

The Christmas Celebration is the
Heathen Feast of Saturnalia



By Drake Shelton



The Bible says that God is only to be worshipped according to the manner in which he has commanded and nothing is to be added to what he has commanded or taken away from it. (Exo. 25:9, Lev. 10:1-2, Duet. 4:2, 12:29-32, Jer. 7:31, Num. 15:39, 1 Chron. 28:11-19, 2 Chron. 29:25, Mat 15:7, Col. 2:20-23) The celebration of Christmas, a Perennial synchronization and embellishment of the heathen feast of Saturnalia and Nordic Pagan myths, is in fact a holy day, a sabbath of sorts, that is not only not commanded in scripture but is a monument of past idolatry. (To say nothing of the fact that birthday celebrations are a heathen practice themselves.¹) The Bible says that monuments of past idolatry are to be destroyed and are not to be synchronized with Biblical Worship. (Gen. 35:4, Exo. 23:13, 34:13, Duet. 7:25, 12:3, 29-32, Num. 33:52, 20, 2 Kings 10:22-28, 16:4, 10, 23: 4, 5, 6,7 ,2 Chron. 13:9, 23:15, Dan. 1:8, 2 Chron. 13:9, Josh. 23:7, Isa. 30:22, Rev. 2:14.) The Christians rejected this and took a form of synchronization. (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, CHAP. XXX. A copy of the letter which Pope Gregory sent to the Abbot Mellitus, then going into Britain) Synchronization is an ancient human temptation. When the Israelites made their Golden Calf in the wilderness

¹ John Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae*, Vol. II (Oxford at the University Press: 1859), 217 et al.



when they came out of Egypt, they said that worshipping the Golden Calf was “a feast to Yahovah.” (Exo. 32:5)

Some say that they celebrate Christmas, not as a religious holy day but as a family day. The problem is, in the solemnity of the Church service, the selection of the Christmas text, usually Luke 2, the Christmas sermon, the solemn carols sung that are reserved only for the service or at least the month of December, the special garbs, the decorating of the Church and the private homes, the special meals and the gathering of the family, makes this day not only religious, but more solemn and religious than the weekly Sabbath.

The Christmas celebration is a synchronistic Pagan holiday from the Roman Pagan celebration of Saturnalia and ancient Nordic and Druid myths and rituals.

John Clark Ridpath, in his, *Universal History*, Vol. XI, page 97, says,

“the most elaborate of all the celebrations of Rome was that of Saturn, held at the winter solstice, and afterwards extended so as to include the twenty-fifth of December.”



This feast was to return all men “for a brief season to their primitive equality.” This festival they called Saturnalia. Ridpath says,

“It was a time of gift-giving and innocent abandonment...It was a season of mirth and jollity; of feasting and hilarity; of games and sports.”

The Laurel Wreath

Edward Gibbon, *The Decline And Fall of The Roman Empire*, Chapter 15, Festivals,

“On days of general festivity it was the custom of the ancients to adorn their doors with lamps and with branches of laurel, and to crown their heads with a garland of flowers. This innocent and elegant practice might perhaps have been tolerated as a mere civil institution. But it most unluckily happened that the doors were under the protection of the household gods, that the laurel was sacred to the lover of Daphne, and that garlands of flowers, though frequently worn as a symbol either of joy or mourning, had been dedicated in their first origin to the service of superstition.”



The University of Chicago's LacusCurtius article
"Saturnalia,"

"It was an occasion for visits to friends and the presentation of gifts, particularly wax candles (*cerei*), perhaps to signify the returning light after the solstice, and *sigillaria*. Martial wrote *Xenia* and *Apophoreta* for the Saturnalia, both of which were published in December and intended to accompany the 'guest gifts' that were given at that time of year. Aulus Gellius relates that he and his Roman compatriots would gather at the baths in Athens, where they were studying, and pose difficult questions to one another on the ancient poets, a crown of laurel being dedicated to Saturn if no-one could answer them (*Attic Nights*, XVIII)."





This heathen practice is the origin of the Christmas practice of hanging a laurel wreath on one's door during Christmas and the practice of Advent Candles wreathed in pine branches and pinecones.

