

"Think not that I come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Matthew 5:17

# Jewish Heritage Revival



## One Heritage United by Messiah

"And When he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" John 10:4

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## The True Origin of Christmas

Where and how did Christmas originate?

What do we know about Christmas as it is celebrated today?

Let me first state, that nowhere in God's Word does it specifically state, by date as to when Jesus was born. However, there is enough evidence to offer significant proof as to when He was conceived and born...more on that in the next article. So if Jesus wasn't born on Christmas, what is it? Where did it come from? And, why does the church celebrate our Messiah's birth on this day?

Furthermore, how did the church arrive at such a date when there is no date given in God's Word? In order to answer these questions, we must go outside of God's Word and look at the history of the church.

What is Christmas?

The date is December 25th (on the Gregorian calendar) and is recognized by the church as the birth of our Messiah.

So, if this is what is recognized, how did we get here? The information can be somewhat confusing and conflicting, depending on the perspective. In looking at the perspective from the Catholic Church, specifically, several summarized excerpts from the Catholic Encyclopedia - we witness the following:

### Alexandria- 200 AD

- The first mention was from Egypt at approximately 200 AD under Clement of Alexandria. Egyptian theologians assign the day of Messiah's birth to Pachon 25 (or May 20th) in the 28th year of Augustus. Over the years, other assumptions included Pharmuthi 24th or 25th (April 19th or 20th). Other dates had been mentioned, with the December date firmly established in Egypt between 427 and 433 AD. (Note - the date of January 6th, was also mentioned, specifically regarding a semi-Gnostic ceremony at Alexandria where a cross stamped Kore was carried in procession around a crypt, to the chant "Today at this hour Kore gave birth to the eternal"

### Cyprus, Mesopotamia, Aremnia, Asia Minor - 380 AD

- During the fourth century in Cyprus, Epiphanius stands against the Alogi and claims Jesus was born on January 6th and baptized on November 8th. In Cappadocia, Gregory of Nyssa's sermon on St. Basil (who died prior to January 1, 379) and the sermon on St. Stephen's feast prove that in 380 that December 25th was already celebrated in that part of the world.

### Antioch - 386 AD

- During the time of Chrysostom a priest, he attempted to unite Antioch in celebrating Jesus's birth on December 25th (in response to "certain Jewish rites and feasts", with part of the community already celebrating that day for some 10 years. There was resistance from conservatives, however on this occasion he was successful in defending the "new custom"

## Constantinople - 379 / 380 AD

- Gregory Nazianzen made himself the initiator of the "new feast"

The Catholic Church also clearly states the following:

"The origin of Christmas should not be sought in the Saturnalia (17-23 December) nor even in the midnight holy birth at Eleusis (see J.E. Harrison, *Prolegom.*, p. 549) with its probable connection through Phrygia with the Naasene heretics, or even with the Alexandrian ceremony quoted above; nor yet in rites analogous to the midwinter cult at Delphi of the cradled Dionysus, with his revocation from the sea to a new birth (Harrison, *op. cit.*, 402 sqq.)."

Thereby distancing themselves from a very common opinion that Christmas was established on the dates associated with the pagan holiday of Saturnalia, so to make it more palatable for the "conversion" of pagan worshipers to Christianity.

### More About Saturnalia:

A festival celebrated in December in Rome. The term Saturnalia (from the god Saturn) was the name the Romans gave to their holiday marking the Winter Solstice. Over the years, it expanded to a whole week, the 17th through 23rd of December. It also degenerated from mostly tomfoolery, marked chiefly by having masters and slaves switch places, to sometimes debauchery, so that among Christians the (lower case) word "saturnalia" came to mean "orgy". Also considered a festival dedicated to Saturn whom they believed introduced laws and agriculture to the Italians. The festival, held on December 17 upon completion of the sowing, 'was a time for exchanging gifts and for licentious merrymaking, when masters and slaves changed places.

Excerpt from the 1911 *Catholic Encyclopedia*, - "Christmas": "Christmas was *not* among the earliest festivals of the Church...the first evidence of the feast is *from Egypt*." Further, "Pagan customs centering around the January calends gravitated to Christmas." Under "Natal Day," Origen, an early Catholic writer, admitted, "...In the Scriptures, no one is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great banquet on his birthday. It is *only sinners* (like Pharaoh and Herod) who make great rejoicings over the day in which they were born into this world".

Many years after Rome had made Christianity the "official" state religion, during the time of Emperor Justinian, (529 AD) Christmas became a civil holiday.

