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*the Birth series*

## **The Origin of Christmas**

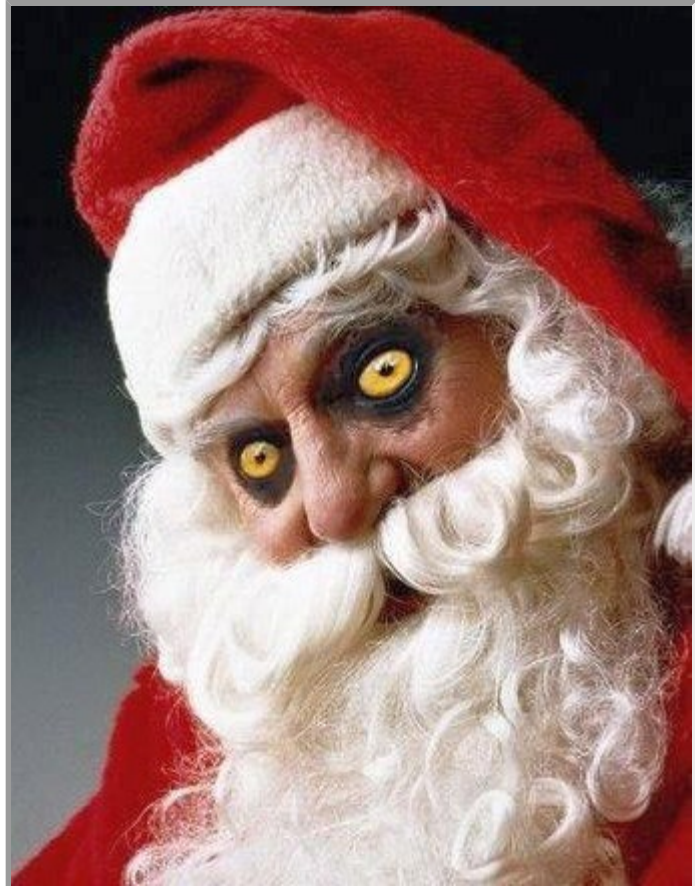
by haRold Smith

a citizen of the Commonwealth (Ephesians 2:19)

**"LEARN NOT** the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, **for the customs of the peoples are vanity**. A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move. Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk..."

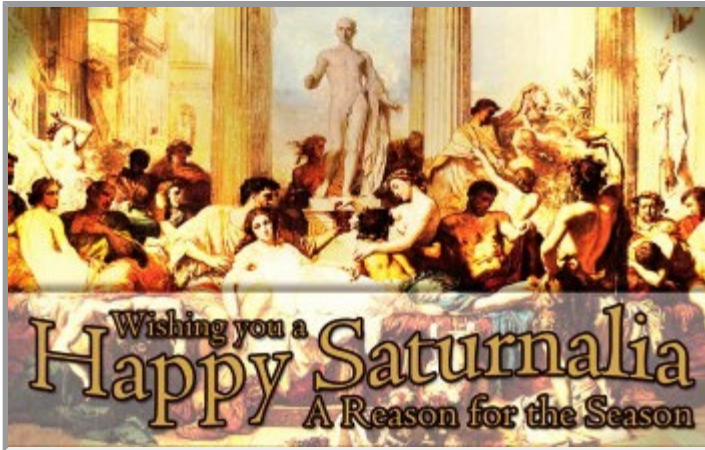
Jeremiah 10:1-5

Roman pagans first introduced the holiday of **Saturnalia** (click on highlighted words to view content), a week long period of lawlessness celebrated each year 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 25th, Roman authorities believed the forces of darkness were destroyed by brutally murdering this innocent man or woman.



**...just where does this guy come from?**

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 bakeries during the Christmas season as "gingerbread men"). In the 4th century CE, Christianity (as was their practice) co-opted the Saturnalia festival into its rituals, hoping to bring 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. The problem was that there was nothing intrinsically Christian about Saturnalia. To remedy this, these Christian leaders named Saturnalia's concluding day, December 25th, to be Jesus' birthday (the first mention of a Nativity feast appears in the Philocalian calendar, a Roman document from 354 CE, which lists December 25th as the day of Jesus' birth). Christians had little success, however, in trying to refine 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" (Increase Mather, *A Testimony against Several Prophan and Superstitious Customs, Now Practiced by Some in New England*, London, 1687, p. 35. See also Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas: A Cultural History of America's Most Cherished Holiday*, New York: Vintage Books, 1997, p. 4.). Because of its known pagan origin, Christmas was banned by the Puritans and its observance was illegal in Massachusetts between 1659 and 1681 (ibid, Nissenbaum, p. 3). However, Christmas was and still is celebrated by most Christians - ignorant of its sordid history.



Some of the most depraved customs of the Saturnalia carnival were intentionally revived by the Catholic Church in 1466 when Pope Paul II, for the amusement of his Roman citizens, forced Jews to race naked through the streets of the city. An eyewitness account reports, "Before they were to run, the Jews were richly fed, so as to make the race more difficult for them and at the same time more amusing for spectators. They ran... amid Rome's taunting shrieks and peals of laughter, while the Holy Father stood upon a richly ornamented balcony and laughed heartily" (David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001, p. 74).