The Yule Log

Another famous Christmas celebration is the burning of the Yule log. John Brand and Henry Bourne, in their, *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (1777), page 155-157,

“Our Fore-Fathers, when the common Devotions of the Eve were over, and Night was come on, were wont to light up Candles of an uncommon Size, which were called Christmas-Candles, and to lay a Log of Wood upon the Fire, which they termed a Yule-Clog, or Christmas-Block. These were to



illuminate the House, and turn the Night into Day; which custom, in some Measure, is still kept up in the Northern Parts.

It hath, in all probability, been derived from the Saxons. For Bede tells us, [*The Reckoning of Time*, Chapter 15] **That this very Night was observed in this Land before, by the Heathen Saxons.** They began, says he, their Year on the Eighth of the Calends of January, which is now our Christmas-Day: And the very Night before, which is now Holy to us, was by them called Mædrenack, or the Night of the Mothers ... The Yule-Clog therefore hath probably been a Part of those Ceremonies which were perform'd that Night. The very Name seems to speak it, and tells its Original to every Age.

It seems to have been used, as an Emblem of the return of the Sun, and the lengthening of the Days. For as both December and January were called *Guili* or *Yule*, upon Account of the Sun's Returning, and the Increase of the Days..."

Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, by John McClintock and James Strong, Volume 12, page 1012,



“The burning of the Yule-log, Yule-clog, or Christmas-block, testifies to the use of fire in the worship of the sun.”



The Pileus

The common Christmas headwear, seen on Santa and his elves alike, also originates in Saturnalia and the ancient Pagans. It was the Pileus, a felt cap. (Martial, *Epigrams*, XIV.1)





We need not conjecture as to the appearance of this cap, as the feast of Saturnalia is still observed in Budapest. Observe the headwear:



Elves

The elves of Santa's service come from the Nordic Pagan mythological country of Lichtalfheim sometimes Álfheimr, the land of the good elves as opposed to Schwartalfaheim, the land of the bad elves. The word *elf* is an ancient Germanic word and has no other origin or meaning. It is directly connected to Nordic and Northern German Paganism.



Santa's Sleigh





The myth of Santa, flying through the air on his chariot with his reindeer is an embellishment of the ancient Nordic Pagan myths of Oskoreia, Skinfaxi and Hrímfaxi, where gods would be miraculously drawn through the sky on chariots. *Fólnir* and *Fauloherra* are Nordic terms that refer to Odin, the master of Yule, riding Sleipnir, miraculously, through the open sky.

Mistletoe





The ritual of the mistletoe plant comes down to us from the Heathen Druids. It is called the Ritual of Oak and Mistletoe. It is a religious ritual, accompanied with animal sacrifice to bestow fertility, thus the Christmas connection to kissing under it to extract its occult virtue. This ancient heathen ritual was recorded in Pliny's *Natural History*, XVI, 95,

“We should not omit to mention the great admiration that the Gauls have for it as well. The druids - that is what they call their magicians - hold nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and a tree on which it is growing, provided it is a hard-timbered oak... Mistletoe is rare and when found it is gathered with great ceremony, and particularly on the sixth day of the moon.... Hailing the moon in a native word that means ‘healing all things,’ they prepare a ritual sacrifice and banquet beneath a tree and bring up two white bulls, whose horns are bound for the first time on this occasion. A priest arrayed in white vestments climbs the tree and, with a golden sickle, cuts down the mistletoe, which is caught in a white cloak. Then finally they kill the victims, praying to a god to render his gift propitious to those on whom he has bestowed it. They believe that mistletoe given in drink will impart fertility to any animal that is barren and that it is an antidote to all poisons.”



Christmas Trees

Jer. 10: 2 Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. 3 For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. 4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. 5 They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.

At first glance, this passage may appear to be an explicit condemnation of Christmas Trees, but it is not. This passage is simply referring to the fashioning and decoration of a Pagan idol not a tree *simpliciter*. No scholarly commentaries I am aware of say that this passage refers to Christmas trees. A similar account is given in Isa. 44:

Isa. 44:15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with



part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

Even Alexander Hislop, in his famous *Two Babylons* does not use this passage against Christmas Trees. In the University of California Press publication *Christmas: A Candid History* by Bruce David Forbes, page 45, Forbes maintains that the origin of Christmas Trees began with Boniface, a Papist, in the 8th century with his disputes with the German Odinists.

