

# CHRISTMAS...

## THE *UNTOLD* STORY

Why is Christmas not mentioned in the Bible? What connection does "Santa Claus" have with Christ? What is the real meaning of mistletoe, the holly wreath, and orbs on trees? Was Jesus really born on December 25<sup>th</sup>? Christmas, no matter its origins, is the most important commercial season of the year. Without the centuries-old tradition of exchanging of gifts, the national economy would be dealt a terrible blow—thousands of businesses would be bankrupt. You will be astonished to discover the REAL TRUTH about this most important of all nominal Christian holidays.

*by Garner Ted Armstrong*

**A**nyone can discover the truth about the pagan origins of Christmas, simply by looking up the word, along with all its accouterments and symbols in the major encyclopedias and history books. With the development of the Internet, it is even easier for those who possess PCs, and have access to the Worldwide Web. However, very few ever bother to do so. What about you? Have you ever really wondered about some of the customs we take casually for granted? Ever wanted to know the real TRUTH about the symbolism of "the mass of Christ," or "Christmas"?

From time to time, I will see an article entitled "Put Christ back in Christmas," or words to that effect. But it is impossible to "put Christ back in Christmas," since He was never in Christmas in the first place! None of the apostles of Christ ever heard of the term; not one of them ever celebrated Christ's birthday. The words Christmas, holly wreath, mistletoe, Rudolph, Santa Claus and Christmas tree do not appear anywhere in the Bible.

The early true church never heard of Christmas. Centuries passed before the large, apostate church ever so gradually began adapting purely pagan practices and mythology to a time they originally called "the epiphany" (relating to Christ's baptism, which they erroneously believed occurred early in January). Later, some writers began urging a celebration at the same time as the pagan winter solstice observances. This was done for the simple reason that so many pagans were already accustomed to "joyous," sometimes "riotous" orgies of feasting at the time of the winter solstice.

Each year, articles appear in thousands of publications at Christmas time, cheerfully admitting that the true origins of the celebration are wholly *pagan*, not Christian. Such articles admit that Christ was probably born several months earlier than December 25<sup>th</sup>; admit the pagan origin of the Christmas tree, "Santa Claus," mistletoe, holly wreaths, yule logs, and the exchanging of gifts.

But most then go on to explain that the so-called "Christian" celebration "replaced" the pagan celebrations, and are therefore perfectly acceptable customs for Christians. Is this true? Does it make any difference to God? Why did not the apostles of Christ celebrate Christmas, instead of doggedly clinging to the Passover? Why did not the early church, for many, many centuries, not celebrate it? Why was it banned in early colonial America?

Did you ever really wonder WHY we do the things we do? WHY do we just take for granted such things as Hallowe'en, Christmas, New Year's Eve, Groundhog's Day and April Fool's Day? How many have ever really researched the origins of these and other practices, and pondered whether they are Christian or pagan?

You and I were born into a "ready-made" world. We had no part in customizing it to suit our own tastes—there it was, laid out for us, replete with holidays and customs we were taught as children (most of us). What was

YOUR childhood response when you discovered there *is no Santa Claus*? Or did you cling to the *myth* of "Santa," without thinking your parents had fibbed to you? Years ago, I heard of one young lad who, upon finding out there was no Santa Claus, said, "Well, maybe I had better look into this Jesus Christ business, too!"

I certainly never did look up any information about Christmas until I was well into my twenties, and already married. I did so, not so much to prove it was alright to celebrate Christmas, but to try to determine if my father who claimed it was pagan, and preached vigorously against it was right or wrong. That left me the "odd man out" in my neighborhood and in my school when it came time for carol singing and tree decorating. How desperately I wanted to *conform* to all that was in place around me. Christmas looked like so much FUN, after all.

As a boy, I deeply envied my neighborhood friends and school chums. They all gaily entered into the "Christmas spirit." My parents didn't observe Christmas. I never remember a time when we had a Christmas tree, or when any members of our family exchanged presents, or sang Christmas carols. My father, who was a preacher, claimed he had found historical and biblical proof that the whole thing was "pagan to the core," as he invariably put it.

