



# Christmas

## Introduction

Yes, this is another article about Christmas, probably one of the most (if not the most) controversial holidays in this modern time. It's so controversial that even though it is intended to honor a biblical event, it has literally divided the Christian community!

Many claim it is a time of the year when we are supposed to remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus, the savior of the world. They see this season as a time to practice joy and giving, and to be filled with such happiness that it just overwhelms you, and becomes contagious, affecting and infecting all those round you. It's a time for decorating our homes in festive style using bright ornaments, and colorful lights. And, it's a time for giving; to one another and to needful charities. For many who actively and enthusiastically celebrate this holiday, it's also a time to do a lot of shopping for friends and family, and occasionally a stranger or two.

There are a lot of questions surrounding this worldwide holiday. Some of them seem to mean very little to most people, some don't matter at all, and most prefer to just not think about the questions so they can go on their merry way enjoying this bustling, frivolous season. Bring up the question of the origins of Christmas and it's traditions, and the usual response is one of two things. Most of the time, people I've spoken to really don't want to hear what I have to say, but are usually polite enough to at least pretend they want to hear. A few become very uncomfortable, but not because of what they know about the holiday, but because I appear to be some kind of religious fanatic who is about to ruin their "Christmas Spirit".

The problem with either of these responses, and with Christmas in general, is that we've aimed it directly at God, so we really need to be sure of what we're doing and saying, and why we're doing these things, so we don't end up regretting it later. We need to look at this holiday, with all it's traditions and trappings, and give all these facts and details our full and honest attention. It is absolutely necessary that we set aside all preconceived notions, and ideas, and listen to what God, history, and current events have to say about this ultra important season of the year. To do anything less would be doing an injustice, not only to ourselves, but more importantly, to God himself!

We need to look at all the factors surrounding this season of the year, consider all the arguments for and against the history and ingredients of this holiday, and listen to what God has to say to us about the Christmas celebration.

The categories we need to cover include the following:

1. Where did the traditions come from?
2. Where did the customs come from?
3. Where did the definitions and symbolism come from?
4. What does God say in both the Old and New Testaments about these traditions, customs and the symbolisms?
5. How do these factors measure up to God's expectations and desires for us?
6. What is Christmas today?
7. How does our conduct at this time of year serve God?

Many of the answers to these questions will overlap each other, but I will do my best to make things as clear as possible, and to present them in a reasonable order.

I do ask, however, that you read EVERYTHING and read it all the way through. In order to understand the truth, we must be willing to see it all, from all different sides.

## The Origins

Few people will debate whether or not the traditions and material of present day Christmas come from pagan origins. Most people have heard, and understand, that items like Christmas Trees, Yule Logs, the use of Holly to “deck the halls”, Wreaths, kissing under the Mistletoe, and even going from door to door Caroling all come from pagan traditions and celebrations used to serve and honor pagan deities. In fact, while we're on the subject, even the giving of gifts was part of the pagan festivals.

Since there is a general, and accepted understanding of the origins of these customs and traditions, I'm not going to go into pages and pages of detail about these things. We know the Yule Log was either Scandinavian or Celtic, the Christmas Tree comes from somewhere up around northern Europe (Germany, I think), and the wreathes and holly and caroling all come from various other sources. The wreathes were carried by priests in parades as symbols of the eternal nature of their false gods. The Holly branches have been used by many to decorate their homes, because it stays green, even in the winter, and is therefor a type of “ever green” plant (again, eternity being signified). The Mistletoe was hung in doorways of homes where people would kiss, then proceed to have their orgies (yes, I said orgies). Tradition held that the sun god and the goddess of heaven went into their bodies, so the humans were not responsible for their actions (yeah... right – that's why they went there knowing this tradition and fully expecting to participate).

Even the caroling (wassailing) was a tradition originally used to bless the god of produce and to drive evil spirits away from apple trees. In England, where the practice was most common, it was referred to as wassailing. People would walk to an orchard, sing songs, then make a lot of noise by banging pots and other metal items, then would fire a volley of shots through the tree branches, then move on to the next orchard. This ritual, it was hoped, would guarantee a good harvest the next season.

Centuries before, in Greece, it was a form of dancing in circles while singing, and was considered a feast of fertility and gaiety. If the gods were pleased, the women would bear children and everybody would find happiness in the following year.

For information on the origins of the other items familiar at Christmas time, just Google the items as “Pagan *whatever item your searching*”. For example, in the Google search field enter “pagan origin of Christmas Tree” and hit <ENTER>. There's a wealth of information and plenty of references to verifiable sources to fill your mind with all the necessary goop to show you the truth.

My purpose here is to discuss what the Bible, God's Holy Word, says about these traditions and articles of worship being used to serve the true God. We find this instruction in Deuteronomy 12: 30 & 31:

**30** ... and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.' **31** You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.

Take a close look at what these verses say, and don't read into them things they do NOT say. Also, let's be clear of one thing right up front. To say that this is an Old Testament decree by God, and not intended for the New Testament church is ludicrous, if not down right stupid! (NO, I'm not going to be nice about this... God deserves better than to have to put up with our excuses).

Several points to consider are this. First of all, when the apostles began teaching about God after receiving the Holy Spirit, the only books they had were what we call the Old Testament. The New Testament was written by them as they performed their ministry and as the original church grew and expanded across the continents. Second, this command is not a Mosaic ordinance, but a warning from God to His people, that they are no allowed to take pagan festivals, customs, and rituals, and change them to enable using them to serve Him (the true God).

Notice what it does NOT say. It does NOT say, “If you borrow festivals and customs from these pagans, just make sure you change them and assign meanings to them that point to me.” No! He said they (and we) cannot use these things to serve Him.