Excerpt from the *Encyclopedia Americana* - 1956 "Christmas...was not observed in the first centuries of the Christian church, since the Christian usage in general was to celebrate the death of remarkable persons rather than their birth... a feast was established in memory of this event [Christ's birth] *in the fourth century*. In the fifth century the Western Church ordered the feast to be celebrated forever on the *day of the Mithraic rites of the birth of the sun and at the close of the Saturnalia*, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed."

## Common Customs and Traditions of Christmas:

### Gift Giving:

It is understood that gift giving is biblical, commonly referenced by the gifts that Messiah received from the shepherds and wise men from the east...as found in Luke 2:15 - 20 Matthew 2:1 - 11 respectively.

Regarding the visit of the wise men from the east, it was customary that when visiting a King, you were to present gifts. The bringing of gifts is found throughout God's Word, such as the Queen of Sh'va's visit to King Solomon:

"When the queen of Sh'va heard what was being said about Shlomo because of the name of ADONAI, she came to test him with difficult questions. She arrived in Yerushalayim accompanied by a very great retinue, including camels bearing spices and gold in great abundance, and precious stones. When she appeared before Shlomo she spoke with him about everything on her heart," 1 Kings 10:1 - 2

Regarding the shepherds visit, it doesn't state that they brought any gifts.

The *Bibliotheca Sacra* states, "The interchange of presents between friends is a like characteristic of Christmas and the Saturnalia, and *must have been adopted by Christians from the pagans*, as the admonition of Tertullian plainly shows" (Vol. 12, pp. 153-155).

## The Christmas Tree:

Believe it or not, the "christmas tree" is found in God's Word, not to support it, but rather to warn against it. The origin actually predates the church. [Jeremiah 10:1 - 16](#) warns against "the way of the heathen"

The christmas tree of today actually originated from Germany, which in turn came from the Romans, which in turn came from Babylon and the Egyptians. Each nation had its own tree. The Egyptians used a palm tree. The Romans used a fir tree that was decorated with red berries during saturnalia. A babylonian fable talks of *an evergreen tree which sprang out of a dead tree stump*. The old stump symbolized the dead Nimrod, the new evergreen tree symbolized that Nimrod had come to life again in Tammuz (Source - Walsh, *Curiosities of Popular Customs*)

## Santa Claus:

The name of "Santa" can be traced back to several places of origin:

1. The Langers Encyclopedia of World History article entitled "Santa" states that it was a common name for Nimrod, throughout Asia Minor. The "fire god" that would go down the chimneys of the ancient pagans and to whom infants were burned and eaten in human sacrifice.
2. The Santa Claus of today comes from Saint Nicholas, a Roman Catholic Bishop who lived during the fifth century. He resided in Myra and was honored by Greeks and Latins on December 6th. Gift giving occurred on the eve of December 6th, as a result of a secret gift of dowries that he bestowed to three daughters of an impoverished citizen of Myra. Washington Irving is given credit for bringing new life to this ancient Bishop by renaming him "St. Nick", as found in his publication "Knickerbocker History of New York"

The term "Old Nick" has also been known as a term for the devil.

3. In Revelation 2:6 and 2:15 our Messiah is warning the churches at Ephesus and Pergamos of the ways of Nicolaitans.

**"Therefore, remember where you were before you fell, turn from this sin, and do what you used to do before. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your menorah from its place - if you don't turn from your sin! But you have this in your favor: you hate what the Nicolaitans do - I hate it too." Revelation 2:5 - 6**

**"Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: you have some people who hold to the teaching of Bil'am, who taught Balak to set a trap for the people of Isra'el, so that they would eat food that had been sacrificed to idols and commit sexual sin. Likewise, you too have people who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore, turn from these sins. Otherwise, I will come to you very soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth." Revelation 2:14 - 16**

The term Nicolaitanes means "followers of Nicholas" In breaking the word down further, Nikos means destroyer or conqueror. These people were in essence followers of the destroyer - Nimrod.

If you move the "n" to the end of Santa...you have Satan.

So, now we know where it came from and how it originated in addition to the origins of some of the customs. Another pagan festival assimilated into the church, by the church. A previous article comes to mind regarding [easter!!!](#)

What does God's Word say about the recognition of such feasts by His people?