December 25th

The day Jesus died is referred to as the Passover in John 18:39. This celebration begins after sundown on the 14th day of Nisan which on our calendar would be in the middle of March. According to Daniel 9:24-27 there are 70 weeks (Weeks are periods of seven years) determined for Israel. There are 69 weeks from the building of the temple to Messiah. The Messiah's ministry is in the midst of the 70th week and in the middle of this week he is killed and his death puts an end to the sacrificial system (Mat 27:51). Therefore, his ministry began at the end of the 69th week and continued until the middle of the 70th



week, making his ministry exactly 3 and $\frac{1}{2}$ years in duration. Jesus began his ministry when he was 30 (Luke 3:23) years old as was tradition among the Levite priests from the command of God in the law (Num 4:3). Therefore, his death was in mid-March; 6 months before mid-March is mid-September and three years before that is obviously mid-September. He began his ministry the same time as his 30th birthday, therefore he was born in the month of September not even close to December 25th.

Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, Book 4 maintains Yeshua was born on December 25th but he provides no evidence whatsoever.

The Three Wise Men





Jesus was born and in the same day was lying in a manger (Luke 2:16). After eight days he received circumcision (vs 21). Even as Mat 2:1 and the context reveal, the magi who came bearing gifts came much later after his birthday; as is added by Mat 2:11, they found him in a house as compared with his manger birth. These were not birthday gifts and it was not the first Christmas celebration.

Summary

It need not surprise us that Christmas, the high holy day of the Christian West, is a mixture of Roman and Nordic Paganism. The same thing applies to our days of the week and the months of our year. Most of it is Roman but Wednesday is named after Odin or Woden. Nazarenes should use 1st day, 2nd day, 3rd day, etc. instead of the Heathen heritage the Christian Church has given us, though I cannot say it is a sin, simply to mention the names of other gods. The Torah does not forbid the rote mechanistic act of using a pagan god's name.

Exo. 23:13 And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

Maimonides, in his exposition of the 613 laws, says, “46. Not to swear in the name of an idol—Exodus 23:13.”



The prophets and apostles use the name Baal, Ashtoreth, Moloch, Remphan, among other Pagan gods all over the Bible.

During the Protestant Reformation, there was a general, sadly, not absolute, rejection of the practice of Christmas.

The Perth Assembly of 1618-1619 in Leiden was convened by the Pilgrims before they set out on the Mayflower. David Calderwood, recorded their arguments against Christmas in his *Perth Assembly* page 63 et al., “Reasons Against Festival Dayes.” John Clark Ridpath, in *The New Complete History of the United States of America*, Vol. 2, pg. 778, records the reasons William Bradford established the festival of Thanksgiving, and it was to be the new winter festival for Protestants as Christmas was considered Pagan and Papal idolatry. (See also *Discovery and First Colonization* by John Clark Ridpath, pgs. 771, 778) *The Westminster Standards*, “Directory for the Publick Worship of God,” Touching Days and Places for Publick Worship:

“Festival days, vulgarly called Holy-days, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued.”



In George Gillespie's *English Popish Ceremonies*, we read of numerous Churches that abolished Holy days: Geneva, Strasburg Germany, Zurich in Helvetia (Switzerland) [EPC, 48]; Belgic Church National Synod 1578, Martin Luther, *A Treatise on Good Works*, XVII, "This Sabbath has now for us been changed into the Sunday, and the other days are called work-days; the Sunday is called rest-day or holiday or holy day. And would to God that in Christendom there were no holiday except the Sunday," and finally, The Waldenses [EPC, 49].

