

What Is Christmas?

**By E. G. Cook
(1898 - 1986)!**

In the light of God's Word, how can anything with a Christian name be popular with the world? In John 7:7 Jesus said the world hates Him and in John 15:19 He said the world hates His people. But in spite of all that, everybody loves Christmas. The vilest sinner in town will run over you, if necessary, in order to celebrate his Christmas. If you have any doubts as to whether the world loves Christmas or not, just go into one of our large department stores, or Ten Cent stores, during the last few frantic hours of Christmas shopping and see if the sinners don't elbow you just as quickly, and tackle you just as hard as the saints do.

As I meditated upon that question the thought came to me that if I would make a feast everyone would love, I must give everyone what he wanted. If I wanted the Orientals to come to my feast I would serve rice, if I wanted the Italians to be there I would serve spaghetti, for the Russians I would be sure to serve plenty of vodka. In other words, if I wanted everyone to come and enjoy my feast I must give everyone what he wants. Then the thought came to me that maybe that is just what has happened to Christmas. So I began to search the reference books to see if that were true. I had to go to the secular books because I was unable to find it in my Bible. It was truly amazing what I found, and what you can find if you will only look for it, concerning the most loved of all seasons of the year. According to the most authentic sources available, and I will even throw in the Catholic reference works because on this point they all agree, there never was a Christmas before the middle of the fourth century, even in Rome. In Jerusalem, it was first observed in the fifth century, and then we are told it caused rioting in the streets.

I searched through at least a dozen of the world's leading reference works on the subject and they all agree that no one knew the date of Christ's birth, and some of them say we cannot be sure as to the actual year

in which He was born. But, in order for the Catholic Church to have a big feast day, it was necessary for some date to be set for His birthday. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia says that in order for the shepherds to have been out that night with their flocks it would have been necessary for His birth to have occurred sometime between March and September. The Catholic Church however, could not celebrate Christmas at that time of the year as we shall see later. It must be in December whether there were any shepherds and sheep out that night or not. It became really interesting when I began searching for the reason why it must be in December.

First, however, let us consider some of the things which were put into Christmas to make it so universally loved. In Babylon, that great heathen Chaldean city, pagan religion reached its peak so far as ancient history was concerned. Here in Babylon the queen of heaven and her son had their beginnings in the persons of Semeramis and her son, Tammuz. When Belshazzar was slain (Daniel 5:30) and the Chaldeans defeated by Darius, the Mede, it seems the capital of the pagan religious world was moved from Babylon to Pergamos. Later, at the death of Attalus III, Phrygia was given to the Roman Empire in 133 B.C. The Babylonian pagan worship was then removed to Rome where Semeramis and Tammuz became Fortuna and Jupiter.

This queen of heaven and her son became the very heart of pagan, or idol worship throughout the world. They were called by different names in different countries. In Egypt they were Isis and Osiris, in India they were Isi and Iswara, in other parts of Asia they were Cybele and Deoius, in Greece they were Ceres and Plutus, but they were all the same queen of heaven and her son. All of these were dumped into Christmas under the new name of Mary and Jesus. This new name did not affect the pagan people of the world too much, for no matter what you call a dish of tender fried chicken it is still a very tasty dish.

I learned that the more religion the Catholic Church put into Christmas the more popular it became. The world is a great lover of religion so long as the

Christ of Calvary and His shed blood are left out of it. Now with all the ingredients in Christmas, it is time to look for the reason why Christmas must be in December.

Even back in ancient Babylon the birth of Tammuz was celebrated in our December. The heathen sun worshippers throughout the northern hemisphere all celebrated the rebirth of the sun at the time of its turning back toward the North; that is, about December 25. Tammuz, Osiris, Iswara, Deolius, Plutus and Jupiter were all representatives of the sun of their respective countries. These heathen people had been brought into the Catholic Church, mainly through the efforts of Constantine the Great. They were still just as heathen as they were before they were incorporated into the Catholic Church; and they were going to continue celebrating this great feast at this same time. It did not matter too much what their god was called. It was still a representative of their sacred god, the sun. But the time of their feast could not be changed because the sun starts on his return toward the North at only one time of the year. Even old Satan, with the help of all his able efficient co-workers, could not change the time. Therefore,

Christmas had to be December 25, whether the shepherds were out that night with their flocks or not.

As much as the head of the Catholic Church likes to boast of his God-like power and authority, this was one time when he was completely helpless. He had absolutely no choice in the matter. His problem was clear. If he wanted to make good Catholics out of his host of heathens he must give their queen of heaven and their god a Christian name. So Mary and Jesus had to be the name and December 25 had to be the date. Had Bishop Julian I, been really and truly interested in setting the real date of Christ's birth, the month of December would not have been considered at all, because anyone who is at all familiar with the climate conditions which prevail in Palestine during the month of December would know there were no shepherds and sheep out in the field at that time of the year.

