

Christmas - The Winter Solstice is the Real Reason for the Season

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I. The origin of Christmas

1. Definitions

- A. Christmas - *etymology* - Late OE. *Cristes mæsse* the mass or festival of Christ. 1. a. The festival of the nativity of Christ, kept on the 25th of December. Usually extended more or less vaguely to the season immediately preceding and following this day, commonly observed as a time of festivity and rejoicing. (Oxford English Dictionary)
- B. Mass - *n.* 1. The Eucharistic service; in post-Reformation use, chiefly that of the Roman Catholic Church.
- C. *Christmas* comes from the Old English *Christ's Mass*. The etymology of the word alone should cause a Christian to stop and think about why he is celebrating a Catholic holiday.

2. Does Christmas come from the Bible?

- A. A quick word search will reveal that the word Christmas is not found in the Bible.
- B. Did the apostles celebrate it under a different name?
 - i. The only celebration of the birth of Christ recorded in the Bible was the celebration of the actual event.
 - ii. There is no record of any apostle or any Christian in the Bible celebrating Christmas or the birth of Christ.
 - iii. There is no commandment in the Bible to celebrate Christmas or the birth of Christ.
- C. In that there is no commandment or example in the scripture to celebrate Christmas, the onus is therefore on the person who celebrates it to justify why he does so, not on the person who doesn't celebrate it to justify why he doesn't.
 - i. We often find ourselves defending our refusal to celebrate Christmas with other "Christians" who are questioning us about it.
 - ii. We should start going on the offensive instead of going on the defensive.
 - iii. The next time someone asks you what you are doing for Christmas, instead of saying "I don't celebrate Christmas" and then preparing to defend yourself when they ask why, we should instead respond with, "You celebrate Christmas? Why do you do that since God never commanded you to in the Bible?"
- D. Furthermore, the Biblical account of Jesus' birth shows that it was likely in the fall time (likely early September) because the shepherds were abiding in their fields by night (**Luk 2:8**), which they would not do in the cold, rainy season of winter in Israel (**Son 2:11**).

3. So if Christmas doesn't come from the Bible, where does it come from?

- A. One only needs to read the first two sentences of the *Christmas* article in the Encyclopedia Britannica to find out the origin of the holiday.
- B. "Christmas, on Dec. 25, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, is the most popular commemoration of the church year. Its

observance as the birthday of the Saviour is attended with secular customs often drawn from pagan sources; indeed, both Christmas and Epiphany, which falls 12 days later on Jan 6, are transformed pagan celebrations of the winter solstice, and so closely linked that their origins cannot be discussed separately." (*Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.704)

4. Christmas was not celebrated until 300 years after the birth of Christ.
 - A. "Christmas on Dec. 25 is first known to have been celebrated in Rome in the second quarter of the 4th century, when it commemorated the birth of Christ; there was as yet no Epiphany. In the eastern part of the empire a festival on Jan. 6 commemorated the manifestation (Gr. *epiphaneia*) of God in both the birth and the baptism of Jesus (in Jerusalem, however, only the birth was remembered), and there was as yet no Christmas. In the course of the 4th century the celebration on Dec. 25 was adopted in the east (except in Jerusalem), and became the day when the birth was commemorated, Jan. 6 retaining its connection with the baptism." (*Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.704)
 - B. "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. Irenaeus and Tertullian omit it from their lists of feasts; Origen, glancing perhaps at the discreditable imperial Natalitia, asserts (in Lev. Hom. viii in Migne, P.G., XII, 495) that in the Scriptures sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthday; Arnobius (VII, 32 in P.L., V, 1264) can still ridicule the "birthdays" of the gods." (*Christmas*, [Catholic Encyclopedia](#))
5. December 25th was celebrated in Rome as the birthday of the unconquered sun (Natalis Solis Invicti) before it was hijacked by the Catholics and changed into Christmas.
 - A. "December 25th in Rome.--This was the date of a pagan festival in Rome, chosen in A.D. 274 by the emperor Aurelian as the birthday of the unconquered sun (*natalis solis invicti*), which at the winter solstice begins again to show an increase of light. At some point before A.D. 336 the church at Rome established the commemoration of the birthday of Christ, the sun of righteousness, on this same date." (*Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.704)
 - B. "The idea that Christians chose to celebrate the birth of Jesus on 25 December because this was the date of an already existing festival of the Sol Invictus was expressed in an annotation to a manuscript of a work by 12th-century Syrian bishop Jacob Bar-Salibi. The scribe who added it wrote: "It was a custom of the Pagans to celebrate on the same 25 December the birthday of the Sun, at which they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and revelries the Christians also took part. Accordingly when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnised on that day."" (*Sol Invictus*, Wikipedia, 11-3-2015)
 - C. "The idea, particularly popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, that the solstice date of 25 December for Christmas was selected because it was also the date of a Roman festival of Dies Natalis Solis Invicti (Birthday of the Unconquered Sun) is challenged by the church." (*Sol Invictus*, Wikipedia, 11-3-2015)