Also, I have heard people say, when reading or hearing these passages, that we don't sacrifice our children at Christmas time. That's not really true, but in the physical sense of murdering them, yes, it's true (although, in truth we are sacrificing our children in several ways). I'll explain later (or in another article) about the first half of the previous sentence, and the part in parentheses. But, as a result, they feel that as long as we're not killing our children (physically) then we're not disobeying God's instruction... **wrong!**

Another misconception is that God is saying He hates everything they do. That's not what He said. He said everything He hates, they do (or did, in this case). What He's saying is that if there's something He hates, they've done it. Of course God doesn't have a problem with us using foliage to decorate our homes, and doesn't even mind if we want to put trees in our home, but when they're set up for the wrong reason, such as taking that action from a pagan tradition to honor Him, then He hates that. But it's not the tree that bothers Him, but the use of pagan traditions. I'll explain that later as well.

## **Our Freedom In Christ**

The worst argument, yet the most convincing to most people is that we, as New Testament believers, have been set free from the restrictions of the Old Covenant demands. Reasoning this way is based on the verses found in the New Testament scriptures that say we have been set free in various ways. The freedom we have in Christ is that we are free from the heavy burdens of the requirements of the written

codes of conduct. These codes included the laws of clean and unclean meats, the Sabbath restrictions placed on the people, such as how far they can walk without breaking the command to do no laborious work on that day, and the ritual washings and many other codes of conduct placed on the people by, not only God, but also the Pharisees. Even circumcision is no longer required by God, and it was the very sign between Him and His people. Now, the sign is the circumcision of the heart! We have even been set free from the written code as written on the tablets of stone, which Paul referred to as the “Letter Of The Law”.

There is a great confusion in the phrase "letter of the law." Many Christians believe this to mean that we are not under God's Law anymore, and that we are free to disregard God's Law (such as the Ten Commandments), as long as we keep the spirit of the law. However, it is a scriptural truth that if one is truly keeping the spirit of the law, then one will not break the letter of the law. (Clarification: this does not pertain to the temporary, sacrificial laws, such as sacrificing animals for our sins; because these laws passed away when Christ fulfilled all of them by sacrificing Himself on the cross. But when it comes to God's law that gives us a knowledge of sin, it does matter, because if one is keeping the spirit of the law, one will not sin against the Lord). Jesus emphasized this when He quoted the commandment against adultery, then expanded on it to give the spiritual intent of that commandment.

This excuse about our freedom in Christ has caused us to forget the statement that we are not to allow our freedom to become a license for sin (*Galatians 5*), and having a proper understanding of the difference between the “letter” and the “spirit” of the Law will help us steer clear of this misunderstanding. It's very confusing that people post the Ten Commandments on their walls, yet say we need only to obey the spirit of the law (in affect, we're allowed to make our own decisions as to right and wrong – although most would deny that claim while actually living it themselves), and claim this freedom allows us to make our own decisions in various matters not directly stated within the Ten Commandments themselves. Much of the justification for celebrating Christmas is based on the idea that “as long as we're doing it for God, it's okay.” We've completely disregarded God's instructions by claiming this supposed “freedom” in Christ, while at the same time saying we need to obey Him. Most Christians today, as a result, have absolutely no idea what it means to really obey God!

We have not been set free from obeying God, and following His laws and commandments. We have been set free from the “letter of the law” and now live in the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ, and live by the Law of the Spirit of God. This spiritual law encompasses all the original commandments, but has been expanded to include much more than what is contained in the written code of the Law. That is why, for example, we are not required to keep the Seventh Day Sabbath. However, we are required to keep the Sabbath, but in the spirit of the Law and not the letter!

In the same way, we are still bound by God's command that we **NOT** take pagan celebrations, and use or adjust them to fit our worship of God! Again, God did **NOT** say that we can do this as long as we change the symbolism or the meaning, but that we are **NOT** to take those traditions and practices and turn them toward Him! God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever, and His command to **NOT** inquire of the pagans how they served their gods, still applies today. We are **NOT** to use our freedom in Christ as a license for sin by ignoring God's instruction concerning the use of pagan celebrations, and there's good reason for that command from God!

So, basically, this is what happened to get what we call Christmas into the Christian culture.

*Roman pagans first introduced the holiday of Saturnalia, a week long period of lawlessness celebrated*

between December 17-25. During this period, Roman courts were closed, and Roman law dictated that no one could be punished for damaging property or injuring people during the week long celebration. The festival began when Roman authorities chose "an enemy of the Roman people" to represent the "Lord of Misrule." Each Roman community selected a victim whom they forced to indulge in food and other physical pleasures throughout the week. At the festival's conclusion, December 25<sup>th</sup>, Roman authorities believed they were destroying the forces of darkness by brutally murdering this innocent man or woman.

The ancient Greek writer poet and historian Lucian (in his dialogue entitled Saturnalia) describes the festival's observance in his time. In addition to human sacrifice, he mentions these customs: widespread intoxication; going from house to house while singing naked; rape and other sexual license; and consuming human-shaped biscuits (still produced in some English and most German bakeries during the Christmas season).

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, Christianity imported the Saturnalia festival hoping to take the pagan masses in with it. Christian leaders succeeded in converting to Christianity large numbers of pagans by promising them that they could continue to celebrate the Saturnalia as Christians. Throughout the following years, decades and centuries, the symbolisms of the various traditions imported into the holiday celebration have been assigned by either the Catholic Church or the Protestant congregations that accepted the holiday as a beneficial celebration and observance for their followers.

The problem was that there was nothing intrinsically Christian about Saturnalia. To remedy this, these Christian leaders named Saturnalia's concluding day, December 25<sup>th</sup>, to be Jesus' birthday.

Christians had little success, however, refining the practices of Saturnalia. As Stephen Nissenbaum, professor of history at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, writes, "In return for ensuring massive observance of the anniversary of the Savior's birth by assigning it to this resonant date, the Church for its part tacitly agreed to allow the holiday to be celebrated more or less the way it had always been." The earliest Christmas holidays were celebrated by drinking, sexual indulgence, singing naked in the streets (a precursor of modern caroling), etc.