As part of the Saturnalia carnival throughout the 18th and 19th centuries CE, rabbis of the ghetto in Rome were forced to wear clownish outfits and march through the city streets to the jeers of the crowd, pelted by a variety of missiles. When the Jewish community of Rome sent a petition in 1836 to Pope Gregory XVI begging him to stop the annual Saturnalia abuse of the Jewish community, he responded, "It is not opportune to make any innovation" (ibid, Kertzer, p. 33, 74-5). On December 25, 1881, Christian leaders whipped the Polish masses into Antisemitic frenzies that led to riots across the country. In Warsaw, 12 Jews were brutally murdered, huge numbers maimed, and many Jewish women were raped. Two million rubles worth of property was destroyed.

#### **The Origin of the Christmas Tree ---**

Just as early Christians recruited Roman pagans by associating Christmas with the Saturnalia, so also were worshipers of the Asheira cult and its offshoots recruited by **the Church** sanctioning "Christmas Trees" (Clement Miles, *Christmas Customs and Traditions: Their History and Significance*, New York: Dover Publications, 1976, pp. 178, 263-271). Pagans had long worshipped trees in the forest, or brought them into their homes and decorated them, and this observance was adopted and painted with a Christian veneer by the Church in spite of the clear restriction of **Jeremiah 10** at the top of this article proclaiming such practice as idolatry. There are many who protest by saying they do not "worship" trees - even as they bow before the tree when retrieving a present from under its branches. Scripture teaches in **Deuteronomy 11:16** that what we give ourselves to is what we serve and what we serve is who we worship. Yeshua upheld this principle in **Matthew 4:10**. In the same manner as what we eat and digest becomes a part of us, so does what we give ourselves to define who we are (see what it means **To Be Free**).

#### **The Origin of Christmas Presents ---**

In pre-Christian Rome, the emperors compelled their most despised citizens to bring offerings and gifts during the Saturnalia (in December) and Kalends (in January). Later, this ritual expanded to include gift-giving among the general populace. The Catholic Church gave this custom a Christian flavor by re-rooting it in the supposed gift-giving of Saint Nicholas (ibid, Miles, pp. 276-279).

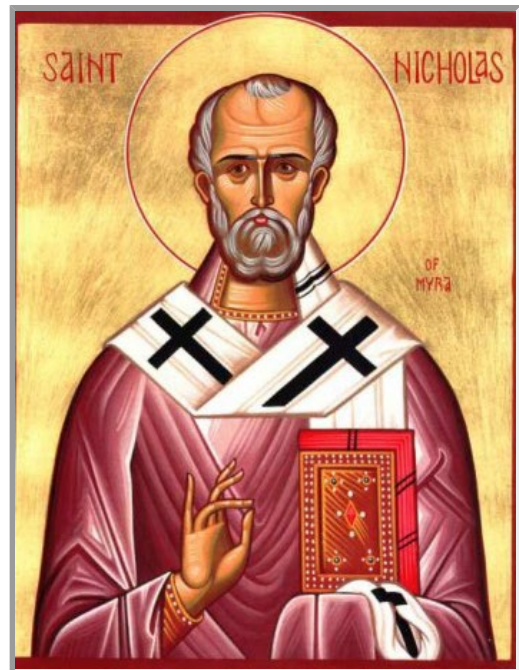
#### **The Origin of Mistletoe ---**

Norse mythology recounts how the god Balder was killed using a mistletoe arrow by his rival god Hoder while fighting for the female Nanna. Druid rituals use mistletoe to poison their human sacrificial victim (ibid, Miles, p. 273). The Christian custom of "kissing under the mistletoe" is a later synthesis of the sexual license of Saturnalia with the Druidic sacrificial cult (ibid, Miles, p. 274-5).

later

### The Origin of Santa Claus ---

Saint Nicholas was born in Parara, Turkey in 270 CE and became Bishop of Myra. He died in 345 CE on December 6th, only being named a saint in the 19th century. He was among the most senior bishops who convened [the Council of Nicaea](#) in 325 CE and created the New Testament. The text they produced portrayed Jews as "the children of the devil" who sentenced Jesus to death. In 1087, a group of sailors who idolized Nicholas moved his bones from Turkey to a sanctuary in Bari, Italy. There Nicholas supplanted a female boon-giving deity called The Grandmother, or Pasqua Epiphania, who used to fill the children's stockings with her gifts. The Grandmother was ousted from her shrine at Bari, which became the center of the Nicholas cult. Members of this group gave each other gifts during a pageant they conducted annually on the anniversary of Nicholas' death, December 6. The Nicholas cult spread north until it was adopted by German and Celtic pagans. These groups worshipped a pantheon led by Woden - their chief god and the father of Thor, Balder, and Tiw. Woden had a long, white beard and rode a horse through the heavens one evening each Autumn. When Nicholas merged with Woden, he shed his Mediterranean appearance, grew a long beard, mounted a flying horse, rescheduled his flight for December, and donned heavy winter clothing. In a bid for pagan adherents in Northern Europe, the Catholic Church adopted the Nicholas cult and taught that he did (and they should) distribute gifts on December 25th instead of December 6th.



