

## History of Christmas

- Jo 4:24 – worship in spirit and truth.
- Jo 8:32 – the truth will set you free.
- Jo 14:6 – only through Yahushua.

### Background

Christmas" is a contraction for "Christ's Mass," originally a Roman Catholic observance. It was designed to compete with the pagan Roman feast of Saturnalia in honor of the sun deity Mithras. Mithras bore a remarkable (however pagan) similarity to the Biblical Messiah and the Mithras feast, like Christmas, was to commemorate his (Mithras) birth.

There is no historical or biblical evidence that Yahushua's birthday was celebrated during the first 300 years of the early church. (New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, "Christmas," p.47). The date of the Messiah's birth is not known. The Gospels indicate neither the day nor the month," (The New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 3, p. 656).

"The fathers of the first three centuries do not speak of any special observances of the nativity. No corresponding festival was presented by the Old Testament. The day and the month of the birth of the Messiah are nowhere stated in Gospel history, and cannot be certainly determined," (Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical literature Christmas," p.276).

### Mithraism

Both Mithraism and Christianity became popular in Rome during the second century CE. As a Persian religion, Mithraism was far older and more venerable at the time, having been practiced as early as 1500 BCE in both Persia and India. Rome's initial exposure to Mithraism was likely through Cilician "traders" (pirates from Turkey). Emperor Nero (54-68), considered becoming a Mithraist and Emperor Constantine embraced the philosophy. During the first-second centuries, Mithraism quickly spread to all frontiers of the Roman Empire, especially those guarded by Roman legions (transferred from the Near East). Mithraism was subsequently practiced in Great Britain, where numerous Mithraic temples have been excavated (By Edward Jayne). Mithraism came from the mystery religions of Egypt, Syria, and Persia. "They were secret in many of their ceremonies and their members were under oath not to reveal their esoteric rites. Doctrines included a savior-god who had died and risen again. Various derivative cults spread within the Roman Empire and copied from one another in easy-going syncretism, which characterized much of the religious life of that realm and age" (Kenneth Latourette in A History of Christianity pp.24-25).

Mithras, the sun-god, was born of a virgin in a cave on December 25, and worshipped on Sunday, the day of the conquering sun. He was a savior-god who rivaled Yahushua in popularity. He died and was resurrected in order to become a messenger god, an intermediary between man and the good god of light, and the leader of the forces of righteousness against the dark forces of evil. Mithras was proclaimed the creator of the universe and a manifestation of the creative Logos (compare Jo 1:1). When Mithra saw mankind afflicted by Ahriman (ArRahman=Satan, 12th Imam?), the cosmic power of darkness, he incarnated on earth. His birth on 25 December was witnessed by shepherds. After many deeds he held a last supper with his disciples and returned to heaven. At the end of the world he will come again to judge resurrected mankind and after the last battle, victorious over evil, he will lead the chosen ones through a river of fire to a blessed immortality," (Mystery Religions in the Ancient World). The "Christian" apologist Tertullian wrote that as a prelude to the Mithraic initiation ceremony, the initiate was given a ritual bath and at the end of the ceremony, received a mark on the forehead. Tertullian described these rites as a diabolical counterfeit of the baptism and chrismation (confirmation) of Christians (Bouyer-The Christian Mystery).

Mithraism and followers of Yahushua Messiah were vying for dominance in the Roman Empire, one pagan, the other the true path. Roman emperors wanted a unified empire without divisive religious factions. The political motivation for harmony overshadowed the need for religious ideology. As a result, the Roman leadership began to blend pagan beliefs with the truth delivered by Yahushua. Combining "the way" with pagan traditions is known as syncretism. The Romans knew if you respect a man's deities, you are halfway toward winning his friendship. As a result, the Romans gave Latin names to the Greek gods.