The Reverend Increase Mather of Boston observed in 1687 that "the early Christians who first observed the Nativity on December 25 did not do so thinking that Christ was born in that Month, but because the Heathens' Saturnalia was at that time kept in Rome, and they were willing to have those Pagan Holidays metamorphosed into Christian ones." Because of its known pagan origin, Christmas was banned by the Puritans and its observance was illegal in Massachusetts between 1659 and 1681. However, Christmas was, and still is, celebrated by most Christians.

Just seeing the origin of the customs and traditions of the season should be enough to keep Christians away from this celebration, but then we still have the excuse that we are "free in Christ". Yet, God said they've done everything He hates. Why is it we cannot see this?

If you want to know the ancient traditions of items like Christmas Trees, Holly, Wreaths, and Mistletoe, just Google these things and read for yourselves. I'm not going to quote it all here, as most would probably just see it as interesting reading at best, and not take any of it seriously, since they would claim that's not why we do these things now. However, I do want to make a few points about these symbols and traditions.

## **The Christmas Tree Symbol**

The Christmas tree is probably the most common symbol used during this holiday. I've heard and read a lot about the symbolism of this decorative artifact from ancient cultures. However, let's look at the modern, accepted symbolism assigned to this item.

One of the most common I've heard is that it's an evergreen, so it symbolizes eternity. Well enough... it does stay green when everything else turns various colors and dies. During it's entire life cycle, these

trees maintain their greenery and appearance of life. However, appearances can be deceiving with other plants. Although the other trees lose their leaves, they are not dead. Hence the idea of eternity is shared by all the perennial plant life on the planet. Evergreens just show it better.

Another common remark about the Christmas tree is that when viewed in two dimensions, it appears to basically have three points; the top, and either side at the bottom, thus forming somewhat of a triangle. For many Christians this is claimed to represent the Triune God; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Let's look at something on this subject now. Exodus 20 - ***"You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."***

This verse shows that using any form to represent anything of worship, including God, Himself, is a sin! God specifically commanded that we not using anything to represent Him. We have no idea what He looks like, we have no idea how pure He is, and we have no means of assigning any kind of physical value or item to represent Him. It is an actual insult to God to take some item of the earth and use that item to represent the creator of everything! God repeatedly makes it clear that such action is worshipping the creation (that which He created) rather than the creator. Jesus specifically stated that God wants us to worship Him in SPIRIT and in TRUTH – that eliminates any physical representation of Him... period. To use a tree as a symbol for God is virtually idolatry, and nothing less!

I'm not going to say that placing presents under the tree means we're bowing down to that tree. I don't know about you, but unless I stoop or squat, I have a hard time setting things on the floor. When I place something under my bed, I'm not worshiping my bed. It's not fair to start making things up to press a point, but it's also not fair to God to blatantly disregard His instructions.

## **Christmas Ornaments and Decorations**

I could go crazy here, but for the sake of those who would have a field day with this section, I'm going to keep it simple. Again, the commandments in Exodus 20; no images of anything in heaven, on the earth, or under the earth. That would include using colorful items to represent races and nationalities. Doves to represent the Holy Spirit that descended in the form of a dove when Jesus was baptized, lights representing the Light having come into the world, the musical instruments representing the song sung by the angels when Jesus was born, and stars representing the star that led the wise men (Magi). Whenever we place any item of symbolism on the tree, or anywhere in our homes, it's idolatry.

Some would say, "What about the symbolic items used in the Jewish Temple?"

First of all, they were not items of worship, which is precisely what the Christmas ornaments are. They are items used in worshipping God, and were placed in front of the Mercy Seat, where God actually sat when consulting with men through the ages and were not set in people's homes as some sort of reminder of anything. No, not all symbolism is wrong, but when it's man-made and attached to a pagan-devised ritual, then it becomes part of the idolatry.

As far as angels go, here is an error common to man. Most angels are depicted in our stories and imagery as female, yet, every angel ever mentioned in the bible is of masculine portrayal. Again, a careless point, but notable just the same. That's just something I've noticed and thought I'd mention here as a point of interest.

## Mistletoe

This is the part of the Christmas celebration I hate to even think about. Unfortunately, I feel compelled to do so, in part because I know how my attitude has been in the past, and I hear people talk about this every year; including those who are considered upstanding citizens within their individual congregations.

Mistletoe is the sprig of foliage which was hung in doorways during the Saturnalia celebration, and is hung in many doorways of Christian homes today during the Christmas holiday season. Anyone who even gives half a thought to this tradition, wouldn't need much of an imagination to know where this comes from. Originally this was the beginning of wild sexual encounters between men and women (whether married or not) and was a widely accepted and practiced tradition in several societies.

It's no different now. Sure, we may not have sex parties after kissing under the mistletoe, but we're still sinning by having it hung in our homes. The truth is, there is no such thing as an innocent kiss between two people who are not married. You may have all the respect in the world for you neighbors and friends, but you have no business kissing them. Those of you who would argue that point are just kidding yourselves and falling for the false innocence man would like to think he has.

Even if you're the kind of person who only kisses your wife (or husband) under the mistletoe, you are still endorsing the approval of a practice that is grossly abused and misused throughout the world, and especially in the more advanced societies. One "innocent" kiss under the mistletoe has led to all sorts of thoughts and provocation; none of which is good, and certainly not Godly in nature.

To make it simple, it's one of the worst parts of Christmas traditions there could possibly be, and a typical example of the true nature of Christmas, and the so-called "Christmas Spirit".

## Gift Giving

Here is where most people have really attacked my viewpoint on Christmas. I've had several people actually get angry and throw this one at me, "Surely you're not going to say that God hates for us to give gifts to each other!"

Yes, I am... and here is why.

Giving of gifts at Christmas time was started by the pagan celebrations, especially in Rome where citizens were required to bring gifts to the ruler during the Saturnalia festival (the original pagan celebration from which Christmas is taken). The custom later spread to people giving gifts to each other as well. Of course, that doesn't necessarily make giving gifts a bad thing. After all God is the greatest giver of gifts ever, and still is, and always will be.

