



# The Greatest Story NEVER Told



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**Little Tommy Jones was wide awake, despite the fact that he had gone to bed nearly an hour before.** In his mind were visions of a little old man with snow white hair and beard, dressed in a bright red suit. He was being pulled through the air by eight reindeer, in of all things, a sleigh. (This bothered Tommy. Why the sled? You see, Tommy lived by San Francisco and it was 50° at 8:00 P.M.) But nevertheless, it was Christmas Eve . . . and Tommy had helped his parents decorate the “Christmas tree.”

He saw his sister putting the “Christmas wreaths” in the windows, and the “Yule log” burned briskly in the fireplace. Every time Tommy's mom walked under the “mistletoe”, his dad would hug her and kiss her. It seems Daddy always was like this on Christmas Eve. He was loud and boisterous and filled with “Christmas Cheer” (that's what Mommy called it). All Tommy could think of was, “what will Santa Claus bring me for Christmas this year?”

Meanwhile, at the little church on the corner, people were pouring into the building to celebrate Christmas Mass, and one could see a Christmas tree, beautifully decorated near the altar. Downtown, the community's only tavern was filled with men and women laughing, hugging, kissing and yes, some even fighting. After all, this was Christmas Eve, a time to *really* celebrate.

All these scenes we have depicted for you are in “honor” of the birth of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus the Christ) on December 25th.

***Does Christmas really celebrate the birthday of Jesus?*** Was he in fact actually born on December 25th? Why do so many celebrate their saviour's birth by getting drunk? Should we observe someone's birthday by giving gifts to one another? How did Santa Claus get involved with the birth of Jesus? Why all the emphasis on Christmas tree, yule logs and wreaths?

A great and important event occurred nearly 2,000 years ago in ancient Palestine. It was the birth of our Saviour, Yeshua our Messiah (Jesus Christ). We all know the story as told in the gospels. Joseph and Mary had gone to Bethlehem at the “**decree of Caesar Augustus that all the world should be**

**taxed (enrolled), and this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, and all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem . . . to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.”** (Luke 2:1-5)

The story is familiar to us. There was no room at the inn, they spent the night in what we would call a barn, and there Mary gave birth to Jesus. His bed was a manger filled with hay. The attendants were the animals “lowing softly” as they settled themselves for their evening sleep. Out of town, in the fields around Bethlehem, shepherds were spending the night in open fields with their flocks. (Obviously, it was at a time *before* the shepherds would bring their flocks into the barns, *before* the cold rainy season of December and January.)

**“As the shepherds watched over their flocks by night they suddenly saw angels appear in the sky, and the angel of Yahweh came upon them, and the glory of Yahweh shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angels said unto them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”** (Luke 2:8-11) As those shepherds rejoiced that night, so should we rejoice because Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour was born. It is through Christ that we have salvation.

*When did this event take place?* Actually, no one knows the actual date. However, most “Christian people” all over the world commemorate it on December 25th, and they call it Christmas, (from Christ Mass or the “Mass of Christ”).

As stated in the introduction, most Christian denominations hold special services. It is a time of activity and good will, sometimes starting right after Halloween (at least for the merchants). Many people consider it the best season of all, and they look forward to it with great anticipation.

To Christians who really study their Bible there are questions: *Is this*

*observance of Christ's birth as portrayed by the world, really taught in the Bible?* How does one link “Santa Claus” with Jesus Christ? Why the decorations and the Christmas tree? Since we don't really know the exact date of Christ's birth, why did we choose December 25th? Who authorized it? Was it God? If he did, for what reasons? It is our intent to answer these questions and to determine just what our attitudes, as Christians, should be.

*Think for a moment.* Few people know why we do the things we do and where our customs come from. We live in a world filled with customs and we grow up practicing many of them. Most Christian religions have supposed Christmas to be the most important of our Christian holidays. Without question we have blindly followed its observance, and have supposed its observance to be one of the principal teachings of the New Testament.

We *assume* that Jesus was born on December 25th, and that God in His Word has set this day apart as the most important Christian festival. We exchange gifts because the three wise men presented gifts to the Christ child. Did you know the Bible nowhere states there were three wise men? Did you know those wise men never appeared at the manger on Christ's birth night, *but actually many months and perhaps even two years later?* They didn't appear at the manger, but Christ's “house” (Matthew 2:11). Since we look to Christ as the author of our salvation, perhaps we should take a deeper look into his birth. We often hear the slogan “*Jesus is the reason for the season*” or “*Let's put Christ back into Christmas!*” Maybe we should investigate just how Christ got into Christmas in the first place.