Therefore, from a family perspective, I dreaded Christmas.

But in school, and among my friends along the block, I loved it. I so wanted to be a part of it; to share in the "Yuletide," and, especially, to find my stocking filled with wonderful goodies, or to mimic the scenes of kids around the Christmas tree, joyfully opening up gaily-colored boxes, or spending the first few hours on their new bicycles, or in their little red wagons.

To a limited extent, my mother allowed me to participate. We would draw each other's names out of a box in our grade school classrooms, and each pupil was encouraged to buy a gift for the one whose name was drawn. But this was during the Great Depression, and folks didn't have much money. Ten cents was a lot to spend on a gift. Keen frustrations occurred, when my Mom would take me down to the five and dime, and help me buy a tiny vial of perfume for a nickel, and wrap it up to give to the girl whose name I had drawn; all apprehensive, excited, expectant about what I would find on my desk when we had our classroom "Christmas party," only to discover a tiny *handkerchief*—well, that was disappointment in capital letters!

I used to "play Christmas" out of sight of my parents, in our garage. But I couldn't play my game until AFTER Christmas, because only then could I sneak out into the neighborhood, retrieve a little tree someone had thrown away, delighted to find a few scraps of tinsel still on it, and spirit it away, and into our garage. I would find brightly-colored wrappings people had discarded, take them out of the garbage cans, and then wrap them around little blocks of wood, like chunks of 2x4's we sometimes used for kindling. Then, I would arrange them under my pitiful little tree, and pretend they were gifts!

My pretended Christmas was even more frustrating than exchanging gifts in class! For one thing, it was all out of sync, and for another, I was terrified I would be caught.

I learned to lie about Christmas. When the kids would be out riding their new bikes, or waltzing by on a pair or roller skates, or pulling one another in their new red wagon, and asked me, "Teddy, what did you get for Christmas?" I would tell them socks, or underwear. After all, who was going to check up—and how could they prove it one way or another?

Why am I telling you this? Because I want you to understand, before you read the rest of this book, that I desperately wanted to *conform* to the world around me. I deeply resented the fact that my parents didn't "keep Christmas." Later, as a man, I would have dearly loved to be able to justify Christmas from the Bible—not only justify keeping it, but being able to PROVE that I should! If I could do that—if I could prove that Christ was really born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, and that He wants me to celebrate His birthday by making out a Christmas

shopping list, and entering into the "Christmas spirit," then I assure you I would have the most beautiful tree in the neighborhood; would have my shrubs and roof all lit up, and would sneak down and fill my grandkids stockings with goodies, and blame it all on Santa Claus.

But, alas. I looked into the history books and encyclopedias—and the Bible.

I was as astonished at what I found—as you will be!

### *The Origin Of The Holiday*

December 25<sup>th</sup> was not the birthday of Christ. It was not until the fourth century, about twice as long a period of time as the United States has been a nation, that the apostate church adapted the pagan rituals and symbols to professing Christianity, thus beginning to recognize such customs as cutting down trees and bringing them indoors to decorate with orbs and bulbs.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* admits, "...before the 5<sup>th</sup> century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it [the Epiphany] should come in the calendar, whether on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, or the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, or the 25<sup>th</sup> of December" (ibid. Vol. IV p. 293).

Origen, one of the so-called "church fathers" (known as the "ante-Nicene fathers" to scholars, meaning those writers of nominal Christian thought who lived prior to the Nicene Council, in 325 AD), repudiated the very idea of "keeping the birthday of Christ as if He were a King Pharaoh." Apparently, the very first mention of the idea of attaching December 25<sup>th</sup> to the birth of Christ came in about 354 AD, more than three hundred and twenty years after Christ sent the Holy Spirit to build His true church, from the pen of a LATIN chronographer. Translated into English, it read, "Year 1 after Christ, in the coinsulate of Caesar and Paulus, the Lord Jesus Christ was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, a Friday and 15<sup>th</sup> day of the new moon." Long before, however, Clement of Alexandria, another of the so-called "ante-Nicene fathers," condemned such speculation as mere superstitions. Clement, in issuing a scathing denunciation of such writings, added that some chronologists alleged Christ to have been born on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May; others said on the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> of April, and Clement himself argued it had probably occurred on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, 3 BC. At least, he was a bit closer in his guesswork than those he dismissed.