Mithraism consists mainly of the cult of the Indo-Iranian (Persian) Sun-god Mithra. It reached its zenith during the third century, and vanished under the repressive regulations of Theodosius at the end of the fourth century. Helios Mithras (Helios=god of the sun) is one god. Sunday was kept holy in honor of Mithra, and the sixteenth of each month was sacred to him as mediator. December 25<sup>th</sup> was observed as his birthday, the *Natalis Invicti* (birth of the unconquerable), the rebirth of the winter-sun (Arendzen by John Looby, *Mithraism*, Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume X. 1911).

- Acts 17:16-30 – the unknown Elohim

### **The Roman Influence**

Although syncretism (combining diverse beliefs) was never more than a political benefit for the Romans, it had a profound effect on true believers. Roman Emperor Constantine, a former pagan himself, gave the most significant push to Messianic-pagan blending of teachings. Among other things, he would decree that worship for true believers switch from the seventh day Sabbath to the first day of the week. Sun-day-the day the pagans worshiped the sun.

This greatest of all the "Christian" holidays began in antiquity, as a pagan observance of the winter solstice, and has morphed into a quasi-religious observance. The early Catholic Church did not celebrate Christmas. The Catholic Encyclopedia states: Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. Irenaeus and Tertullian omit Christmas from their lists of feasts; Origen, states "that in the Scriptures sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthday" (Lev. Hom. viii in Migne, P.G., XII, 495). The first evidence of the (Christmas) feast is from Egypt about 200 CE

Christmas observance was condemned as pagan around 200 CE by Tertullian: The *Minervalia* are as much *Minerva's*, as the *Saturnalia Saturn's*; Saturn's, which must necessarily be celebrated even by little slaves at the time of the *Saturnalia*. New-year's gifts likewise must be caught at, and the *Septimontium* kept; and all the presents of Midwinter and the feast of Dear Kinsmanship must be exacted; the schools must be wreathed with flowers; the *flamens' wives* (idol priests) and the *aediles* (quasi-political leader) sacrifice; the school is honored on the appointed holy-days. The same thing takes place on an idol's birthday; every pomp of the devil is frequented. Who will think that these things are befitting to a Christian master, unless it be he who shall think them suitable likewise to one who is not a master? (Tertullian. On Idolatry, Chapter X).

The Catholic Encyclopedia adds: The majority (of Christians) have by this time induced the belief in their mind, that it is pardonable if at any time they do what the heathen do, for fear "the Name be blasphemed"...To live with heathens is lawful, to die with them is not. Let us live with all; let us be glad with them, out of community of nature, not of superstition. We are peers in soul, not in discipline; fellow-possessors of the world, not of error. But if we have no right of communion in matters of this kind with strangers, how far more wicked to celebrate them among brethren. Who can maintain or defend this? By us, the *Saturnalia*, New Year's, Midwinter's festivals and *Matronalia* are frequented, presents come and go, New-year's gifts, games join their noise, banquets join their din. Oh better fidelity of the nations to their own sect, which claims no solemnity of the Christians for itself. Not the Lord's day, not Pentecost, even if they had known them, would they have shared with us; for they would fear lest they should seem to be Christians.

We are not apprehensive lest we seem to be heathens. Idolatry is condemned, not on account of the persons which are set up for worship, but on account of those its observances, which pertain to demons. (Tertullian On Idolatry, Chapter XIV & XV).

1. Pagans would not intentionally celebrate days considered to be Christian.
2. Christians should not celebrate days that are honored by the heathen.
3. Those who profess Messiah should not celebrate Saturnalia, New Year's, or other pagan days, as even the observance is a form of idolatry.

- 1Co 10:5-22 – drinking from YHWH's cup and the devils cup.
- Gal 4:8-12 – turning to worldly ways, observing day, months, times.
- Col 2:6-10 – traditions of men.

The Church of Rome did not adopt Christmas until the fourth century. It is well known that the date of December 25th was observed by non-Messianic believers as part of the celebration of Saturnalia as well as the date of the birthday of the sun-god Mithra (or Mithras).