- D. "The well-known solar feast, however, of *Natalis Invicti*, celebrated on 25 December, has a strong claim on the responsibility for our December date." (*Christmas*, [Catholic Encyclopedia](#))
 - E. "In A.D. 354, Pope Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He probably chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the sun. Christians honoured Christ, instead of Saturn, as the light of the world." (World Book Encyclopedia)
6. Christmas customs are rooted in paganism focused around solar observances.
- A. "Traditional Customs.--The traditional customs connected with Christmas have been derived from several sources as a result of the coincidence of the feast of the Nativity of Christ and the pagan agricultural and solar observances at midwinter. In the Roman world the Saturnalia (Dec. 17-24) was the time of merrymaking and exchange of presents (*see* Saturn). But, though Christmas festivities were indirectly influenced by these customs, the fact that Christmas was celebrated on the birthday of the unconquered sun gave the season a solar background, connected with the kalends of January (Jan. 1, the Roman New Year) when houses were decorated with greenery and lights, and presents were given to children and the poor. To these solstitial observances were added the Germano-Celtic yule rites when the Teutonic tribes penetrated into Gaul, Britain and central Europe. Yuletide brought its own tradition of feasting and mortuary customs, to combine with Roman solstitial and transitional New Year rites. Special food and good fellowship, the Yule log and Yule cakes, greenery and fir trees, wassailing, gifts and greetings, all commemorated different aspects of this festive season. Fires and lights, symbols of warmth and lasting life, have always been associated with the winter festival, both pagan and Christian. Evergreens, as symbols of survival, have a long association with Christmas festivities, probably dating from the 8th century when St. Boniface completed the Christianization of Germany and dedicated the fir tree to the Holy Child to replace the sacred oak of Odin." (*Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.705)
 - B. Santa Claus is the reincarnation of Odin, a false Scandinavian god.
 - i. "Odin, one of the principal gods in Scandinavian mythology. ... The Roman historian Tacitus states that the Teutons worshiped Mercurius; and, if only because of the identity of *dies mercurii* (Mercury's Day) with Wednesday (Woden's day), there can be little doubt that the god Woden whose name was the earlier form of Odin is meant. ... Odin is the great magician among the gods and is associated with runes. In outward appearance he is a tall, old man, with flowing beard and only one eye. A wide-brimmed hat covers part of his face, and he wears a cloak." (*Odin*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 16, p.864)
 - ii. "Only with great caution should the mysterious benefactor of Christmas night — Knecht Ruprecht, Pelzmärtel on a wooden horse, St. Martin on a white charger, St. Nicholas and his "reformed" equivalent, Father Christmas — be ascribed to the stepping of a saint into the shoes of Woden, who, with his wife Berchta, descended on the nights between 25 December and 6

January, on a white horse to bless earth and men. Fires and blazing wheels starred the hills, houses were adorned, trials suspended and feasts celebrated (cf. Bonaccorse, op. cit., p. 151). Knecht Ruprecht, at any rate (first found in a mystery of 1668 and condemned in 1680 as a devil) was only a servant of the Holy Child." (*Christmas*, [Catholic Encyclopedia](#))

- C. Many of the customs of the Roman festival Saturnalia were incorporated into the Christmas holiday.
- i. "His [Saturn] great festival, the *Saturnalia*, became the most popular of the Roman festivals, and its influence is still felt throughout the western world. Originally on Dec. 17, it was extended first to three and eventually to seven days. The date has been connected with the winter sowing season, which in modern Italy varies from October to January. Remarkably like the Greek Kronia (*see* Cronus), it was the gayest festival of the year. All work and business were suspended. Slaves were given temporary freedom to say and do what they liked, and certain moral restrictions were eased. The streets were infected with a Mardi Gras madness; a mock king was chosen (*Saturnalicus princeps*); the seasonal greeting *io Saturnalia* was heard everywhere; presents were freely exchanged, principally wax candles and little clay dolls (*sigillaria*). The cult statue of Saturn himself, traditionally bound at the feet with wooden bands, was untied, presumably to come out and join the fun. The influence of the *Saturnalia* upon the celebrations of Christmas and the New Year has been direct." (*Saturn*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 19, p.1088)
 - ii. "How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia [Dec.25] following Saturnalia [Dec.17-24], 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 merry making 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." (New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge)
- D. The Roman Catholic Church is known for transforming paganism into Catholicism.
- i. "Do not destroy the temples of the English gods; change them to Christian churches. Do not forbid the harmless customs which have been associated with the old religions; consecrate them to Christian uses." (Pope Gregory to Augustine, 597 A.D.)
 - ii. "The most respectable bishops had persuaded themselves, that the ignorant rustics would more cheerfully renounce the superstitions of Paganism, if they found some resemblance, some compensation, in the bosom of

Christianity. The religion of Constantine achieved, in less than a century, the final conquest of the Roman Empire: but the victors themselves were insensibly subdued by the arts of their vanquished rivals." (The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Edward Gibbon)