The same Latin (Roman Catholic) chronologist, along with others, began arguing that the date should be fixed on the same day observed by the Mithraic Priests [a pagan order held in awe and reverence by superstitious adherents], who termed December 25<sup>th</sup>, *Natalis invicti solis*, or "birthday of the invincible [unconquerable] sun."

But the nominal Christians in Syria and Armenia scornfully accused the Romans of sun worship and blatant idolatry, contending that December 25<sup>th</sup> may well have been an invention of the disciples of Cerinthus to commemorate the "natural" birth of Jesus. Cerinthus may have been a contemporary of the apostle John during his last years, and was an advocate of a blend of gnosticism and Judaism; holding the strange notion that Jesus Christ was the "natural" son of Joseph and Mary, and that the "Christ" descended upon Him at His baptism, but left Him again prior to His death. He also taught that the resurrection was yet future; that Jesus was still dead during his time. Therefore, his suppositions about the birth of Christ were rejected by the "ante-Nicene fathers," such as Irinaeus, Polycarp, and Eusebius.

The *Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, states, "In Britain the 25<sup>th</sup> of December was a festival long before the conversion to Christianity [and therefore a pagan festival], quoting Bede, who said the pagans called it "the mother's night." This may be very significant indeed, as will be seen later. The Puritans in England, as late as 1644, by an act of Parliament, declared "Christmas" on December 25<sup>th</sup> to be an "heathen festival," and to show their contempt, ordered people to fast on that day. Their descendants outlawed any celebration of the pagan December 25<sup>th</sup> in New England up until only about 22 years before my father, Herbert W. Armstrong, was born, in 1892!

Actually, following their custom of superimposing "Christian" observances upon purely pagan, heathen celebrations, the apostate church eventually established December 25<sup>th</sup> as the birthday of Jesus Christ in order to make it easy for hundreds of thousands of Teutons and others, who were accustomed to feasting on that day in commemoration of "the Saturnalia," or the "birthday of the invincible sun," to embrace nominal Christianity.

The encyclopedias and history books are replete with information about the pagan origin of Christmas. Even the Bible encyclopedias admits the truth. An outstanding example is from the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* which admits, "How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia (December 25<sup>th</sup>) following the Saturnalia (December 17th-24th), 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 merrymaking was so popular that Christians were *glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner*. Christian preachers in the west and the near east protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia accused their western brethren of idolatry and sun worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival" (ibid. Article: "Christmas").

Don't assume that all these pagan sun-worshipping customs are only ancient practices of those long since dead. Believe it or not, there are "Saturnalians" and dozens of small sects of Satanism and witchcraft practicing in the United States and other "Christian" countries TODAY!

The Internet contains weird pages of material about HOW TO CELEBRATE THE SATURNALIA! At least, Satanists and sun worshipers know the true meaning of the season!

### ***Was The Birth Of Jesus Christ The "First Noel"?***

The "first noel" is a common phrase. Not only is it one of the dozens of best-known Christmas carols, it may be found on cups and glasses, on orbs and bulbs, on gaily-colored wrapping paper, and practically everywhere, including huge letters set up on brightly-lit neighborhood lawns.

The words of the famous song are well-known: "The first noel, the angels did say, was to certain poor shepherds in fields where they lay," etc. Thus, a purely pagan phrase is adapted to the annunciation of the birth of Christ by the angels. Millions casually assume that the "first Noel" simply means "the first Christmas." Not so.

The word has a Celtic origin, and comes from two words among the ancient region of Gaul (modern day northern France and Brittany), *novo Hel*. *Novo* means "new" and *Hel* means "sun." You will recognize both ancient words in our English words "novice," and "heliograph." It meant "new sun", or the winter solstice, and marked the first day of the year when the days began lengthening.

