 46, affirms, "*They presented unto Him gifts*. The custom of the people of the east was to never approach the presence of kings and great personages, without a present in their hands. The custom is often noticed in the Old Testament, and still prevails in the east, and in some of the newly discovered South Sea Islands."

The practice of exchanging of gifts among friend and relatives at "yule-tide season" is simply *not* found in the Scriptures. It is an old custom derived from paganism.

Statistics show that family breakups, crime, robberies, murders, and suicides increase dramatically around Christmas time! Many tell of Christmas as being "a time of pain and heartbreak." Many will proclaim "it is the thought that counts"; however, reality is that we are seasonally bombarded by commercial messages advertising, in effect, that "how much you love someone is dictated by how much money you spend on a gift for them." Our Lord and Savior brought joy and life to the poor, not pain and heartbreak!

Christmas shopping and exchanging gifts

The annual chaos of rush hour to the malls and shopping centers, searching the whole city for that one special item for that hard-to-buy-for relative, the devastation of bank balances (or the blow-outs of credit card debts), often leading to financial strife in the new year, is not a modern twenty-first-century phenomenon.

Consider the writings of a fourth-century writer Libanius describing the end-of-year festivities of the pagan Roman Empire: "Everywhere may be seen...well-laden tables...The impulse to spend seizes everyone. He through the whole year has taken pleasure in saving...becomes suddenly extravagant...A stream of presents pours itself out on all sides" (*Christmas in Ritual and Traditions*).

Oh, the wonderful tradition of exchanging gifts during Christmas! That

excitement of looking forward to seeing what your loved one buys you for Christmas! It *has* to be “Christian,” right?

Let us see what the *Bibliotheca Sacra* (pages 153-155) says about the exchanging of gifts at Christmas: “The interchange of presents between friends is alike characteristic of Christmas and the Saturnalia, and *must have been adopted by Christians from the pagans*, as the admonition of Tertullian plainly shows” (emphasis mine).

The exchanging of gifts does *not* honor Christ at all. Suppose strangers decide to celebrate *your* birthday at a time that is *not* your birthday, and then exchange gifts among *themselves*, completely ignoring *you!* Would you be “honored”? And yet this is exactly what happens at Christmastime—we exchange gifts among ourselves at a time that is not Christ’s birthday, and deceive ourselves into thinking we are “honoring Christ!” When put into proper perspective, what folly! Is it any wonder that Scripture says that Satan has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9)?

Okay! So what if we just leave out the paganism?

Let us allow the Scriptures to speak for themselves.

Scripture declares, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit *and in truth*” (John 4:24).

“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6).

God’s Spirit is the spirit of truth (John 17:17), and the spirit of truth does not lead us to the truth through error, half-truths, lies, or false doctrine. Truth slices through and exposes falsehood *every time*. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Consider: worshiping Christ through honoring His birthday on a day that is *not* His birthday, borrowing many pagan cus-

toms in the process, is *not* worshiping Him “in spirit and in truth”! On the contrary, it is actually taking His name in vain. “Howbeit in vain do they worship me,” Christ said, “teaching for doctrines the commandments of *men*” (Mark 7:7). God is supreme. It is He that determines when and how He will be worshiped, not puny, sinful little men.

What the Scriptures say

What does *God* say about all this? Surely, since He is the one we are seeking to please, we should seek out what God has to say about these matters. Turn to Deuteronomy 12:30-31, where we read, “*Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.’ Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.*”

There, in the plainest of language, is what *God* thinks of our transferring pagan customs to His Holy name!

What about my family?

Many sincere folks will nervously ask, “*But what about my family, my children, my friends?* How can I possibly stop keeping Christmas; it’s a family day for us, and the children and grandchildren all expect presents; they’ll all think I’ve become a religious fanatic!”

You will find that the children are the least of the problem. When you explain the truth to them, they will respect you for it and understand much faster than you think. Let them in on the “inside scoop” about all the lies surrounding the *Santa Claus* myth. Show them the impossibility of a fat man in a red suit flying through the sky in a sleigh visiting millions (billions?) of homes each Christmas Eve with presents for good little boys and girls. Just tell them the *truth*: that Christmas is not a festival that God wants Christians to keep. Explain to them that Christmas is only one day, and that,

by comparison, God’s feast days are sprinkled throughout the year, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day lasting eight solid days. Who is the winner here?

As unbelievable as it may seem, thousands know better. But they fear what *people* will say; fearing the scorn of other people who might notice they have no Christmas tree or gaily decorated lawns and housetops this year, and question them about it. To these people, it is clear whose opinion counts. It is the opinion of tiny children, or the opinion of so-called “friends” and neighbors.