We need to really take an honest look at this practice of giving gifts during the Christmas season, and examine the ideas and motivations behind this practice. Bringing this tradition into the modern celebration of Christmas, let's take a look at the practice and attitudes of giving at this specific time of year.

Probably the most popular saying at this time of year is, "It isn't the gift that matters, so much as the

giving.” But this statement is really nothing more than an excuse used by those who fit into one of two categories.

First, and the most common, in my opinion and experience with people, is those who just give to be giving, and don't really care if the one receiving the gift likes or appreciates what they receive. Their whole idea of giving is based on the season, and that it's expected, so they do it with no real regard for the person to whom the gift is given. Quite often, when this excuse is used, it's because the recipient of the gift is not high on the givers list of deserving recipients. The gift is given to avoid embarrassment or hurting someone's feelings, and not out of genuine care or concern.

The second group is those who really can't afford the gifts they feel obligated to give, and this reasoning disguises their embarrassment and also allows the recipient a chance to acknowledge the gift as an act of thoughtfulness, and therefore help save face for the giver. Although this second type of giver is doing the best they can, they are still giving because it's expected and not because they really have a desire to give (especially since they really can't afford it). Many people, and sometimes even their own children, or other close family members, receive gifts that are somewhat less than expected or hoped for simply because of the expense of the season and the burden that expense places on those who do the giving.

Even the highlight of the season, for most people, is really a show or a burden, or both. Many people, such as my wife's youngest daughter, can afford to give lavishly, but do so only at Christmas time, and only to immediate family. Those outside that small circle are literally left in the cold, and left to fend for themselves. Even if you're happy to give, it's because of Christmas, and not because of God.

Now a warning:

Many people have told me they give gifts because the wise men (Magi) gave gifts to Jesus when he was born. Now, listen to that reasoning. Are the gifts given because Jesus was born, or because someone else gave gifts? Who are they actually honoring with that concept, Jesus or the Magi? The truth is, if the example they are following for giving gifts to each other is the gifts presented by the Magi, then the ones being honored are the Magi, and **NOT** Jesus! Once again, in our careless disregard for the instructions God gave us, we've committed idolatry by honoring the actions of people rather than the actions of God. Even when we try to use the actions in the Bible as our reasoning for doing a specific action, we end up doing the wrong things. As a result, giving gifts at Christmas time is **idolatry**, and is definitely and positively a sin! If you say you give gifts to honor God's gift, give up. God neither needs nor wants your gifts; He wants your obedience.

There is still another point to all of this gift giving during the Christmas season, and that is the season itself. When our practice is to give gifts at Christmas time, and seldom at other times of the year, we're placing undue importance on the holiday itself. Many people, in casual conversations, have admitted that when their children, family or friends mention something they'd like to have, they immediately think of getting them the gift at Christmas time, and not at that moment. I've known a lot of people who have started this practice immediately after the current Christmas season has just ended; as early as January of the following year. When it comes to some kind of technology gift, they reason that it's either too expensive to purchase at that time (after all they've spent at Christmas) or they admit (usually honestly) that by the time Christmas rolls around again, it'll have been either replaced or updated with something newer or better, so why get it now?

Many people, especially out of financial considerations, will even wait for Christmas to purchase necessities and give them as gifts. I'm referring to things such as clothing for their children. Why? Because Christmas is so expensive that it's better financial management to save the giving for that time of year and thereby cover two items with one gift; the idea of giving, and providing something that's actually needed by the recipient. Of course that also makes the gift a good gift, even if it's not as well appreciated as the more desirable luxury gifts one might hope for. Once again, it's the season that's important and not the need.

To carry the seasonal idea even farther, let's look at how the ministers of many Christian churches teach about giving at Christmas time. One minister of a church in Stillwater, Oklahoma, whom I consider to be an excellent minister who really cares about whether his congregation is living life as they should, actually stood in front of the congregation when talking about giving to a specific cause, and said, "It's the reason for the season."

Shame on him for making such a remark! GOD is the reason for giving; not some artificial, man-made time of year borrowed from pagan worship practices! God is the ultimate giver, and the one who really understands the value of a proper gift! When we say a season or holiday is the expression of giving, we're robbing God of the glory and honor that is rightly due him. I know at this point such a minister would rush to clarify what they mean, but the truth is, all intended meaning aside, the congregation heard him say that Christmas is the reason for giving, and thereby supported the idea of giving at that time of year instead of when actually needed.

Proof of this principle comes directly from the charitable organizations themselves. Do you see the Salvation Army red buckets in front of Wal-Mart during the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration? NO! The only time of year they can be fairly certain most people might give is during the Christmas season, and that is why they are out in force during that time of year. I don't blame them. They have a big job to do, which God has given them, and they need to get the financial backing during the time when it's most likely to be given. It's a matter of public knowledge that many charitable organizations depend on the giving "spirit" at Christmas time to run their organizations through the entire following year. A reduction in giving at Christmas will mean a definite decline in services throughout the remainder of the year. Once again, it's not Godliness that inspires the giving, but the man-made season. What a shame that we've taken an idea God has given us and turned it into some form of idolatrous worship! And we cap it off by making excuses for not giving really valuable (not necessarily expensive, but seriously needed) gifts by making the excuse it's the giving that matters and not the gift.

Jesus says that's not true. Listen to His own words when talking to the people during His ministry here on the earth.

*Matthew 7:11> "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him?"*

The truth is, if you give a gift nobody wants or needs, what good is the gift? We need to stop making excuses for shoddy giving just so we can participate in the Christmas season, and feel good about ourselves. Saying it's the giving, and not the gift, that matters is placing the importance on the giver and not the recipient, which is totally backwards to what is proper and good. Giving gifts should be for the benefit of the receiver of the gift, and not for the purpose of building up the ego of the person giving the gift. If we were giving because of the example God has set, our hearts would be aimed toward the person for whom the gift was intended, and not for how good we look ourselves when giving the gift.