In 354 CE, Bishop Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the sun (Sechrist E.H. Christmas. World Book Encyclopedia, Volume 3).

Some scholarly sources believe that the earliest celebration in Rome of Christmas began 2-3 decades earlier (by Constantine, who had been a follower of Mithraism). The church where the tradition of celebrating Christmas on Dec. 25 may have begun was built near a pagan shrine as part of an effort to spread "Christianity". Emperor Constantine built the Basilica of St. Anastasia, where some believe Christmas was first celebrated on Dec. 25 to coincide with the Roman festival celebrating the birth of the sun god (Carandini, professor Rome's La Sapienza University). The Basilica of St. Anastasia was built as soon as a year after the Nicaean Council (325). "The church was built to Christianize these pagan places of worship, it was normal to put a church near these places to try to save them" (Carandini). But in the days of the holy Constantine, in the holy Council of Nice, this festival was not received by the holy fathers (Ananias of Shirak, 600CE, On Christmas, The Expositor 1896).

The Roman Saturnalia and Persian Mithraism was an adaption of an even earlier mystery religion, the Babylonian mystery cult. The ancient Babylonians celebrated the reborn Nimrod as the newborn Tammuz by worshipping an evergreen tree. The Babylonians also celebrated this rebirth during the winter solstice. Jeremiah condemns ancient Israel for copying this paganism, and specifically mentions every green tree (evergreen). (Cieselka W.)

- Jer 3:13 – scattered ways.

The December 25th Christmas did not become part of the observations in Constantinople until the famous hater of Jews, John Chrysostom, introduced it there: We may take it as certain that the feast of "Christ's Nativity" was kept in Rome on 25 December. It was introduced by St. John Chrysostom into Constantinople and adopted in 395. It is clear that even early Roman writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen did not endorse Christmas, nor did Augustine even list it as an important holiday. Catholic sources recognize that it is not likely that a census (as shown in Luke 2:1) would be done during the winter, making a December 25th date of birth unlikely (it was also too cold for shepherds to spend the night with their flocks out in an open field, as shown in Luke 2:8). Towards the beginning of the third century, there were some in Alexandria (not Asia Minor, or even Rome) who began to feel that Yahushua's birth should be celebrated, and that it would be on May 25th. But later, in the fourth century, Christmas began to be celebrated with January 6th or December 25 being the dates observed, because the sun-worshipping Emperor Constantine, or

one of his successors, wanted to have a Sun holiday at the time of Saturnalia and Brumalia to placate the Gentiles (Thurston H).

### **Manger Facts**

- Math 2:1-23 – gifts, no worship, wise men or magi inquire about Yahushua, no indication of how many, three kinds of gifts, likely an entourage of servants and camels with them. Yahushua was in a house, presented their gifts and left, avoiding an inquiring King Herod.
- Lk 2:1-35 – in a manger, in the field, watch at night, register for census/tax.
- Math 4:10, Lk 2:20 – only worship YHWH, shepherds didn't worship babe in the manger.
- Jer 36:22-23 – 9<sup>th</sup> month=Kitlev (Nov/Dec), fire to keep warm, cold in Jerusalem.

This had to be before the cold winter rains and snow began to fall. The livestock had not yet been moved to shelter. "It was a custom among Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts about the Passover [early spring], and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain" (Clarke's Commentary by Adam Clarke, vol.3, p.370). Clarke says the first rain commences in October or November. He adds, "As these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Savior was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields. The flocks were still in the fields by night. Also, Caesar Augustus had declared a census be made of the empire, and each citizen had to report to his hometown to register, Luke 2:1-5. That is probably why the inn was full with travelers. It is likely Augustus would have called a census in early fall after the crops were harvested and the people had money and time to travel before winter, especially to the Feast of Tabernacles.

- Ex 23:17 - Three times a year all males travel to Jerusalem.