7. Christmas was not celebrated in America by Christians until the middle of the 19th century.
 - A. "In the United States traditional Christmas customs were at first suppressed (as in England under the Commonwealth), because of the Puritan objection to them as pagan in origin, but since the middle of the 19th century the celebrations have become increasingly popular and commercialized. Christmas is traditionally regarded as the festival of the family and of children under the name of whose patron, St. Nicolas (*q.v.*), presents are given." (*Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.705)
 - B. Christmas was outlawed in Boston on May 11, 1659.
 - C. "For preventing disorders arising in severall places within this jurisdiceon, by reason of some still observing such ffestivalls as were superstitiously kept in other countrys, to the great dishonor of God & offence of others, it is therefore ordered ... that whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas or the like, either by forbearing of labour, feasting, or any other way, upon any such account as aforesaid, every such person so offending shall pay for every such offence five shillings, as a fine to the county." (*When Christmas Was Banned In Boston*, [American Heritage](#))

II. What saith the scripture about honoring God by incorporating pagan practices into His religion?

1. As the aforementioned quotes demonstrate, the practices and customs of Christmas are merely the imitation of the ancient pagan festivals of Natalis Solis Invicti and Saturnalia which the Catholic church adopted into their religion.
 - A. The scripture forbids such wickedness.
 - B. God foresaw men's propensity to worship Him like the heathen do and prohibited it in the law of Moses (**Deu 12:29-32**).
 - i. God specifically forbade Israel from serving Him like the nations whom they conquered served their gods (**Deu 12:30**).
 - ii. They were to worship Him exactly how He commanded them, and they were not to add to it nor take from it (**Deu 12:32**).
 - iii. False religion should be destroyed, not embraced, imitated, or incorporated into God's religion (**Exo 34:12-15; Deu 7:5; Lev 18:3**).
 - iv. By learning the way of the heathen, Israel ended up sacrificing their children to devils (**Psa 106:34-38**).
 - v. You may not know or remember the wickedness of the heathen religions that worshiped the sun and sacrificed their children, but God does.
 - vi. Think about that the next time you celebrate Natalis Solis Invicti under the pretense of celebrating the birth of Christ.

- C. God doesn't want His people to learn the way of the heathen (**Jer 10:2-4**).
 - i. What does this sound like to you? A Christmas tree?!
 - ii. What does God say about Christmas trees? Learn not the way of the heathen!
 - a. Green trees have been associated with pagan idolatry since ancient times.
 - b. God hates worship done with green trees (**1Ki 14:22-24; 2Ki 17:10-12; Jer 2:20**).
 - c. Cheap artificial trees that won't rot are no better (**Isa 40:19-20**).
 - d. Child sacrifice accompanied worshipping under green trees (**2Ki 16:3-4; Isa 57:5**).
 - e. Is it any wonder that abortion (child sacrifice) is rampant in a society that is enamored with Christmas and its green tree worship?
 - iii. Israel learned the way of the heathen when Aaron made them a golden calf and then proclaimed that it would be used in a feast unto the LORD (**Exo 32:5-6**).
 - iv. Paul called that practice of incorporating heathenism into God's religion idolatry and forbids Christians from doing such evil (**1Co 10:7**).
- D. Not learning the way of the heathen is also a NT precept.
 - i. We are not to do as the heathen do (**Mat 6:7**).
 - ii. We are not to be yoked with unbelievers, nor their idolatrous religions (**2Co 6:14-18**).
 - iii. The things that the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God (**1Co 10:20-21**).
 - a. The Romans who worshiped the sun during Natalis Solis Invicti were worshipping devils.
 - b. Christians who celebrate Christmas, which is Natalis Solis Invicti renamed, are worshipping devils.
 - c. You can't have it both ways; you're either worshipping devils or God.
 - d. God hated sun worship so much that it was punished by death in the law of Moses (**Deu 17:2-5**).
 - iv. We are to do all things whatsoever Jesus commanded us (**Mat 28:20**).
 - a. If we do all things Jesus commands, we can't leave anything out.
 - b. If we do whatsoever he commands, we can't add in anything extra.
 - c. We are to keep the ordinances as delivered (**1Co 11:2**).
 - d. Christmas was never commanded by Jesus or the apostles, and in that it's a religious observance, it ought not to be done.
- E. God will severely judge those who mix elements of His religion with heathen religion and sin (**Dan 5:1-6 c/w Dan 5:22-31**).
- F. Do-it-yourself religion is not pleasing to God (**1Ki 12:28-33**).
- G. God warns us against the celebration of holydays (**Col 2:14-17; Gal 4:8-10**).
- H. When you find something that the world loves, you have likely found something that God hates.
 - i. Things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God (**Luk 16:15**).

- a. Shouldn't it seem strange to Christians that atheists, agnostics, some Muslims, and many other unbelievers all love Christmas?
 - b. You can bet that if the Bible commanded people to celebrate Christmas, the world would hate it.
 - c. The fact that the world loves Christmas is good evidence that God hates it.
 - ii. When the two witnesses in Rev 11 (possibly God's word and His church) have lost all their influence, the world starts celebrating Christmas (**Rev 11:10**).
- I. We are hypocrites if we condemn the idolatrous practices of other religions and at the same time incorporate them into our own (**Rom 2:1; Rom 2:21-22**).