Also, what good is a needed gift when it was needed several months back, and they've learned to get along without it in the mean time? Now they have something they thought they needed (or wanted) but really don't know now if they really do, but since they have it they may as well use it. For instance, the child needs clothes for school, but you wait until Christmas, so they get a lot of winter clothing. They did without during the warmer months, and when winter is over, and they need the lighter clothing again, they still don't have them even though Christmas has come and gone. If you purchased the appropriate clothing for them in the warmer months, why wait until Christmas (when it's cold) to give them the items they needed? It just doesn't make sense to me.

The truth is, if a gift is worth giving, it should fulfill a need for the one receiving the gift, and it should be a need at the time the gift is given. Giving gifts just to be giving gifts is not a pattern God would endorse, but it is one that appears to be a good, or at least nice, thing to do (humanly speaking). Just imagine a church setting up to go to a foreign country where one of their congregations needs a new church, but when the team arrives in the area, they give the people crates full of pogo sticks and electronic games. Sure, the gifts may be kind of neat, and lots of people (especially young people) like the electronic games, but those gifts don't provide what the locals need, so they're useless to them. But that's the way the season of Christmas is designed. Make people believe they're doing a good thing by getting them to spend tons of money on gifts for people on their own personal lists, and tell them it's fun by putting up a lot of decorations, and giving them a happy slogan ("Merry Christmas") and they'll shop 'til they drop, and tell you how much fun they're having doing it (until it comes time to pay the credit card bills)!

When it comes to charitable giving, take a look at the more personal side. I work in a factory in Perry, Oklahoma, as well as do this ministry work and own a home-based computer business. In the factory, in 2009, they had a Christmas tree decorating contest between the departments. Some of the creations were interesting, but one in particular, decided to put real presents under their tree, then after the contest, take those presents to a needy family. Good thought, but it still fell short of God's ideal. Once the season was over, I asked the people in that department about the family they "adopted" during the Christmas holiday. I was told they gave them the presents and a little money to help them out, but nobody had any idea what was going on with the family after that.

My point is that they appeared to be helping the family, but in truth, except for the little bit of money they managed to give them, all they did was give the children some toys, and a few needed clothing items, then left them to fend for themselves again. The help, though good, was short lived and hardly sufficient to help a needy, single parent family. As good as this action may appear to be, that family will not receive any help from these people again until the next Christmas, and even then will probably miss out because they've been helped once, and most will feel they should help a different family the next time. It did little real good to help them with the artificial showing of concern when their real need is day to day, month to month, and year to year, and none of those who gave are really concerned about them beyond the Christmas giving. Yes, every little bit helps, but Christmas allowed them to feel good about what they did, without anybody really doing enough to be of real value, and at least they eased their own minds about whether or not they've helped someone during the Christmas season.

Once again, as is so often the case, the help was self-serving and not really an effort on anyone's part to be of real service to the people in need. The mind of the giver was comforted, and the receiver was thankful for the one showing of assistance, but it all stopped there... until next year... maybe.

People do these very things year after year, and honestly believe it's what God wants them to do. If it wasn't so sad, it would actually be funny, but trust me when I say, "God is **NOT** laughing!" He sees the

sad, pathetic state of our attempt to worship Him, and it makes Him sick to see us do these things.

## The Fruits of Christmas In General

In First John chapter 4 and verse 1, we read, *“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

The bible also says in Matthew 7:6> *“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?”*

I realize this verse refers to spirits as being those of individuals and perhaps even organizations, but I believe it's not wrong to use the same passage in reference to an event or a practice of some kind. After all, people constantly talk about the “Spirit of Christmas”. So, let's take a look at Christmas and see what the “fruits” of this holiday really are.

Let's start with the symbolisms used in this holiday celebration. We have trees, shrubs, twigs, ornaments and lights all over the world. Each of them seem to have a meaning, but where does that meaning come from? The truth is, every part of the symbolisms used during the Christmas holiday season has been arbitrarily assigned by human beings.

Be truthful; what does a tree standing in your house have to do with the birth of a baby? We can point to the evergreen principle and say it represents “eternity” or “eternal life”, and we can use a wreath to represent the same thing, and we can look at lights to represent... well... light. But the truth is, it's all arbitrary and given as a means of incorporating a pagan celebration into Christian culture, and the absorption has been quite thorough and complete. It worked, just as intended and allowed the church in authority at that time, to bring a lot of people into their membership who would otherwise have probably never joined.

Now we come to one of the long-standing arguments I've heard over the years in support of the Christmas season. The claim is that absorbing the seasonal festivities into the church and giving them Christian definition made it possible to completely destroy a whole bunch of horrible pagan celebrations. But, did it... really?

Consider first that if the people refused to join the church unless they could continue their celebrations and festivities, even to the point of doing everything just as they always have, including the excessive drinking and the sexual improprieties, then were they really sincere in coming to Jesus in the first place? Since the church had to adopt their pagan traditions by absorbing them into the Christian culture, then the truth is, the only thing that changed was the label placed on the festivities.

Second, take a look at the Christmas season today. When you see the festive decorations, the jolly merry-making, the extravagant shopping sprees, the rampant commercialism and capitalism, and the abuses of things like mistletoe and gift giving to those from whom they wish to have favors returned (many gifts are given to those from whom the giver would like to receive sexual favors, and it's much more rampant than one might think), and the sadness that infects so many people who feel left out by the festivities, and the dramatic rise in extramarital affairs and subsequent divorces, you have to ask yourself whether the entire Christmas season is rapidly returning to its roots of origin.