The holiday is actually nothing more than the ancient "Saturnalia," celebrated among different pagan, heathen peoples in different lands by amazingly similar customs and nonsensical beliefs. SUN worship was virtually universal among all savage, heathen tribes, clans, and nations.

Truth be told, the celebration of the birth of Christ has occurred *in every month of the year* among different peoples at different times. For a period of centuries, it was celebrated in January. To this day, a common expression is "the twelve days of Christmas," which refer to the *signs of the Zodiac, and pagan, agrarian rituals*. In other words, as pagans *prayed to the sun god*, they celebrated the signs of the seasons; appealing to the *solis invictus*, or the invincible sun, to "begin his journey back to the northern latitudes," lengthening the days, warming the earth, melting the ice and snow of winter, and bringing once again the springing forth of new life.

By taking such "quaint" beliefs, and *adapting* them to nominal "Christian" beliefs, the universal church was able to "convert" countless hundreds of thousands of savage peoples in dozens of countries all over the world.

As one book, *The Origins of Christmas*, states, "Across Europe, Roman, German or Celtic festivals marked the beginning of winter. Christianity originated and expanded in the ancient world by promising a new life, and by announcing a new light to the world in the person of Jesus Christ. Little by little, a calendar of religious festivals was established from the fourth century, replacing ancient rituals and pagan celebrations."

But the ancient rituals and pagan celebrations, with all their accompanying symbolism and enactments were by no means replaced with anything that was "Christian." One may claim a pig is a duck hundreds of times, but the pig is a pig, nevertheless.

### *Christ Was Not Born In The Winter*

Christ was not born on or anywhere near the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. The Bible says, "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

"And there were in the same country shepherds *abiding in the field*, keeping watch over their flock by night [Note carefully! The sheep were gathered into sheep cotes much earlier; no sheep were still "abiding in the field" this late in the year. But in September or early November, such a scene could have obtained. There is ample proof for this]."

There is virtual unanimity among some of the most well-known commentators on this point: Barnes, Doddridge, Lightfoot, Joseph Scaliger, and Jennings, who wrote *Jewish Antiquities* all agree that December 25<sup>th</sup> could not have been Christ's date of birth. Joseph Mede, following a long dissertation on the subject, says, "At the birth of Christ every woman and child was to go to be taxed at the city whereto they belonged, whither some had long journeys; but the middle of winter was not fitting for such a business, especially for women with child and children, to travel in. Therefore, Christ could not be born in the depth of winter. Again, at the time of Christ's birth, the shepherds lay abroad watching with their flocks in the night time; but this was not likely to be in the middle of winter. And if any shall think the winter wind was not so extreme in these parts, let him remember the words of Christ in the gospel, "Pray that your flight be not in the winter," if the winter was so bad a time to flee in, and women and children to travel in.

Here is what Christ Himself said: "Then [when the Abomination of Desolation is in place] let them which be *in Judaea* [the very place of Christ's birth] flee into the mountains:

"Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

"Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

"And *woe unto them that are with child*, and to them that give suck in those days!

"But *pray ye that your flight be not in the winter*, neither on the Sabbath day:

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:16-21).

Notice how Jesus Christ singled out pregnant women, or nursing mothers, saying they should PRAY that they should not have to flee their homes into the countryside, and into the mountainous country of Judaea *in the winter!* Further, it was not the practice of the Roman government to force their subject peoples into arduous, even perilous, travel in the middle of winter. Their object was census-taking for taxation purposes, not to create popular rebellion. Therefore, they would have chosen the season of the year when it was the *easiest* time for travel, not the most difficult.

Now, continuing with the account of the annunciation of Christ's birth:

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

"And the angel 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.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men [actually, the verse reads, in the original, `Peace on earth among men of good will'].

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

"And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger" (Luke 2:7-16).

However, one may see the shepherds AND the wise men, or the "Magi" (Persian followers of the "Magus," and believers, perhaps, in Zoroaster, who were forced to acknowledge the King of kings and Lord of lords) standing about the manger in many, many pictures, movies, books, and of course, in decorations on millions of lawns.