God says, “There is a way that *seemeth* right unto a man, but the *end* thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 16:25). The Bible says, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). When, in the lives of millions of professing “Christians,” will the opinion of Jesus Christ and God the Father take first place in their hearts?

Is it possible to stop keeping Christmas? Yes, it is: tens of thousands of Christians the world over have already done so. What’s more, they are now keeping the *festivals that God specifically commands*. And experience shows that their children and grandchildren are in no way deprived.

What now?

If this information is new to you, your head may be spinning. You may be wondering, “How does this information affect *me*? What shall I do?” Perhaps you now find yourself in an impasse. If all this about Christmas is correct, then how should we respond?

To ignore truth is obviously not a safe policy to follow, especially when it concerns the choice between *following unbiblical customs* on the one hand and *obedience to the commandments of God* on the other. If you are intellectually honest, we challenge you to *go to the library and check it out*. Read as many encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other reference works to see if these things are true.

The Bible commands us to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The inference is, if it is *not* good and true, do *not* hold fast to it; let it go. We prove all things by com-

paring what we hear with the Word of God, and if our beliefs and customs—however cherished they may be—do not agree with the Bible, we need to reject them. If they do agree with the Bible, then receive, believe, and practice them. God does not require “blind faith.” Hearers of the gospel are bound to inquire, examine, and judge whether what they hear is—or is not—according to Scripture. Any man or body of men that denies us this right, or hinders us from exercising it, is violating the revealed will of God.

When you have thoroughly studied the matter, you are left with a choice: you can either go along with the pagan festival of Christmas or obey the Almighty’s commandments.

There really is no other option.

God’s festivals: what are they?

Has God left us with *nothing* to celebrate; no days to keep; nothing to observe? By no means!

Christmas is not the only pagan festival that has been “baptized” into professing Christianity. Its adoption into the ecclesiastical calendar is accompanied by several other heathen observances such as New Year’s, Valentine’s Day, Ash Wednesday, Easter, Halloween, and so forth. These counterfeit holidays (a shortened form of “holy days”) have seemingly blinded the churches of this world to the sabbaths and holy days of the Eternal mentioned in the Bible—sacred days God’s people are commanded to keep.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, ‘Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye *shall* proclaim to be holy convocations, even *these are my feasts*’” (Leviticus 12:1-2).

Whose feasts? The feasts of the Jews only? No! God says these are *His* feasts—*His* holy days. These are the *only* sacred festivals in the Bible that believers are commanded to observe. A “holy convocation” is a holy, commanded assembly. Why haven’t you been taught these things?

What *are* these sacred times? In brief, they are:

The Passover

This service commemorates the death of Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb of God, who gave his life to purchase our salvation. “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even *Christ our Passover* is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

This week-long feast commemorates Israel’s hurried departure from Egypt when they lived on unleavened bread. Leaven is a type of sin. The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures our putting out the leaven of sin, hypocrisy, and false doctrine out of our lives—which is another way of saying that it pictures the keeping of God’s commandments.

Pentecost

This festival commemorates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Historically, this event happened in A.D. 31 on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). This day also points to a time in the near future when God will once more pour out His Spirit upon His people in these last days.

The Feast of Trumpets

This feast still awaits even partial fulfillment. It foreshadows the time when God’s people will fulfill the Great Commission to “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20; cf. Isaiah 58:1). Finally, it pictures the time of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth to set up His kingdom and the time of the resurrection of His saints. Read all of Zechariah 14.

The Day of Atonement

This solemn day of *fasting* and prayer foreshadows the time of the putting away of Satan the devil for 1000 years; and the time of *judgment* and *atonement*, when God’s begotten sons and daughters will finally be brought into the very presence

of the Almighty and be “*at one*” with Him.

The Feast of Tabernacles

This festival pictures the Millennium, the 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ upon the earth at His return. Historically, it also commemorates Israel’s forty-year stay in the wilderness in temporary dwellings (booths, or temporary dwelling places). This festival also commemorates the incarnation, when Jesus Christ took up residence in the form of a human body.

The Last Great Day

This feast prefigures the great general resurrection—the time when all those who never had their first chance for salvation will be resurrected to physical life and given their first opportunity for salvation (Revelation 20:5).

Consider the deep spiritual meaning of God’s holy days, compared with the empty, vain traditions of the pagan holiday called Christmas: “See,” God’s Word says, “I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But”—*read this closely*—“if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt *not* hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live*” (Deuteronomy 30:15-19).

You now have a choice to make. We pray it will be the correct one. We pray that God’s Holy Spirit will grant you the humility, the understanding, and, yes, the *courage* you will need in order to break the vain cycle of pagan traditions, and to take your stand for the truth of Almighty God!

What will your choice be?