So many people who aren't even professing Christians, and who couldn't care less about God, thoroughly enjoy, and revel in the holiday season. Many Christians get a feeling of euphoria by helping

and giving during this season of the year, but loudly complain when such giving is requested any other time. People will scrimp and save to cover the cost of the season, knowing what's expected of them during that time of year, and will even use that effort to save as an excuse for not giving during the earlier times of each year. Those who lose their jobs, or don't get their raises as expected or who's wives end up pregnant and can't work for a while, look at the season with concern and even dread.

Those who live in wealthier families see the season as a time to get all the really neat things that have been advertised much of the year. Very little thought is given to what is claimed to be the reason for the celebration in the first place.

Children are drafted into church plays depicting the birth of Jesus, and parents applaud their performances, and people feel good about doing these things, when they give little thought to the impact of God's sacrifice the rest of the year. Despite it's major flaw, Christmas is the most "Christian" (using the term loosely) thing most people do in any given year.

So many people, including Christian professing ones, teach their children all about Santa Claus, and think it's just so cute to see the children all excited about the jolly, fat guy with the white beard, and wearing the red suit. This is the person with all the power to decide who is naughty and nice (by who's standards I wonder) and who decides who gets gifts and who gets a lump of coal. Grownups who claim to believe in God, go around wearing the red Santa caps, and jingling their bells in celebration of the season.

Think about it, even as a fairy tale. This Santa Claus character is taking the credit for being the omnipotent being who decides right and wrong, and who magically provides gifts, and has all kinds of mystical powers (flying reindeer, able to know everyone around the world, touch the side of his nose and goes up and down chimneys magically, etc.). Even if you know the children will figure it out later, and know he's not real, is it still okay to tell them that kind of story, especially during a season that's supposed to be honoring Jesus?

God said we should diligently teach our children about Him! To even tell a little "white" lie, as we like to call it, is a terrible sin, and a horrible affront and insult to our creator God! Everybody who has anything to do with the Santa Claus story in any way shape or form should be ashamed! We're lying to our children in the name of cuteness... how evil can we be? We've created an imaginary being with magical powers who has been given Godly judgment over our children. That's not the kind of image I want my children and grandchildren to grow up with. I want them to know that God is the giver, and the judge, and His standards are the only standards that matter.

We can NOT sugar coat this season with nice images, pretty decorations, and happy faces. All the catchy, fun music in the world, and all the gift giving we can manage can NOT hide the evil backdrop of this season of the year. There isn't enough tinsel in the universe to disguise what the season is all about!

Even claiming that a few don't do those terrible things, and even fewer may give year round, can you honestly look at God, and see the evil influence this holiday has on people and society, and still believe it's a good way to honor God? If you think that, then you've been reading the wrong bible, because my bible describes a loving and merciful God who is also jealous of His people getting mixed in with false gods, and improper relationships with money, society, and other practices. God told us to come OUT of the world, and not to partake of its sins. We must live in the world, but we are to be separate from the world, and not allow the world to filter into our thinking and actions. Christmas is the biggest and worst

example of that very sin taking place!

## The Final Word

The plain and simple truth is that there is absolutely nothing about Christmas that's redeemable. Not the traditions, not the decorations, not the worship services, and not even the gift giving is anything God would want His holy name associated with. For people to really come to a right relationship with our loving Father God, we must turn our backs on everything that even hints of paganism and worldliness.

We have let the world and it's ways creep into the body of Christ, and we need to weed these things out immediately. I'm not saying that those who serve sincerely in our churches and in society to please God, yet celebrate Christmas are going to be denied entry into the Kingdom of God, but they're on shaky ground. Even Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom, but he who does the will of my father." Jesus also said that when He calls His people into His kingdom, some who will be left out will say that they prophesied (preached) in His name, cast out demons in His name, and even healed people in His name, but He will say to them that He doesn't know them.

It is well stated in the bible that, "The name of the Lord is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you!" Non Christians see these things going on and figure there's little, if any, difference between them and Christians, and unfortunately they're right. Things like this are the reason Christianity has such little affect on our modern culture. You can't tell us apart from the rest of the world. We're just as steeped in worldliness as anyone else. We really are the hypocrites we're accused of being. We say we're all "hypocrites in transition", but we forgot to allow ourselves to be transformed! "*Be transformed by the renewing of your minds...*"

Satan has managed to push his pattern of living right into the heart of Christianity, and we've fallen for it, hook, line, and sinker! He has managed to fill the entire story of Christ's birth with lies and misconceptions, and has even managed to get ministers of all faiths claiming that it might actually be possible Jesus may have been born in December. Any person with half a knowledge of God should know better than that!

Look at how God has done things throughout the Hebrew history. Everything that was foreshadowed by the annual Holy Days, was actually performed on those specific days. Even the time Jesus was crucified, took place on the Passover, because He was the lamb of God, and that is the day that pictured His ultimate sacrifice. After His resurrection, the Holy Spirit wasn't given publicly to the apostles until the day of Pentecost. Why? Because that day pictured (and foreshadowed) the time of Jubilee (setting free) which also foreshadowed the Lord's Jubilee (as Peter stated in his sermon) and it therefor coincided with the "pouring out" of the Holy Spirit and making it available to all of mankind.

What makes us think God would have Jesus born on any date other than the annual festival time that represented the coming of the Messiah? That would place Jesus' birth somewhere from September to October, depending on whether it was a leap year.

Also, Mary was visited by the angel when Martha was 6 months pregnant in the 6<sup>th</sup> month of the year. Immediately after the visitation, Mary went to Martha and stayed with her for 3 months. After that she returned home and was later found to be with child herself, which would place her delivery time somewhere between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> month of the following year, which would place her giving birth somewhere between early September and the middle October by the Roman calendar (the Hebrew calendar starts in March or April depending on the schedule of the previous year). Six months after the

time Martha gave birth Mary would give birth, which would be the case if Mary conceived immediately after the angel spoke to her (or soon thereafter) which would then place her giving birth to Jesus right at the time from about the day of Trumpets (which foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah) to the Feast of Tabernacles (which foreshadowed the 1000 year reign of Christ after the tribulation).