... 'ole Saint Nick

In 1809, the novelist Washington Irving (most famous for his novels, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle*) wrote a satire of Dutch culture entitled *Knickerbocker History*. The satire refers several times to the white bearded, flying-horse riding Saint Nicholas using his Dutch name, Santa Claus. Dr. Clement Moore, a professor at Union Seminary, read *Knickerbocker History*, and in 1822 he published a poem based on the character Santa Claus: "*Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in the hope that Saint Nicholas soon would be there...*" Moore innovated the legend by portraying a Santa with eight reindeer who descended through chimneys. The Bavarian illustrator Thomas Nast almost completed the modern picture of Santa Claus. From 1862 through 1886, based on Moore's poem, Nast drew more than 2,200 cartoon images of Santa for *Harper's Weekly*. Before Nast, Saint Nicholas had been pictured as everything from a stern looking bishop to a gnome-like figure in a frock. Nast also gave Santa a home at the North Pole, his workshop filled with elves, and his list of the good and bad children of the world. All Santa was missing was his red outfit. In 1931, the Coca Cola Corporation contracted the Swedish commercial artist Haddon Sundblom to create a coke-drinking Santa. Sundblom modeled his Santa on his friend Lou Prentice, chosen for his cheerful, chubby face. The corporation insisted that Santa's fur-trimmed suit be bright, Coca Cola red. And Santa was born - a blend of Christian crusader, pagan god, and successful, commercial idol.

### Christmas Is A Lie

The Christian church's tradition that the Christian god, "[Jesus](#)" was born on December 25th is not scriptural and is nothing more than contrived hypocrisy (see the scriptural truth about [The Birth](#)). December 25 is a day on which Jews have been shamed, tortured, and murdered. Many of the most popular Christmas customs - including Christmas trees, mistletoe, Christmas presents, and Santa Claus - are modern incarnations of the most depraved pagan rituals ever practiced on earth. Many who are excitedly preparing for their Christmas celebrations would prefer not knowing about the holiday's real significance. If they do know the history, they often object that their celebration has nothing to do with the holiday's monstrous history and meaning. However, saying that, "...we are just having fun" or "...we are only celebrating the birth of Jesus" does not mitigate their behavior. If we know the Truth, then why would we want to compromise what we know as Truth to settle for something less than Truth regardless of how attractive it may seem or popular it may have become? And then, by the extension of our actions, teach our children to believe a lie? Christmas has always been a holiday celebrated carelessly. For millennia, pagans, Christians, and even Jews have been swept away in the season's festivities, and very few people ever pause to consider the celebration's intrinsic meaning, history, or origins. Christmas celebrates the birth of a factually maligned, religiously replacement Christian god who came to rescue mankind from the "curse of the Torah." It is a 24-hour declaration that [the Torah](#) of YaHo VeH found in our bibles is no longer valid.

### The Challenge

Imagine that between 1933-45, the Nazi regime celebrated Adolf Hitler's birthday, April 20, as a holiday. Imagine that they named the day, "Hitlerday," and observed the day with feasting, drunkenness, gift-giving, and various pagan practices. Imagine that on that day, Jews were historically subject to perverse tortures and abuse, and that

this continued for centuries. Now, imagine that your great-great-great-grandchildren were about to celebrate Hitlerday. April 20th arrived, but they had long forgotten about Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen. They had never heard of gas chambers or death marches. They had purchased champagne and caviar and were about to begin the party when someone reminded them of the day's real history and their ancestors' agony. Imagine that they initially objected, "*We aren't celebrating the Holocaust; we're just having a little Hitlerday party.*" If you could travel forward in time and meet them; if you could say a few words to them, what would you advise them to do on Hitlerday? On December 25, 1941, Julius Streicher, one of the most vicious of Hitler's assistants, celebrated Christmas by penning the following editorial in his rabidly antisemitic newspaper, Der Stuermer: "*If the danger of the reproduction of that curse of God in the Jewish blood is to finally come to an end, then there is only one way - the extermination of that people whose father is the devil*" ([HolocaustResearchProject.org](http://HolocaustResearchProject.org)). It was considered an appropriate thought for the day. This Christmas, how will you celebrate? (*This article contains excerpts from author, Rabbi Lawrence Kelemen*)

*"A good tree does not bring forth evil fruit,  
neither does a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Matthew 7:18*

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**???Questions???**

Please feel free to email me at [harold@hethathasaneer.com](mailto:harold@hethathasaneer.com). While not claiming to have all the answers, it would be an honor to partake with you of what Spirit is uncovering.

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