But the Magi did not arrive in Bethlehem until after a journey of many, many MONTHS, perhaps a YEAR after the birth of Christ. Historical facts mean nothing to those who blindly adopt "custom," however.

Study carefully the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Matthew. Herod would not have risked killing all the little boys from two years old and younger if he had known the Christ child was a mere week or two old! He ordered the murder of all those from two years and younger because he had carefully interrogated the wise men about the *time the star had appeared*. Notice the account, how the Magi had "...come into the HOUSE [not a manger], [where] they saw the young child [not here called a baby, or an infant] with Mary His mother..." (Matthew 2:16).

This is simply another example of the ignorance of millions, who, though they believe they are celebrating a "Christian" custom, have not bothered to so much as read the Bible account carefully.

### ***What Is The Origin Of The Christmas Tree?***

Tree worship is virtually universal among heathen peoples. To this day, there are those who believe trees have a spirit; those who will "apologize to the spirit of the tree" before cutting it down.

From the earliest times, since trees come in so many thousands of varieties, and are so useful to man, ancient mankind ascribed any number of god-like qualities to trees. Trees produce many hundreds of varieties of foods for man, from nuts to bananas; from fruits to bark used as spices, as in the case of the cinnamon tree. The ubiquitous palm trees of the tropics and Middle East have been used for rafts, canoes, building homes, thatching roofs, producing clothing, and for dozens of kinds of foods, from coconuts to dates.

But it was not only the most "primitive" peoples who worshiped trees. Even such notable Greek philosophers as Plato and Aristotle taught that trees possessed *reason*, just as humans do; believed trees had "feelings." Ancient Egyptians held to the superstition that the life of a human being and the life of a tree were somehow connected; that the fate of one was identical to the fate of another. In the famous Egyptian fable called "the tale of two brothers," dating from perhaps 1,000 B.C., one of the brothers allegedly "leaves his heart on the top of the flower of an acacia tree," but then falls down dead when the tree is cut down.

There is a "black arts" connection here. As in voodoo, wherein people believe a human being can be cursed with sickness, wounds, or even killed by sticking pins in a doll-like caricature of the victim, many believed that a person's life was inextricably intertwined with the life of a tree. By depositing fingernail clippings, human hair, or some article that had been in close contact with the man, pagans believed they were putting themselves into close "personal" contact with the tree. Then, if certain boughs were cut off, and investigated, and it appeared that a blight was affecting the tree, the man drew conclusions from this—believing he would be stricken with a disease, or die.

Encyclopedias are replete with pagan concepts of tree worship. Customs in dozens of countries all over the world show that it was common belief that humans and trees had some common bond; some spiritual interconnection. Some believed it was possible to transfer disease from a sick person to a tree. Thus, they would place bits of hair, items of clothing, or some personal item from the sick person; even fingernail clippings, into a niche or hole bored into the tree. The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, eleventh edition, states that some sick persons would be passed through the aperture resulting from splitting a tree, and then, if the tree survived, the patient would surely recover. In India, the Korwas hung rags on trees which formed the shrines of their various village gods. Even in early America, in Nebraska, some believed that hanging of objects on the branches of trees propitiated supernatural beings, or could give them such blessings as good hunting and good weather.

The universality of tree worship was also observed by the well-traveled Charles Darwin, the "father of evolution," who wrote of a tree he saw in South America festooned with various offerings, including rags, meat, and even cigars! Not only were libations made to this tree, but horses were sacrificed to it.

From the most ancient times, the Bible records how the pagan nations inhabiting Palestine in the time of Joshua and the Israelitish occupation worshiped in "groves." Wooded copses atop hills were used as pagan shrines. Sometimes, amidst the groves, the tops and branches were lopped off a standing tree, which was then carved to represent a phallic symbol, or carved with the face of a "god." Notice one outstanding example:

"And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

"And they set them up images and *groves* [groves of trees] in every high hill, and *under every green tree*:

"And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger" (2 Kings 17:9-11). God commanded them—as He commands us today—"LEARN NOT THE WAY of the heathen!" We are commanded of God NOT to adopt the customs; the "way" of worship of the demented, savage, ignorant minds of heathen peoples, thinking them "quaint" or "cute," and then pretending they are "Christian."