When the Apostles held the council at Jerusalem to discuss the impact that gentiles were having, they discussed if they should be circumcised and adhere to Torah. Their response can be found in Acts 15:13 - 22

**"Ya'akov broke the silence to reply. "Brothers," he said, "hear what I have to say. Shim'on has told in detail what God did when he first began to show his concern for taking from among the Goyim a people to bear his name. And the words of the Prophets are in complete harmony with this for it is written, "'After this, I will return; and I will rebuild the fallen tent of David. I will rebuild its ruins, I will restore it, so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, that is, all the Goyim who have been called by my name," says ADONAI, who is doing these things.' All this has been known for ages. "Therefore, my opinion is that we should not put obstacles in the way of the Goyim who are turning to God. Instead, we should write them a letter telling them**

**to abstain from things polluted by idols,**

**from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood. For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat." Then the emissaries and the elders, together with the whole Messianic community, decided to select men from among themselves to send to**

**Antioch with Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba. They sent Y'hudah, called Bar-Sabba, and Sila, both leading men among the brothers"**

God, in his Word is very clear about the inclusion of false practices (other gods / idols) into the worship of the one and only God...the God of Israel. The term is known as syncretism.

**"You are not to let any of your children be sacrificed to Molekh, thereby profaning the name of your God; I am ADONAI." Leviticus 18:21 (Note - that there are other abominations listed in this section of Leviticus, but for the purpose of this article are not related)**

God made very clear, the consequences to Israel, should they do such abominations:

**"For those who engage in any of these disgusting practices, whoever they may be, will be cut off from their people. So keep my charge not to follow any of these abominable customs that others before you have followed and thus defile yourselves by doing them. I am ADONAI your God." Leviticus 18:29 - 30**

The decision of the Apostles, based on their deliberation and interpretation of God's Word resulted in four things that they should abstain from...the basis being the Noahide Laws. These things were quite prevalent in the Gentile world, whereby polytheism was common. Anything other than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is considered to be idol worship.

Many in the church will say (and have said) that the sole purpose of Christmas is to recognize the birth of our Messiah. If the church truly believes this statement, it is difficult to see it in today's society. During the American Thanksgiving holiday, the "push" to christmas begins. Stores are packed with people doing their "christmas shopping". Billions of dollars are spent on gifts, decorations, trees, etc... This is the time when many retailers actually become profitable. Show me where the emphasis is on our Messiah's birth?

They will further state that the origins are not important. If this were the case, why is God so staunch in His Word to the children of Israel?

Why would God's view of other God's change? The answer is...it hasn't.

Remember, the church has been grafted into the same vine as Israel. That vine is Messiah. Why would you dishonor our Messiah by honoring Him with a celebration of pagan origin? I recently came across this verse in Ezekiel and thought it to be quite appropriate, in relating the relationship of Israel and Gentile believers:

**"You are to divide it by lot as an inheritance both to you and to the foreigners living among you who give birth to children living among you; for you they are to be no different from the native-born among the people of Isra'el - they are to have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Isra'el." Ezekiel 47:22**

The church did not abstain from polluting itself, hence the celebrations of christmas (and easter) as evidence. They may have a different meaning today, but to God, the origin and meaning are the same. They were not ordained by Him, in His Word.

As we discussed in our article on easter, the same holds true for christmas. What does God's Word say about replacing His ways with "man's" traditions? Jesus himself addressed the Pharisees in [Mark 7:1-13](#) regarding putting aside God's commandments for those of man. (Many of the references used in our ["True Origin of Easter"](#) article can be applied to christmas and believers in Messiah.

I have great concern for the church as it is today. The great deceiver has done a masterful job in blinding the church of the truth. He already knows what his final outcome is and therefore, his primary goal is to take as many people with him as he can, in the time he has remaining.

Our Messiah was never part of what we know as christmas...and for that matter never will be.

Just think about the endless lies told by parents to keep the myth of Santa Claus and christmas alive. There are millions of people who believe this is harmless. The information is before you

That has to stop now.

When our Messiah was speaking to the woman at the well, regarding worship of God, His reply is:

**"Yeshua said, "Lady, believe me, the time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Yerushalayim. You people don't know what you are worshiping; we worship what we do know, because salvation comes from the Jews. But the time is coming -- indeed, it's here now --**

**when the true worshipers will worship the Father spiritually and truly,**

**for these are the kind of people the Father wants worshiping him. God is spirit; and worshipers must worship him**

**spiritually and truly." John 4:21 - 24**

The time is at hand where the return of our Messiah is close and can happen at any time. He is coming for His bride - **HIS SPOTLESS BRIDE**. It is time for the church to remove it's spots, and prepare for the coming of it's Bridegroom.

As a believer, when you stand before our Messiah at His judgment seat and you are asked, "why did you celebrate these pagan feasts in My name?"

What will your answer be?

Color Type	Indication
Blue	Bible Text
Red	Bible Text referencing Jesus speaking
Black	General Text

References
Schofield Study Bible - King James Version
True Origin of Christmas - David Pack
The Catholic Encyclopedia
Wikipedia
Encyclopedia Americana
Web Definitions by Google

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