### **The Son and the Sun—A Deliberate Mix**

Dies Natalis Invicti Solis was the pagan Roman holiday created by Emperor Aurelian during his 5 year reign (275 - 270 CE). Literally translated, it means "Day of Birth of the Unconquerable Sun", and was celebrated at the time of the Winter solstice.

Christmas was designed to compete with the heathen Roman feast of Saturnalia in honor of the sun deity Mithras. Mithras (Sun god) bore a remarkable similarity to the Biblical Messiah (Son of God) and the Mithras feast, like Christmas, was to commemorate his birth.

"No wonder the early Christians were disturbed by a deity who bore so close a resemblance to their own, and no wonder they considered him a mockery of the Messiah invented by Satan." These two popular movements were vying for the dominance in the Roman Empire—one pagan, the other "Christian". Historian and archaeologist Ernest Renan said, "If Christianity had been halted in its growth by some mortal illness, the world would have been Mithraist" (Marc Aurele, p. 597).

Caught in the middle were the Roman emperors, who wanted to unify and solidify their diverse empire. They didn't need divisive religious factions. Their motivation was political and not particularly religious. Therefore the Roman rulership saw great advantage in synchronizing and harmonizing these similar religious beliefs into one. The Romans knew that religion was a powerful means for assimilating other peoples and cultures. The Romans had Latinized the Greek Olympus, giving Latin names to Zeus (Jupiter), Hermes (Mercury), Poseidon (Neptune), and many others. The Syrian Baals all became Roman Jupiters, while cults of the Celts and Gauls were given Roman deity names. Although the syncretism (combining of diverse beliefs) into one was never more than a political benefit for the Romans, it had a profound effect on Christianity.

Emperor Constantine, a former pagan himself, was most influential blending Yahushua's teaching with pagan practices. Among other things, he would decree that worship for "Christianity" switch from the seventh day Sabbath to the first day of the week—Sun-day—the day the pagans worshiped the sun. In 364 CE, the Council of Laodicea officially decreed Sunday to become "the Lord's day" (29<sup>th</sup> Canon). "This tendency on the part of the Christians to meet Paganism halfway was very early developed," (Alexander Hislop in *The Two Babylon's*, p. 93). Interestingly, pagans gave up precious little of their own beliefs and practices. "And we find Tertullian, about the year 230, bitterly lamenting the inconsistency of the disciples of Christ in this respect, and contrasting it with the strict fidelity of the Pagans to their own superstition." Hislop quotes Tertullian, "By us who are strangers to Sabbaths and new moons, and festivals (Lev 23 Holy Days), once acceptable to Christ, the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the Brumalia, and Matronia are now frequented; gifts are carried to and fro, new year's day presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar."

### **Why a Death Celebration in Honor of a Birth?**

A "mass" is a celebration of the Eucharist, or the last supper, body and blood of Yahushua Messiah. Yet, "Christ-mass" is an observance supposedly in honor of His birth. Why? The answer is found with the secular ancients. Mithras was known as the Sun Deity. His birthday, Natalis Solis Invicti, means "birthday of the invincible sun." It came on December 25th, at the time of the winter solstice when the sun began its journey northward again.

The Dictionary of the Middle Ages explains how a mass came to be celebrated for the supposed birthday of the Messiah: "In patristic thought the Messiah had traditionally been associated with light or the sun, and the cult of the Sol Invictus, sanctioned by the Roman emperors since the late third century, presented a distinct threat to Christianity. To compete with this celebration the Roman church instituted a feast for the nativity of the Messiah, who was called the Sol Iustitiae (sun of righteousness or the law). Usually when Christians celebrated the natalis of a saint or martyr, it was his death or heavenly nativity, but in this case natalis was assigned to be the Messiah's earthly birth, in direct competition with the pagan natalis (birthday of Mithras)," pp.317-318.

