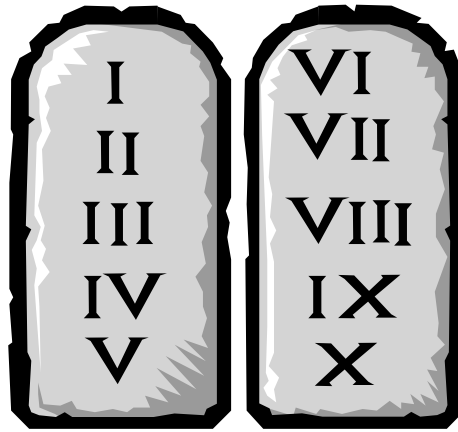


"something for nothing?" Parents who tell their children the Santa Claus myth are endangering their credibility with their children. When they ask you, "Can Santa really see me through these walls?" – What do you reply? *Our children ought to be able to know that they can trust everything we tell them without question.* How else can we expect them to believe us when we teach them in childhood from the holy scriptures those things "*which are able to make them wise unto salvation, even the mystery of godliness, that God was manifest in the flesh?*"

The scriptures point out what is to be a stark contrast between the Christian and the world. That contrast has been largely glossed over in our day. "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*" (1 John. 2:15). "*Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*" (Romans 12:2).

The crucial question for the believer is are you willing to do whatever God would have you do, even though it may mean a drastic change in your thinking or practice? Many people say, "...I enjoy it, and no one is going to take it away from me. It's for the kids" (the implication being, not even God). It's then that Christmas becomes an idol. *An idol is anything that comes between you and God: anything you refuse to give up, even at his command.* General exhortations to surrender all don't affect us greatly; *but discipleship really counts when it affects some concrete area we really care about.* The real question is, can you sincerely say to God about this issue, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" - "**Thy** will be done?" Peace in Jesus name.



the Israel of God®

Bible Study Class

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"...Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him ..." -
Isaiah 55: 6-7

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CHRISTMAS: IS IT BIBLICAL?

Do you believe GOD...



...or the man He created?

- Where did Christmas come from and should we celebrate it?
- Can the TRUE Christian associate CHRIST with Christmas?
- Does it REALLY matter today?

If you are not sure, then read the information inside of this brochure to find out ...

CHRISTMAS: IS IT JOLLY OR FOLLY?

Let's look at some of the familiar customs of Christmas and examine their significance. Taking only a small selection of the many familiar traditions, assuredly, you know that what is said about these are true of all of the Christmas customs, and you should check them all out in any encyclopedia.



The Messiah (Jesus) *was not* born in the month of December.

Take for instance the very date of Christmas, December 25th. As you are probably aware, no one really knows the time of Christ's birth and December 25 is a highly unlikely time. Why then December 25th? Well, at that time of the year when the days began to lengthen, the Babylonians celebrated the victory of their sun god

(Mithra). The Roman copy of this Babylonian custom was called the **Saturnalia**, the feast of the **birth of Sol** (the Winter Solstice). It was for centuries and abomination to Christians.

The celebration was an orgy of pagan revelry. But, the Church, instead of standing firm against paganism, began to compromise. It wanted to (help) weak young Christians who did not want to give up the fun and merry making surrounding the Winter Solstice. So the Church said, "Go on with your fun and celebration. Only now we'll call it a celebration of the birth of the Son of God. Instead of losing people to paganism, we'll combine the two and gradually even win some of the pagans of our day to profess Christianity. Let's not force men to choose between the two."

WHAT DOES 'CHRISTMAS' MEAN? WHAT ARE ITS ORIGINS?

Now, think about the name *Christmas* itself. What does it mean? Many people do not even know that it is a combination of *Christ* and *mass*. Christmas is the Roman Catholic celebration of a particular mass in honor of the birth of Christ. Perhaps it would impress on our minds the real meaning of Christmas if we would refer to it as **Christ mass**. What is the significance of the mass? At its heart, the Roman Catholic mass is a denial of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. It professes to be a reenactment of the sacrifice of Christ for sin. It is a denial of the gospel (Heb. 9: 12, 24-26; 10:10, 12,14). The Roman Catholic Church has many other masses, such as Michaelmass, but it is their *Christmass* that Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, Protestants, etc. have singled out for observance.

WHAT ABOUT THE CHRISTMAS TREE?

What could seem more harmless than the beautiful Christmas trees that light our homes during the Christmas season? But do you know why we have trees in our homes? From ancient times, trees have played an important role in pagan religion, and were even worshipped. Norsemen, Celts and Saxons used trees to ward off witches, evil spirits, and ghosts. In Egypt, the palm tree was prominent; in Rome, it was the fir tree. Because of this association, idols were often carefully carved from trees.

Jeremiah warned the Old Testament people of God: "...*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 hammers,*

that it move not...But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities." (Jeremiah 10: 2-4, 8).

THE NATIVITY AND SANTA CLAUS

Even the nativity scene, which some regard as the most "Christian" symbol of Christmas, is tainted with pagan influence. Nearly every recorded form of pagan worship which has descended from Babylonian "mysteries" focuses the attention of the worshipper on a mother goddess and the birth of her child. Different cultures used different names, but the concept is uniformly the same. In Babylon, it was the worship of the queen of heaven and her son Tammuz, the sun god who was thought to be the incarnation of the sun. The birth of the sun god took place at the winter solstice. *Yule* was the Babylonian name for child or infant, and *Yule Day* was celebrated on December 25, long before Christ's birth. The next time you see a manger scene on a Christmas card, and Mary and Jesus have a halo around their heads, remember that this Roman Catholic concept is borrowed from the Babylonian "mysteries." And remember that the believer is forbidden to make for himself "...*any graven image or any likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth...*" (Exodus 20:4). Do we take these commands of God seriously, or have we long since outgrown them and explained them away?

And, what about Santa Claus? Can anyone seriously deny that he represents the *real* meaning of Christmas for the vast majority of Americans? We won't go into the familiar stories of his origin as a Roman Catholic saint, but what does he stand for today? Is he a harmless, jolly, fat elf, or has he become an Antichristian symbol of greed, materialism, and selfishness - an expression of