With Christmas literally loaded down with the world's religion it is easy to see why the world loves Christmas, but we see people observing the feast who should not be lured into the feast of the pagan gods. The Baptists themselves seem to be trying to out-spend, out-shine and outdo the world in

the world's own feast. If you ask why they are at this feast, some would unthinkingly say it is because Mary and Jesus are in it. But that statement won't stand when we turn the light of God's Word upon it. Jesus, Himself, said the world hates Him, and He is not a liar. So it is easy to see that if He were in Christmas that would completely ruin it for the world. The world would care no more for Christmas than they do for the church; if Christ were really in it. If He could be put in it, I can just see Him plaiting that whip again. When I see posters which read, "Let's put Christ back in Christmas," I always think of the story of the boy from a backwoods family who went away to college. Upon his return home he wanted to improve the family's grammar, so when his younger brother said pass the lasses, he said don't say lasses, say molasses. His brother retorted, how can I ask for mo'lasses when I ain't had no lasses? So how can we put Christ back in Christmas when He has never been in it? Maybe we should let God tell us why we Baptists are so deeply in love with Christmas.

If we read Jeremiah 5:30-31 in our everyday language it says, the preacher's preach false things and the priests run things their own way, and my people love to have it so. The Baptist people run after the false gods and false religion connected with Christmas simply because they love it. Why do so many preach false things concerning Christmas when they can find nothing in the Bible, nor in authentic secular history to justify what they teach and preach? With everybody, including the Baptists, partaking of Christmas, it was time to give it that good old Christmas spirit. You know, that spirit that makes you feel that it is perfectly all right for you to do things you could not afford to do at any other time of the year. If the drunkard refused to drink on Christmas and the harlot became virtuous for the day, we might be able to say this

Christmas spirit is the Spirit of Christ. But it is an undeniable fact that untold thousands of people drink at Christmas without any compunction of conscience who would not drink at all any other time of the year. All manner of evil and God provoking things are done at this season of the year because this is Christmas.

Do you believe it is the Spirit of Christ that causes thousands of people to line up in the saloons of the land at Christmas time who never go near

them at any other time? I know there are people who will say that is not the real Christmas spirit, but I wonder if that is not just a weak effort on our part to try to justify our participation in this ungodly thing called Christmas. Certainly it is not the Spirit of Christ that gives us all that freedom at Christmas time, but rather it is the spirit of Saturnalia. In ancient pagan Rome a week of feasting and merry-making was observed in the later part of December.

During this feast everyone, even the slaves, were permitted to do just as they pleased. Things like gambling, etc., which were prohibited at other times, were winked at during Saturnalia. This feast was brought over from ancient pagan Rome by modern pagan Rome and dumped into Christmas to give it that tangy flavor and make people look forward to it with great anticipation. As you recall, I stated in the beginning that I was unable to find Christmas in my Bible, but after learning a little about this lovely season from other sources, I was able to find quite a lot about it in my Bible.

In Jeremiah 7:18 I found that even in his day, some 600 years before Christ was born of the virgin Mary, the children gathered wood, the men kindled the fire, and the women made cakes to the queen of heaven, to provoke God to wrath. In Jeremiah 10:3-5 I learned that the customs of the people in his day were vain because they went out in the woods with an ax, cut down a tree, took hammer and nails to fasten it upright, and then decorated it with silver and gold. God said it was a vain custom, and vanity is one thing He hates. I must confess that I have done the same thing many times except that I used much cheaper decorations. Christmas, like the groves in Israel, is so beautiful. What could be more beautiful than a Christmas tree with all its decorations and gifts? Surely nothing unless it was the original Christmas trees decorated with silver and gold. But when I think of the beauty of Christmas, I am reminded of the tabernacle. In Exodus 26 we find that all that the world saw was the skins of animals, but on the inside it was overlaid with gold and had all manner of beautiful curtains and hangings. The beauty of the tabernacle was hidden from the world, but not so with Christmas. The beauty of Christmas is on the outside in plain view of everyone, but on the inside are dead men's bones.

All manner of drinking, debauchery and unclean living is covered over with the beautiful cloak of Christmas. But in Revelation 17 and 18 we have a ghastly picture of the Catholic Church, including her Christmas and fabulous Christmas trade, which will cause all that weeping and wailing when it is finally cut off (Daniel 9:27), and in Revelation 18:4 Christ says, **“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”** It is not an easy thing to come out of her. No one wants to be a kill-joy or an old Scrooge. Many will say that Christmas has become a part of our American way of life, and that is so true. It has become about as much a part of our way of life as idolatry had in the Jew’s way of life in Israel and Judah, and if I remember correctly it took the destruction of their country and enslavement of the Jewish people to tear them away from their idol gods.

If anyone has any evidence to justify our participation in Christmas, please let it be known. I have searched in vain. I have heard that one about its being handed down to us by our fore-fathers, but it seems to me that would come under the heading of commandments of men, and Jesus did not sound too complimentary in Matthew 15:9 when He said, **“In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”**

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