### **Nimrod**

Nimrod married his own mother, whose name was Semiramis. After Nimrod's untimely death, his so-called mother-wife, Semiramis, propagated the doctrine of the survival of Nimrod as a spirit being. She claimed a full-grown evergreen tree sprang overnight from a dead tree stump, which symbolized the springing forth unto new life of the dead Nimrod. On each anniversary of his birth (she claimed) Nimrod would visit the evergreen tree and leave gifts upon it. December 25th was the birthday of Nimrod. Ancient "forefather" to Mithras, Nimrod began a counterfeit religion in the Book of Genesis that was to compete with the truth of the Bible. The Bible refers to it as the religion of Mystery Babylon. It is the ultimate false religion that will be destroyed when Yahushua comes to set up His throne on earth, Revelation 18. From Babylon sprang up all false worship, including the Mystery Cults, Mithraism, the Greek and Roman mythologies and modern Eastern religions. Babylon's false worship is found today in nearly all religions.

The Madonna and child theme, which is universal and evident in many religions, had its origin in Babylon. Nimrod's wife was Semiramis, the first deified queen of Babylon. She is also known variously as Diana, Aphrodite, Astarte, Rhea, and Venus. Her son was Tammuz, also called Bacchus, Adonis, and Osiris. Semiramis proclaimed he was the reincarnated Nimrod. He came back to life when the dead Yule log was cast into the fire and a pine tree appeared as the slain king-deity reborn at the winter solstice (*The Two Babylon's*, p. 98). "This son (Tammuz), thus worshiped in his mother's arms, was looked upon as invested with all the attributes, and called many of the names of the promised Messiah. Under the name of Mithras, he was worshiped as the

'Mediator' and head of the covenant of grace. He was styled Baal-berith, Lord of the Covenant," (Two Babylon's, p. 70).

- Rev 17:5, 18:2-4 – Babylon the Great, worldwide system.

### **Saturnalia: Forerunner of Modern Christmas**

- Ez 8:12-18 - Tammuz, facing east, the sun deity, sun worship.
- Deut 4:1-19, vs 19 – don't idolize the sun, moon, stars.

The Romans worshiped Tammuz as the sun deity Mithras in a special observance called the Saturnalia. The Saturnalia was named for Saturn, otherwise known as Cronus. Cronus is another alias of Tammuz. His wife and mother was Rhea (Semiramis). The Saturnalia was just another observance for Tammuz, the counterfeit redeemer. The Romans kept the Saturnalia in December, at the time of the winter solstice in honor of the returning sun. The festival lasted seven days. "All classes exchanged gifts, the commonest being waxed tapers and clay dolls (Encyclopedia Britannica, 11<sup>th</sup>)." These dolls were especially given to children. During the Saturnalia the social structure was turned upside down. Frequently the master would serve the slave, who could shout at his master and carry on as lustily as he pleased. Social permissiveness reigned. A King of the Saturnalia was chosen by lot. He "ruled" according to his wildest whim. His counterpart was Lord of the Misrule in medieval England and King of the Carnival or Rex in today's Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

Saturnalia was instituted by Romulus under the name Brumalia (from bruma= winter solstice), (Britannica, p. 232). "The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence," (Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, p.48). And so, the church established the birthday of the Savior to coincide with the heathen feast day." The Latin Church, placed it on the 25th of December, the very day on which the ancient Romans celebrated the feast of their goddess Bruma. In 350CE, Pope Julius I declared Yahushua's birth to be celebrated from then on (Clarke's Commentary and Catholic Encyclopedia, Martindale C. Christmas, 1908). The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church states: "December 25 was the date of the Roman pagan festival and was inaugurated as the birthday of the unconquered sun which at the winter solstice begins again to increase in light. The Church in Rome, unable to stamp out this pagan festival, spiritualized it as the Feast of the Nativity of the Sun of Righteousness. That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival, is beyond doubt." (Two Babylon's, p. 93).