God said, "And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and *went after the heathen that were round about them*, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should *not do like them*" (2 Kings 17:15).

If pagan Amorites, Amalakites, Babylonians, Druids, Teutons, Celts, Greeks, Egyptians or Romans could come back to life today, they would immediately recognize many of the customs practiced by professing "Christians."

But where did the concept of cutting down millions of little firs, spruce, or balsams come from? Most authorities agree it stems from the fable of "St. Boniface" (meaning "pretty face"), who supposedly cut down the "great oak of Jupiter," a tree worshiped by pagan Teutons at Geismar in Hesse, Germany. As the story goes, Boniface, who is also identified as an early English missionary, named "Winfred", came upon a group of heathens who were worshipping at their huge, spreading oak, the "sacred oak of Jupiter." Poor little Prince Asulf was about to be sacrificed to "Jupiter," it seems, until Boniface and his armed men stopped the impending sacrifice and rescued Asulf. Then, Boniface ordered the tree cut down. The legend varies; one version claiming he then planted an evergreen in its place, and another claiming he told the pagans in the next day or so that, by a divine miracle, a little fir tree had "sprung up in its place," and that the new little tree was the "tree of life," and represented "Christ."

Quaint. Always accommodating, the apostate church and churchmen allowed heathens to cling to their symbols of worship, while merely calling them by a different name.

One version of the story says Boniface had a church built in honor of "St. Peter" from the felled oak. Some oak tree!

Today, some utterly ignorant "Christian" people will utter the bovine nonsense that the "evergreen is a symbol of everlasting life"!

But there is an even older version of the story, in which Nimrod, the first organizer of cities and city-states (Genesis 10:8-12), who was also identified with *Tammuz*, or the sun god, was depicted by a sacred tree, which was cut down, only to find that a young green tree had sprung up from the trunk overnight, thus representing the "rebirth" of Nimrod, or the sun god.

The early pagan Scandinavians were tree worshipers, and it was only natural that their "Brumalias" or the winter festival of Saturnalia should feature the holly tree and the fir tree, whose wreaths and branches were brought indoors. The Romans exchanged green tree branches on the "calends," or the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, as good luck symbols.

Today, tens of millions of beautiful trees, which COULD become huge, mature Douglas firs, spruce, balsams, or other kinds of conifers, and which COULD be used to build millions of homes, or produce resins, paper, and dozens of useful products, are instead cut down, then shipped via truck and rail to distribution points, then stood up, to have a base nailed to them, and sold to "Christians" to take indoors and decorate with orbs and bulbs.

As the tree withers and dies, it becomes a fire hazard. Each year, children and families die as a result of faulty wiring on Christmas tree lights.

Does God say anything about the Christmas tree? Notice, "Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel:

"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.

"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 ax.

"They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not" (Jeremiah 10:1-4). When God says LEARN NOT the "way of the heathen," He means exactly what He says. Notice further, "When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land;

"Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, 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; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods [this was done in *groves* of trees, or *asherah*, just as the worshipers of Jupiter were doing in Germany].

"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deuteronomy 12:29-32). Many will argue that Christmas and other pagan festivals are "extra-Biblical"; that, while they are not enjoined by scripture, are nevertheless harmless inventions of sincere Christians in worship of God and Christ. But God thunders at rebellious mankind, "Thou shalt not add thereto" in methods of worship!

Plainly, God commanded His people NOT TO COPY the modes of heathen worship of the degenerate pagan nations of the world; not to adapt their ceremonies, symbols, and rituals, and call them by a different name. Yet, in direct, flagrant disobedience to this divine command, tens of millions indulge in customs which would be readily recognized by pagan sun-worshippers.