Most astute Bible scholars will agree that Christmas as celebrated today is of pagan origin. *Earl W. Count*, Professor of Anthropology at Hamilton College, in his book, “*4000 Years of Christmas*” states: “*We do not know its beginning . . . we do not really know when the Christ child it venerates was born: or the time and place when Christmas was first celebrated: or exactly how it was that, over the centuries, a bishop saint of Asia Minor, and a pagan god of the Germans merged to become Santa Claus*”.

“*Although the Christmas story centers in the Christ child of Bethlehem, it begins so long before his coming that we find its hero arriving on the scene after*

*more than half of the time of the story has gone by. Christmas began over 4000 years ago, as the festival which renewed the world for another year. The 12 days of Christmas, the bright fires and probably the yule log; the giving of presents; the carnivals with their floats; their merry makings and clownings; the mummers who sing and play from house to house, the feasting; the church processions with their lights and song all these and more began three centuries before Christ was born. And they celebrated the arrival of a new year.” (ibid., page 18)*

*“For that day (25th of December) was **sacred**, not only to the pagan Romans but to a religion from Persia which, in those days, was one of Christianity's strongest rivals.”*

*This Persian religion was Mithraism, whose followers worshipped the sun, and celebrated its return to strength on that day. The church finally succeeded in taking the merriment, the greenery, the lights, and gifts from Saturn and giving them to the “babe of Bethlehem.” (ibid., page 27)*

*“It happened that the date (December 25th) did fall in the midst of the Saturnalia. Far from being an invention to compete against Roman and Persian paganism, the birthday of Christ ran the danger of being swallowed up in pagan merrymaking. The (church) fathers tried strenuously to keep Christmas strictly a churchly celebration. It was part of their unremitting struggle to break the grip of the pagan gods upon the people. And as they broke, Romans became Christians . . . but the Saturnalia remained” (ibid., page 28).*

*“When was Jesus born? **No one knows**. December 25th is no more than the historical date of his birth than is any other” (page 50). “Christmas, as we have seen, is of the Mediterranean . . . for the Mediterranean world already had not merely centuries, but millennia behind it, when Christ was born; and even the religion which he founded had traveled several centuries before it discovered its need of Christmas” (page 86).*

*“Renewal and rebirth: After 4000 years, the festival that has grown about the birth of the Christ child remains an affirmation that all things can be made anew” (ibid, page 91).*

*Do you know that Jesus was not born in the winter season?* Luke 2:8 states “**and there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.**” This never could have occurred in the month of December in Palestine. The shepherds usually brought their flocks from the mountain sides and fields and corralled them not later than mid-October, to protect them from the cold rainy season that followed. The Bible states in the Song of Solomon 2:11, Ezra 10:9 and 13, that winter was a rainy season not allowing shepherds to remain in open fields at night.

*The Adam Clarke Commentary*, Volume 5, page 347 states: “*It was an ancient custom among the Jews of those days to send their sheep to the fields, and deserts about Passover (early spring) and bring them home at commencement of the first rain.*” The authority continues, “*during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day, as . . . the first rains began early in the month of Marchesvan, which answers to part of our October and November (begins mid-October) we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole summer, and 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 Lord was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields by night. On this very ground, the nativity in December should be given up. The feeding of the flocks by night in the fields is a chronological fact . . . see the quotations from the Talmudists in Lightfoot*”.

**Do you know there is not one word in the New Testament, nor for that fact, in the whole Bible telling us that we should observe Christmas?** The Christians of the first century, under the inspired teaching of Paul and Peter and the other apostles never observed it. What then is the origin of Christmas? Would you believe it came to us through the Roman Catholic Church, whom God calls in his Word, “The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth”? And that, my friend, is where it gets its authority as a religious holiday. Why not examine the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, published by that church, under the caption “Christmas?” You will find: “**Christmas was *not* among the earliest festivals of the church! . . . The first evidence of the feast is from Egypt.**” “**Pagan customs centering around the January Calends gravitated to Christmas**”

and, further, we find this truth acknowledged: *The Encyclopedia Britannica* says: “*Christmas . . . (i.e., the Mass of Christ)*”. “*Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church.*”