### **Christmas-Saturnalia Travel North & West**

As the Roman Empire spread and as merchants traveled, the customs of Christmas went also. Cultures in northern Europe contributed some of their own customs, or twists on some old themes, nearly all of which had a basis in Babylonian paganism. The decorated tree, St. Nick, Yule log, wreaths, cookies, berries, mistletoe, bonfires, roast goose, roast pig, wassailing, caroling, and other familiar fixtures, were added or embellished for the Christmas-Saturnalia in various countries.

When the Protestant movement attempted to rid itself of the excesses of Roman Catholicism, there also came an opposition to Christmas that almost obliterated it entirely in England. In England, the Puritans could not tolerate this celebrating for which there was no Biblical sanction. Consequently, the Roundhead Parliament of 1643 outlawed the feasts of Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, along with the saints' days' celebrations. For a period of 12 years the staunch Puritans kept the shackles on Christmas, making it an ordinary day of business and even a day of fasting. Yet with the Restoration in 1660 the citizens reclaimed Christmas, but it was a different festival from what it

had been. The religious aspects were minimized or neglected, with the result that the secularization of the holiday was well under way.

In America, strong religious antagonism to the feast of Christmas lasted from 1620 to 1750 –130 years. In 1776 General George Washington surprise-attacked the German Hessians on December 25th, winning a critical Revolutionary War battle by defeating the Christmas-celebrating, drunken German mercenaries. Obviously, Christmas was not an important celebration for the father of our country. Most of today's popular Christmas customs are rooted in ancient rites of pagan peoples who worshiped the sun, green trees, and life.<sup>1</sup>

### **Reindeer**

The origin of Santa's reindeer is relatively new. They were first devised by Clement Clarke Moore (or Major Henry Livingstone Jr) in the famous 19th century poem "A Visit from Saint Nicholas", better known today as "The Night before Christmas". Here he describes Saint Nicholas being pulled by a team of eight reindeer. Rudolph was created in 1939 by Robert L. May. May worked for the Montgomery Ward chain of department stores which used to give away coloring books and other gifts to children over Christmas.

### **The Christmas Tree**

Evergreens historically symbolize immortality and the continuity of life. Nineteenth-century German immigrants to the United States were among the first to use a recognizable Christmas tree in this country, so it is often assumed that the Christmas tree hails from the traditions of northern Europe. It is more authentically a product of much older southern traditions. Ancient Egyptians viewed the evergreen tree as a fertility symbol. During the winter solstice they decorated their homes with palm fronds. Romans would later use boughs of fir.

In the Old Testament an indispensable part of Baal worship involved the asherah, a sacred tree stem or pole. These asherah were found in high places among the Canaanites, or in what the King James Version calls "groves." (wooden image in other translations) Typically these sites included an altar and a stone pillar (stone-worship).

- Ex 34:13, Deut 12:3-5, Deut 16:21-22 – grove=asherah=H842=image of Astarte, Phoenician goddess (Semiramis), don't plant groves with images.
- 1 Kings 14:15, 16:33 – H842=Astarte
- 2 Chron 34:1-8 – Josiah purged the land of idols, grove=H842=asherah
- Isa 17:7-10, Mic 5:12-15 – H842=Astarte

Rather than condemn and destroy this Canaanite Baal worship they found in the Promised Land, the Israelites, as was their custom, chose instead to indulge in it. It didn't matter whether YHWH hated it or not. Israel wanted to be like her neighbors and keep their pagan customs. And because of that YHWH allowed Israel to be taken into captivity and nearly destroyed.

- 2 Kings 17:1-18 – the ways of the heathen, H842=Astarte, always used as idolatry reference (13 times).
- Jer 10:2-5 – deck it with gold and silver.