These are the arguments that the historic Protestants gave for rejecting the celebration of Christmas:

- i. God commands that we work on common days and if there is no prohibition to work, such as the Sabbath, we are commanded to work and redeem the time (Exo 20:9, Eph 5:16).
- ii. A holy day, being an act of religious worship falls under the restrictions of the regulative principle (Duet. 12:29-32). There is no command for Christmas etc. and Holy days such as Christmas are not simply traditional days for public remembrance, heritage or civil celebration but are synchronistic acts of religious worship that combine elements of Christianity and paganism. In this they are condemned as Popish



superstition. It is God's prerogative how one worships him.

iii. Some say that they celebrate Christmas, not as a religious holy day but as a family day. The problem is, in the solemnity of the Church service, the selection of the Christmas text, usually Luke 2, the Christmas sermon, the solemn carols sung that are reserved only for the service or at least the month of December, the special garbs, the decorating of the Church and the private homes, the special meals and the gathering of the family, makes this day not only religious, but more solemn and religious than the weekly Sabbath and seasonal sabbaths.

iv. Rom. 14, Days of fasting do not require abstinence from work and cannot be considered holy days. Days of fasting are allowed to be proclaimed and are not contradictory to these principles (Joel 2:15).

v. The Seasonal Sabbaths are given to remember all of Christ's work and have biblical and apostolic authority in its practice. No other day commemorating any other work of Christ is commanded or practiced by apostolic example and therefore forbidden.

vi. Relics of idolatry are never to be Baptized as the Roman religion seeks. Therefore, our relationship to Christmas trees is at least analogous to what Hezekiah



did to the brazen serpent that had of late been used in superstitious worship (2 Kings 18:4). He did not baptize it, he destroyed it.

vii. Monuments of past idolatry (And not only the idols themselves but all the vessels and ornaments associated and used in the idolatry) are to be destroyed as good King Josiah did in 2 Kings 23 along with many other examples.

viii. Whether the assumed birthday of Christ chosen by the sheepish party is associated with paganism is a fallacy of accident in the major issue concerning December 25. The major issue is that he was not born on December 25 and to say so is a lie. The lie is exposed by simple mathematics. The day Jesus died is referred to as the Passover in John 18:39. This celebration begins after sundown on the 14th day of Nisan which on our calendar would be in the middle of March. According to Daniel 9:24-27 there are 70 weeks (Weeks are periods of seven years) determined for Israel. There are 69 weeks from the building of the temple to Messiah. The Messiah's ministry is in the midst of the 70th week and in the middle of this week he is killed and his death puts an end to the sacrificial system (Mat 27:51). Therefore, his ministry began at the end of the 69th week and continued until the middle of the 70th week, making his ministry exactly 3 and ½ years in duration. Jesus began his ministry



when he was 30 (Luk 3:23) years old as was tradition among the Levite priests from the command of God in the law (Num 4:3). Therefore, his death was in mid-March; 6 months before mid-March is mid-September and three years before that is obviously mid-September. He began his ministry the same time as his 30th birthday, therefore he was born in the month of September not even close to December 25th .

ix. The regulative principle applies just as much to regular life as it does to public worship. If the element of worship is present, the restriction remains. Women need to cover their heads when they pray, whether it be in Church or in the home; Praise to God must be sung only from the Psalter whether in Church or in the home; and vessels pertaining to synchronistic idolatry should be left out of the home as well as the Church.

x. Jesus was born and in the same day was lying in a manger (Luke 2:16). After eight days he received circumcision (vs 21). Even as Mat 2:1 and the context reveal, the magi who came bearing gifts came much later after his birthday; as is added by Mat 2:11 they found him in a house as compared with his manger birth. These were not birthday gifts and it was not the first Christmas celebration.



Objections

Objections: i. Christ celebrated the feast of the dedication (John 10:22-23) which was not commanded.

Ans. The passage nowhere says he celebrated it. He simply arrives at a gathering of people for the purpose of preaching.

ii. Purim was observed by the Jews and it was not commanded (Est 9:26-29).

Ans. This is not a holy day but a civil celebration (Est 9:19-22).

iii. Paul kept the feast of Pentecost. (Acts 20:16, 1 Cor 16:8)

Ans. This is the Jewish Pentecost; for the Pentecost celebrated by the sheepish party the seventh Sunday after Easter (Celebrating the descent of the Holy Ghost) is celebrated in many places; yet Paul seeks to leave where he is presently writing to observe Pentecost and explicitly says in Acts 20 he would be coming to Jerusalem to observe it.