*The Encyclopedia Americana* says “**Christmas, . . . it was, according to many authorities, not celebrated in the first centuries of the Christian church, as the Christian's usage in general was to celebrate the death of remarkable persons rather than their birth . . .**” (The *kiddush*, a bread and wine ceremony, which is instituted by New Testament authority, is a memorial of the death of Christ.) “**. . . A feast was established in memory of this event (Christ's birth) in the fourth century. In the fifth century, the Western church ordered it to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed.**”

So we ask ourselves, “*How did the pagan custom get into the church?*” Most recognized authorities show us that Christmas was not observed by the early church for the first two or three hundred years, a period longer than Canada has existed as a nation! Its origin begins in the western segment of the Roman Church in the **fourth century A.D.** However, it was not until the fifth century that the Roman Church ordered it to be celebrated as an official Christian festival.

In the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* we read “*How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia (December 25th) following the Saturnalia (December 17-24), and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the “new sun” . . . cannot be accurately determined. The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence. The pagan festival with its riot and merry-making was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and manner. Christian teachers of the West and Near East protested against the unseemly frivolity, while Christians of Mesopotamia accused their western brethren of idolatry and sun worship for adopting as Christian the pagan festival*”.

If Christmas came from the Roman Catholics and they received it from

paganism, where then did the pagans get it? What was the origin of Christmas? Would you believe its roots begin just after the flood?

Nimrod, the grandson of Ham and the great-grandson of Noah was the real founder of the Babylonian system that has gripped the earth ever since. It was a system of organized competition, of man-ruled governments and empires, based on a competitive and greedy profit-making economic system, which has persisted to this very day.

Ancient writings speak of this man Nimrod, who started a great, organized world apostasy against God, which dominates the world even now. He was so wicked it is said that he married his own mother, Semiramis. After Nimrod was killed, his mother-wife 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 into 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 supposed birthday of Nimrod. *This is the real origin of the Christmas tree.*

### **Mother and Child Theme**

Through her scheming and designing, Semiramis became the Babylonian “Queen of Heaven”, and Nimrod, under many other names, became the “Divine Son of Heaven”. Through the generations, in this idolatrous worship, Nimrod also became the false messiah, son of Baal, the sun-god. In this false Babylonian religious system, *the mother and child* (Semiramis and the reborn Nimrod) became chief objects of worship.

This worship of mother and child spread throughout the world. Only the names varied because of differing languages. In Asia they were known as Cybele and Diorus. In Rome they were Fortuna and Jupiter. In Egypt their names were Isis and Osiris. Long before the birth of Jesus Christ, the counterpart of the Madonna can be found throughout China, Tibet and Japan.

Their worship was well known among the ancient Israelites. The prophet Jeremiah talks about “cakes” that were made and offered in her honour (see



Jeremiah 7:16-18).

Over the past centuries, the evolution of the Christmas celebration has become more and more evident. People in the 20th century give little thought to the origin of popular festivities, but rather, take them for granted. Let's seek out the origins of several time honored customs of the Christmas season.

### **Yule Log**

In the beginning of this article we stated that the “Yule log” was burning in the fireplace. The yule log is in reality the “sun log.” Yule means *wheel*, in this case, applied as the pagan symbol of the sun. Today, professing Christians speak of the sacred yuletide season. There is nothing sacred about it! ***The symbols come from rank heathenism.*** (Holly berries were also considered sacred to the sun god). In “The Two Babylons”, written by Alexander Hislop, we read, **“The 25th of December, the day that was observed at Rome as the day when the victorious god reappeared on earth, was held as the *Natalis Invicti Solis*, “The Birthday of the Unconquered Sun”. Now the yule log is the dead stock of Nimrod, deified as the sun god, but cut down by his enemies”...(pg.98).**

### **The Christmas Tree**

“The Christmas tree”, now so common among us, was equally common in pagan Rome and pagan Egypt. In Egypt that tree was the palm tree. In Rome it was the fir. The palm tree denoting the pagan messiah as Baal-Tamar (Judges 20:33), the fir referring to him as Baal-Berith. The mother of Adonis, the sun god, a great mediatorial divinity, was mystically said to have been changed into a tree and when in that state to have brought forth her divine son. If the mother was a tree, the son must have been recognized as “the Man of the branch” and this accounts for the putting of the yule log into the fire on Christmas Eve, and the appearance of the Christmas tree the next morning”. **“...the Christmas tree is Nimrod redivius - the slain god comes to life again”.** (*The Two Babylons* - Hislop, page 97, 98).