It is a historical fact that trees were decorated and adored by ancient people in honor of pagan deities. The modern Christmas tree traces to Europe. The Celts practiced an oak tree worship ceremony that dates to the Druids. Sacred groves were common among the ancient Germans (The

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<sup>1</sup> Selections from - [www.yaiy.org/literature/UntoldChristmas.html](http://www.yaiy.org/literature/UntoldChristmas.html)

Golden Bough, p. 58). How the evergreen tree was popularized for Christmas in Europe comes by way of the legend told of St. Boniface as an 8th century missionary in Germany. "He was trying to stamp out the pagan rite of sacrificing people to the oak tree. He led his followers into a forest at Yule time. Showing them a fir tree, he said it pointed straight upward to the Messiah. 'Take this tree into your homes,' he said, 'as a sign of your new worship [Christianity] and celebrate Christ's power no more in the forest with shameful rites, but in the sanctity of your homes with laughter and love" (Compton's Encyclopedia and Fact Finder, vol. 5, p. 326). Rather than abolishing what was heathen-based, ceremonial rites were synchronized into Yahushua's worship.

Even during the winter solstice, Fir trees were always green, symbolic of life, and to the ancients represented immortality in a dead world. They were often set on fire to portray and beckon back the sun. Ultimately, the Christmas evergreen springs from that old Babylonian, Nimrod. It represents the resurrected and reincarnated man-deity. "Now the Yule Log is the dead stock of Nimrod, deified as the sun-god, the Christmas tree is Nimrod redivivus (come back to life) – the slain god came back to life again," (The Two Babylon's, p. 98).

Yule (from huel meaning wheel) was a Germanic and Celtic sun feast in the period December-January which became absorbed into Christmas. It commemorated the turn of the sun and the lengthening of the day. It was a pagan festival in Europe from ancient times, and was adapted to Christmas through the Yule log—a legacy of Nimrod. The Christmas tree wasn't found in America until 1821, brought by Pennsylvania Germans. Christmas wasn't recognized until 1836, when Alabama became the first state in America to make it a legal holiday.

Although tree decorations were common in pagan practices, tinsel, ornaments and lights are a relatively new addition to the Christmas tree presentation dating to 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany.

- Gen 2:9 – trees in the original garden.
- Lev 23:40 – palm trees to make booths for FOT.

### **Santa Claus**

"Santa Claus" is a corruption of the name "St. Nicholas," a Roman Catholic bishop who lived in the 5th century (Encyclopedia Britannica, volume 19, pages 648-649). A supposedly generous individual, he became the patron saint of a number of countries and cities, as well as merchants, bakers, mariners, and children. To the children he developed into a giver of gifts on the eve of his feast day, December 6. The Dutch and Flemish called it the Feast of Sinterklaas (a form of Sint Nikolaas), hence the anglicized corruption, "Santa Claus." A legend of his surreptitious bestowal of dowries on the three daughters of an impoverished citizen is said to have originated the old custom of giving presents in secret on the eve of St. Nicholas (Dec. 6), subsequently transferred to Christmas day.

During the Protestant Reformation, the St. Nicholas image was nearly banished permanently to the North Pole. Taking his place was a more secular figure known as Christmas Man, Father Christmas, or Pope Noel. The Dutch clung tenaciously to St. Nick, although his religious attributes died. When the Pennsylvania Dutch came to America in the eighteenth century they brought with them the custom of the Christkindl. This "Christ Child" supposedly brought gifts for children on Christmas eve, riding a mule loaded with presents. His name was changed by the English settlers to Kriss Kringle (secret Santa). The notion of his North Pole home was contrived through Scandinavian or Russian tales about north-dwelling wizards.

Pro 22:6 - train a child into the way he should go.



## **Gift Giving**

The practice of gift giving also rests with the ancient heathen. The Romans gave gifts to one another at the Saturnalia merrymaking (Encyclopedia Britannica). They also exchanged gifts at the Roman New Year.

- Math 2:11 - wise men never came to manger, went to house to see Yahushua.

The gifts they gave were not birthday gifts, but gifts that were traditionally given to a King by visitors in eastern cultures. They recognized him as born King of the Jews.

- Rev 11:8-12 – only place gifts are exchanged.