It would also place the time when Joseph had to go to Bethlehem at a time when it would not interfere with the keeping of holy days and festivals, thereby allowing for the birth, the circumcision on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, the return to Jerusalem for the dedication in the temple where the two elderly people (Simeon and Anna) saw Jesus as a newborn baby and spoke to the parents. They would then also have had time to return to Joseph's home where the Magi found Mary and the baby Jesus 15 months later, just before Herod had the babies 2 years and under in Bethlehem killed to try to destroy this "King of the Jews".

Now I've brought up the issue of the Magi (wise men from the east) not being in Bethlehem the night Jesus was born. The truth is, so much of what is written in the Christmas legend (and yes, it's a legend, although it's based on the birth of Jesus) is bogus to say the least. There was no star that shone on the stable to show the way to Jesus when He was born. So the star that led the Magi from the east was not then standing atop or above the stable the night Jesus was born.

If there had been, that would have been more than enough sign to bring, not only the shepherds, but the entire community and the surrounding area, to see what this great heavenly sign was all about. Can you imagine the people in the area looking at the sky that night and seeing a bright, shining star in the heavens with it's light shining down onto a small singular spot in a seemingly insignificant town in Israel, and the only reaction being, "Wow, the stars are really bright tonight... especially that one." And everyone goes on about their normal business? You're kidding me! Get real! They'd have gathered around that location like flies on sugar, and the history books would have been filled with various accounts of the incident.

Instead, it was just another night in the little town of Bethlehem. People were resting, perhaps eating supper, many drinking (I'm sure), and some shepherds were out in the field with their sheep, keeping them safe from predators, and most people were probably getting ready to go to bed. After all, there was a census to be taken soon, and many had just traveled a long distance to return to the home of their ancestry. Then, suddenly there was an angel in the field with the shepherds and he made a startling announcement about a miraculous and wonderful birth. This was the first news, and the only local sign, of anything special taking place.

As a matter of fact, when the shepherds went into the town they had to search for the child and His mother. Except for the angelic announcement nobody had any idea anything special was taking place that night. There was no bright star announcing it, there were no wise men with a caravan and expensive gifts in town to make people wonder. There was no big fanfare to mark the occasion. It was just a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, laying in a manger in a stable because there was no room in the inn. That's all there was to it.

So, where were the wise men? I don't know for sure, but I know they were not in Bethlehem, and the truth has been staring us in the face the whole time. In order to understand what took place, we need to take a look at the history of the area, and the facts surrounding the leadership in Judea at the time.

Herod was the King in Judea at the time Jesus was born. That's a fact few debate. Our movies depicting the event even show Herod as the one to whom the Magi speak when they arrive in Jerusalem. The star

apparently led them close enough to Jerusalem that they figured that was where they needed to go. After all, it was a large city for the area, well fortified and rumor had it, that it was the seat of authority for that region. So they went there to find out where the child had been born. Further proof is when they left Jerusalem, they rejoiced when the star appeared “again” and led them to where Mary and the child were living.

But let's back up to the announcement that sent Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in the first place. It's found in the book of Luke, the third of the four gospels at the beginning of the New Testament part of the Bible. Chapter one shows Herod was the King in Judea at that time, as it states this in relating the story of the announcement and birth of John the Baptist. However, in chapter two, Luke begins the record of why people had to go to the home of their ancestry, and states that it was the first census while Quirinius was governor of Syria. Why would he say that and not continue with the theme of Herod being King in Judea? After all, the account of the Magi in Jerusalem, shows them talking to Herod, and not to Quirinius.

It so happens, as historical records show, that year was also the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roman Empire, and Caesar Augustus had ordered all the nobility of the empire to be in Rome for the celebration. That included King Herod, although by now he was not as autonomous as he had originally been (his own fault). While he was gone (for a period of about a year) Quirinius was in charge of the area of Judea in Herod's absence. So, the census was taken by Quirinius, and not by Herod.

After Jesus was born, he was circumcised on the eighth day, then taken to Jerusalem to be dedicated at the temple, in accordance with the Law of Moses stating all the first born sons to be dedicated to God. After the dedication, and having fulfilled all the law's requirements Joseph and Mary, with Jesus in their arms, returned home to Nazareth. Joseph went back to work, Mary kept home and took care of Jesus. Then, after Herod had returned to Judea, the Magi show up, being led by a star (also translated as “angel”), and they ended up speaking to Herod and not to Quirinius, because once Herod had returned from Rome, he again took his given place as King in Judea.

The time between the birth of Jesus and the arrival of the Magi was approximately 15 months. This, coincidentally, would also account for why Herod ordered the death of all the boys in Bethlehem 2 years and younger, and did so according to the time given him by the Magi. It had been more than a year, but less than 2 years since the child had been born, and the Magi knew this.

It's kind of odd that once you know the truth about what took place, everything in the bible suddenly seems to fit. And none of it fits with the story of Christmas. Why? Because the Christmas season is based on lies and fairy tales, and was formulated specifically to get people to join the church at that time, just so they (the church at that time) could have the numbers and the power they craved for whatever purpose they had in mind.

But, because of the fear of Christmas being recognized for what it is, the stories have all been told wrong to fit what today's modern Christians want to believe so they can continue this pagan celebration while pretending to honor God. The truth is, Christmas did **NOT** destroy any pagan celebrations. As a matter of fact, it became worse over time as the pagan traditions from several areas became all lumped together forming a full blown festival of obscenity, worldliness, and rampant idolatry, and was then thrown in God's face by Satan to mock Him and show who man really is under Satan's influence!