## Mistletoe

Let the reader look at the practice of kissing under the mistletoe. “The mistletoe bough in the Druidic superstition, which was derived from Babylon, was a representation of the Messiah, “the man of the branch.” The mistletoe was regarded as a divine branch, a branch that came from heaven, and grew upon a tree that sprang out of the earth. Thus by engrafting the celestial branch into the earthly tree, heaven and earth, which sin had severed, were joined together. Thus the mistletoe bough became the token of divine reconciliation to man, the kiss being the well known token of pardon and reconciliation”. (*The Two Babylons* - Hislop, page 99).

*The Encyclopedia Americana* says: “The holly, the mistletoe and the yule log . . . are relics of pre-Christian times.”

## Gifts

The custom of giving gifts at Christmas time can be associated with the gifts presented to Christ by the wise men of the East; but in reality, at least so far as the English speaking people are concerned, it is derived from an old heathen custom (*The New Standard Encyclopedia, article - Christmas*).

The wise men gave their gifts to Christ, but did not exchange gifts with each other! The gifts presented to Christ were to a king, **because of his royalty, and not because of his birthday!** He was a king, and the people of the East never approached the presence of a king without a present in their hands. (*Adam Clarke Commentary, Volume 5, Matthew 2:11, page 34*).

This was not a new custom being introduced by the wise men, but they were merely following an old ancient eastern custom of presenting gifts to a king when coming into his presence. “**Jesus was king of the Jews**”. (Matthew 2:2).

## The Christmas Wreath

In *Frederick J. Haskins Book*, found in many public libraries, entitled “*Answers to Questions*” we find- “*The use of Christmas wreaths is believed by*

*authorities to be traceable to the pagan customs of decorating buildings and places of worship at the feast which took place at the same time as Christmas. The Christmas tree is from Egypt and its origin dates from a period long anterior to the Christmas era.”*

### **Santa Claus**

The name “Santa Claus” is actually another form of the name “Saint Nicholas”, a Roman Catholic bishop who lived in the 4th century.

In the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th Edition, Volume 19, pages 648-649 you will read “*St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra . . . a saint honored by the Greeks and Latins on the 6th of December . . . 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 (December 6) subsequently transferred to Christmas Day. Hence, the association of Christmas and Santa Claus*”. It was the work of three American men that gave St. Nicholas the personality of our red cheeked white bearded jolly old Santa Claus. (*Ickes*, Chapter 3, *Christmas*, page 57).

### **Kris Kringle**

“*From the German people were to come those most universal of Christmas customs: the Christmas tree, and the portly beneficent Kris Kringle, known as Santa Claus*” (*Christmas Day: The Complete Book of American Holidays*—Myers, page 314).

“*Gradually the Presbyterians, Quakers and Puritans accepted such customs as the Christmas tree, the giving of small gifts and the Christmas feast. But they spoke violently against the corruption of the Christkindl, (the Christ child) into Kris Kringle. After Kris Kringle was fully assimilated, there was much concern among all religious groups about the non-religious trend of the holiday*” (*Christmas Day: The Complete Book of American Holidays* - Meyers, page 316).

“*The observance of December 25 (as a Christian festival) only dates from*

*the fourth century and is due to assimilation with the Mithraic festival of the birth of the sun” (World Popular Encyclopedia, Volume 3).*

*“Gradually a number of prevailing practices of the (heathen) nations into which Christ came, were assimilated and were combined with the religious ceremonies surrounding Christmas. The assimilation of such practices generally represented efforts by Christians to transform or absorb otherwise pagan practices.” (The Zonderian Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Volume 1, page 805)*

*“The pagan symbolism was taken over and, in Christian view, elevated. Jesus became the “sun of justice” and the “sun of righteousness” (Celebrations: The Complete Book of American Holidays - Myers, page 310).*

*“Our annual Christian festival (Christmas) is nothing but a continuation under a different name of this old solar festivity (Saturnalia)” (The New Golden Bough - Fraser and Foster, page 653).*