**Mistletoe** is a Druidic survival that was thought to cure everything from epilepsy to infertility, the wax berries of this parasite were thought to be a sex stimulant. Mistletoe has long been associated with both magic and fertility. Sprigs of mistletoe were once fastened over the conjugal bed on the wedding night.

**Holly's** green leaves and red berries were respected in medieval times as protection against witchcraft and the evil eye; a good luck charm for men.

**Wreaths** with their round shape symbolize the returning sun at the winter solstice, they depict the sun's comeback victory over darkness and death (Nimrod reincarnates to Tammuz).

**Christmas candles** trace to the burning Yule log and the reincarnation of Nimrod.

**Ham** is eaten because Tammuz (Adonis) was thought to have been killed by a boar. In his memory, pagans sacrificed and ate swine at the Saturnalia.

**Christmas cookies** trace back to the cakes that were made to the Queen of Heaven (Semiramis) in Jer. 44:19. Round ones were made for the Saturnalia and Brumalia to symbolize the returning sun.

**Yule Log** can be traced back to the days of the pagan Norsemen, or Vikings. To celebrate their belief in the powers of the gods, the Norsemen held festivals. The father of the Gods was Odin or Thor, commonly called the Yule Father (Yule referred to the sun). The Nordic Yule Log Ceremony was a festival celebrating the sun during the winter solstice. Originally, the Yule Log was burned in honor of the gods and to bring good luck in the coming year. The log was usually from one of the largest trees that could be found. It was so massive that to haul it a team of horses or oxen were needed.

**Oscilla** is a memento/picture/angel figurine image hung on a tree and moves with the wind. During Saturnalia oscilla were sometimes mementos of young kids. Oscilla were associated with ancient child sacrifice rituals of the pagans during Saturnalia. Oscilla also were a form of remembrance of the Roman god Bacchus (same as Dionysus-Greek god), the god of grape harvest and ritual madness.

- Ps 106:37-41 – Israelites entered Palestine, child sacrifice, worshiped Moloch, precursor of Saturn/Kronos.

Eusebius: For what can be a greater proof of madness, than to offer human sacrifice, to pollute every city, and even their own houses, with kindred blood? Do not the Greeks themselves attest this, and is not all history filled with records of the same impiety? The Phœnicians devoted their best beloved and only children as an annual sacrifice to Saturn. At Heliopolis three victims were

daily offered to Juno, for whom king Amoses, impressed with the atrocity of the practice, commanded the substitution of an equal number of waxen figures. At Sparta they immolated (sacrificed) human beings to Mars. Diodorus affirms that two hundred of the noblest youths were sacrificed to Saturn by the Libyan people, and that three hundred more were voluntarily offered by their own parents (Eusebius. Oration in Praise of Constantine, thirtieth anniversary of his reign. Chapter 13, Verses 7,8).

### **New Years - The Feast of Circumcision – Holyday of Janus**

New Year's Day did not become a holy day for the Roman Catholic Church until 487 CE when it was declared to be the Feast of the Circumcision. This gave the Catholic Church an eight-day festival with a 'holy day' at the beginning and the end, similar in that respect to the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34-35). It was determined that if Yahushua was born on December 25th he would have been circumcised eight days later (Luke 2:21) on January 1st, hence the rationale for New Year's being 'the Feast of the Circumcision'. There is no indication in the Bible that Yahushua's circumcision should be celebrated.

- Lk 2:21 – only verse that mentions Yahushua's circumcision.

### **Conclusion**

- Deut 12:1-4 – trees and groves.
- Deut 12:29-32 – don't do in like manner, don't add or diminish.
- Amos 5:21-27 – YHWH hates idols.
- Mt 7:21-24 – hears my sayings and does them.
- Mk 7:6-9 – tradition of men
- Jo 8:31-32 - the truth shall make you free.
- 2 Co 6:15-18 – idols and Yahushua don't mix, come out from among them.
- Ex 20:1-6 – no idolatry.
- Pro 14:12 – a way that seems right.