God warned the Israelites, and today warns us, to not take pagan customs, traditions, and celebrations and use them to honor or serve Him, but we've done it anyway. Unfortunately I have a feeling that even

with all the evidence presented here, most people will laugh it off and find an excuse to not do as God wants, and walk away from this evil celebration. It will be to their own destruction to do so. This entire ordeal makes me very angry on behalf of God; angry enough that during this season of the year I refuse to attend churches, knowing they're steeped in this celebration and the festivities that surround it. I'm honestly appalled that there are so many seemingly good ministers who have fallen for this holiday fiasco. It boggles the mind to realize so many have become captivated by this evil influence in the Christian world, and refuse to see it for what it is; an insult to God, and one He does **NOT** take lightly!

I fear this is a major fulfillment (again) of the prophesy given in Isaiah, and quoted by Jesus in Matthew 13: 14-15.

*14 And concerning them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:*

*'You will listen carefully yet will never understand,  
you will look closely yet will never comprehend.'*

*15 For the heart of this people has become dull;  
they are hard of hearing,  
and they have shut their eyes,  
so that they would not see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears  
and understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them.'*

God's word is still being preached in this modern world, but I doubt if there are really 100 ministers worldwide who honestly speak the complete truth, and are willing change when they see the truth shown to them. I'd like to be proven wrong, and find minister after minister, and congregation after congregation turning away from this horrible practice of celebrating the season of Christmas.

The season, here in the USA has even made the day of Thanksgiving take a back seat as people eagerly anticipate the first day after Thanksgiving as the biggest shopping day of the year, and all because of Christmas and the materialistic frenzy that accompanies that holiday. What a travesty that a day for giving thanks to God fades into the background because people want to have fun, decorate, shop and get gifts, and they make it worse by saying it's all done "in the name of Jesus".

We may think we're doing a great thing with our modern, more progressing congregations and teachings, but we're still not making a dent in the evil in this world, and all we can think to do is "get people saved". The truth is, when we get them into our midst, we do what the pharisees did. We make them twice the victims of hell, first because they were lost in the first place, and again because we now tell them they're saved, but we fill them with the same lies being taught in all the churches around the world. In some ways they're better off not knowing the truth. At least they could claim ignorance and say, "Well, the Christians did it too!"

The truth is, there is very little true Godliness in this world, and very few people living today will ever see the Kingdom of God from the same side Abraham is on. There's a lot of repenting to be done, and a lot of eyes need to be opened, and a lot of hearts need to be circumcised before Christianity will ever amount to even a hill of beans in this culture!

I'm pleading with you ministers to whom I'm giving this document. If you've gotten this far, please ask God to open your eyes to the truth. Ask Him to help you see what is behind all the charade surrounding

the Christmas season. Tell your congregations the truth and turn them away from this horrible evil so God can really begin to work with us and heal our land.

Why is Christmas such an issue that I'd bring it up early in the year? Because it's a symptom of the heart of Christians today. We're so worldly, and so gullible, and so unwilling to see and hear the truth that it will take a giant step, as the first step, to turn things around within the body of Christ. We can't afford to play around with this!

If we just talk about it, and try to make small changes, then the influence of this so called Christmas spirit (which is NOT the Spirit of God) will cause us to lose our dedication to the truth and we'll never reach the goal of the upward calling of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. We will, instead, stay steeped in this world's system of beliefs and values. Our children will continue to grow up with the lie, and our young people will continue to ask questions about life and sexuality for which we seem to have NO answers, and the moral values of our nation, world, and Christian culture will continue to slip.

Jesus, Himself, said, "You cannot serve both God and money." And celebrating Christmas is a worldwide pandemic of serving the god of money, wealth and favor! The god of party and festivities is very pleased with how things are going these days, and how giving useless help to others because its done in a false name just tickles him pink!

Yes, turning away from Christmas is that important. We'll never fully understand the things of God if we can't get our hearts around something so obvious as the error and sin of Christmas. We must take the BIG STEP FIRST, or there are no steps that will save us.

It should be obvious God is not happy with even the USA. He made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, that He (God) is the one who gives people the leadership of the nations all over the world. Now look at who He's given us as president of this country. The last election was basically a choice between "Dumb" and "Dumber", and true to form, we chose Dumber! The entire cycle of losing our freedoms and losing ground in the freedom to worship God is slipping up on us so slowly we can't even see it, and it's because we, supposedly a Christian nation, have slipped a huge distance away from our loving and merciful God. He's taking away all the things we hold so dear, and deservedly so.

I'm not going to be a doom-sayer and say that the world is coming to an end, but if you can't see what's going on around you, then why are you ministering? Take a look at the condition of our world, and of our nation (USA). Are we getting any better with 85% of the nation claiming to be Christian. How can that be, unless those who claim to be Christian, including those who are in church every week, really have no idea what it means to really, truly, honestly, sincerely, and COMPLETELY be a follower of Jesus Christ?

True Godliness will most certainly make a difference in any society! If we are really doing as God would have us do, we'd stand out like sore thumbs! When God's light is really shining in us, the darkness will hide, but instead, look around you, the darkness is our friend. As a matter of fact, the truth is most who claim to be Christians are really just as lost as the rest of the world, but they're just nicer people because they go to church... sometimes... when it's convenient.

So why is it Christianity has absolutely no positive affect on our culture? It's because real true Christianity doesn't exist in our congregations today... period! There are a few who are led by the Spirit to do good things, and we praise them for that, but even their good makes little difference because we back it up with a false belief system.

We need to reach out to others and help, but not with our false beliefs and worldly thinking. Even when we give, we're not cheerful givers, but "jolly" givers; and there's a real difference between the two. We give because it's Christmas, and because our ministers stand up in front of us and say, "It's the reason for the season." And not because we really want to make a difference in the world around us, and bring people into the glorious light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." Well... here's the truth, and here's your chance to be free. Will you take that chance, and run with it, or will you run from it?

Christmas needs to be dropped from all Christian worship, and the people need to be warned to stay away from these types of celebrations. We need to look to God, and Him only, for the proper ways to serve and honor Him.

**PLEASE – PLEASE – PLEASE –** Walk away from Christmas... **NOW!**

**NOTHING LESS WILL DO...**



**LIVING FOR THEE  
MINISTRY**