*“Christmas was generally celebrated in the West only after the triumph of Constantine when the time of Christ's birth was reckoned with the Day of the Unconquered Sun on 25 December” (From Christ to Constantine - Smith, pages 150-151).*

*“The assimilation of Christ to the sun god, as sun of righteousness, was widespread in the fourth century and was furthered by Constantine's legislation on Sunday, which is not unrelated to the fact that the sun god was the titular divinity of his family” (A History of the Christian Church: Revised - Walker, Section 13, pages 154-155).*

So why are the majority of professing Christians running around and telling the unconverted and religious people around them, that we need to “put Christ back into Christmas”? Put Christ back into Christmas?

**It's impossible!** The factual, historical and scriptural truth of the matter, is that, **He was never there to begin with!!** The apostate Roman Catholic church, which accepted unconverted, unregenerate peoples with open arms (and open

coffers), assimilated Christ into her already pagan belief system, in order to continue the “winter solstice festival” and appease the heathen masses without disruption or interruption. Yeshua (Jesus) was *never* in the festival, nor has he ever, nor does he now or ever will, condone it.

### **Yahweh Issues A Strong Warning**

After reading this far, some people may still feel, “Who cares!” “We're not worshipping the tree!” “We celebrate it for different reasons.” “God cares more about our hearts and attitudes to other people”. “Look at all the 'good' that takes place at this time of year.” But, more importantly, we should be asking ourselves, “What does the Almighty, Eternal Yahweh think about all of this?” Does it matter to Him if we introduce pagan customs and observances into our worship? Is it o.k. as long as we do it in the name of Christ and give it the “stamp” of church approval?

Many centuries ago, Yahweh issued a strong warning to Israel about inquiring after and serving heathen gods. Notice in Deuteronomy 12:30-32: **“Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them (heathen nations), after that they be destroyed from before thee: and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, how did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the lord thy God: for every abomination to the lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods . . . what things so ever I command you observe to do it: Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it”**.

In fact, if you study the entire history of the people of Israel in the Scriptures, you will find that Yahweh repeatedly dealt with the stubborn nation of Israel for incorporating pagan and false heathen customs into the true worship.

“Thus saith Yahweh, LEARN NOT THE WAY OF THE HEATHEN...for the custom of the people is vain (useless, foolish) for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.” (Jeremiah 10:2).

Did God change His view about these pagan customs over the centuries? “I am the Lord, I change not”. (Malachi 3:6).

In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus said the apostles were to go to the people of all nations “**teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.**” Did He teach them to observe Christmas? Impossible.

Yeshua tells us in John 13:15 “**for I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.**”

In Leviticus 23, we find the holy days that Yahweh commanded to be kept forever. These are **His** (not the Jews or gentiles) festivals and a very important part of Christian worship.

Christ and His apostles observed these holy days, and so did the early church. Christ kept the Passover since he was a child, and became our Passover lamb, (1Cor.5:7,8). He preached at the Feast of Tabernacles on the Last Great Day, (John 7:37). After his resurrection he kept the remaining days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the apostles (John 20:19). He told them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the holy spirit of God, which would be given as a permanent, abiding gift (John 14:17), on the day of the Feast of Pentecost, which he knew the disciples would still be observing (Acts 2:1). Converted Jews and Gentiles alike kept the same holy days.

Even after the death of Christ, the epistles of Paul show us that the early church **continued to observe** these annual holy days. **Nowhere** will you find any command by Jesus to observe his birth, or Christmas. (Write for our free booklet entitled, “Observances in the New Covenant”).

Christmas and a host of other pagan holidays and customs (Good Friday, Easter, Sunday worship, Valentines Day, Halloween etc. etc.) have come directly from paganism, and the authority of the Catholic church, but the annual holy days of Leviticus 23, which the majority of professing Christians know very little about, have come from Yahweh. Did you know that Yahweh's spring

and fall holidays teach us many wonderful things about His plan of redemption for all of mankind? Let's forsake the pagan holidays of the world and observe the true holy days of Yah.

The choice is ours. Will we be man-pleasers or God-pleasers?

“Study to show thyself approved unto Yahweh...” (2Tim.2:15).

May Yahweh help you as you study His Word and seek to do His will.