Today, the entire TIME of late autumn until mid-winter is celebrated. The day or so after Hallowe'en (itself a totally demonic, satanic, pagan celebration), millions of commercial establishments drag out their Christmas decorations, and put them in their shops and display windows. God commanded, "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an *observer of times*, or an enchanter, or a witch,

"Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer [one who claims to be able to communicate with the dead],

"For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD..." (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

"'Tis the season to be jolly! Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la! Deck the halls with boughs of Holly!"—a familiar refrain. The "Christmas season" is exactly the same thing as "observing times"; observing the winter solstice, just as pagan sun-worshippers did.

The "holiday season," or "yuletide," or the "twelve days of Christmas" are commonly used to connote the "Christmas" holiday, or the "Christmas season."

### ***Where Did We Get The Yule Log?***

What in the world is "yuletide"? What is a "yule log," and where did it come from? Like so many of our "modern" customs, the yule log is also buried in the most ancient myths and superstitions. A Nordic word for the winter solstice was *geol*, the "g" being pronounced like our "y," thus: "yeol" or "yool." The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, states that the term has come to mean "the season of Christmas." Further, it says, "This word is chiefly used alone as an archaism or in poetry or poetical language, but is more common in combination, as in 'yuletide,' 'yule-log,' & etc....it was the name of two months of the year, December and January, the one the 'former yule' (*se aerra geola*) and the other the 'after yule' as coming before and after the winter solstice. According to A. Fick [its] proper meaning is noise, clamour, the season being one of rejoicing at the turning of the year among Scandinavian peoples before Christian times" (ibid. Vol 28, p. 946).

Writing of both the Christmas tree and the yule log, Hislop says, "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, the fir referring to him as Baal-Berith. The mother of Adonis, the sun-god and 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 the tree, the son must have been recognized as the 'man the branch.' And this entirely accounts for the putting of the yule log into the fire on Christmas eve, and the appearance of the Christmas tree the next morning...but why, it may be asked, does he enter the fire under the symbol of a log? ...Now the yule log is the dead stock of Nimrod, deified as the sun-god, but cut down by his enemies; the Christmas tree is Nimrod *redivivus*—the slain god come to life again" (*The Two Babylons*, Hislop, p. 87, 98).

Satan paved the way toward the Madonna and child with many false, counterfeit representations, including Isis and Osirus, which are the Egyptian versions of the Babylonian Nimrod and Semiramus.

Thus, it was no great leap of imagination for pagans to embrace the worship, NOT of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world; as the RULER, who will return to this earth to rule it with a rod of iron, but as a "little babe in his mother's arms"; worship symbols of "madonna and child." After all, they had done so for thousands of years! But God's Word does NOT portray Jesus Christ as being overshadowed by His mother, and does NOT urge WORSHIP toward the "queen of heaven," which was the role of Semiramus, the mother-wife of Nimrod!

### *Christmas Dinners—Boar's Heads, Geese and Turkeys*

Obviously, every pagan festival centered around food and drink—especially drink. Today, tens of millions of people all over the western world of professing Christianity revel in "office parties" at Christmas time; in neighborhood parties, and in many kinds of Christmas-oriented celebrations, from school plays to huge concerts.

The "Tom and Jerry" bowl is a carry-over from the "Wassail" bowl of ancient times. Bacchanalian orgies featured sumptuous banquets and wine. It was the sport of kings and nobles to hunt boar throughout Europe and the Balkans. But the boar represented more than wild game, at a king's table. Pagan mythology says "Adonis" was killed by an attack of a wild boar. Therefore, boars were sacrificed to Adonis in many countries. How the boar's head came to "grace" many a medieval (and modern) English table is another of those mystical, pagan stories of pure myth. Hislop says, "According to one version of the story of the death of Adonis, or Tammuz [the sun god], it was, as we have seen, in consequence of a wound from the tusk of a boar that he died. The Phrygian Attes, the beloved of Cybele, whose story was identified with that of Adonis, was fabled to have perished in like manner, by the tusk of a boar. Therefore Diana, who though commonly represented in popular myths only as the huntress Diana, was in reality the great mother of the gods, has frequently the boar's head as her accompaniment [in pagan statuary, icons, medals, etc.], in token not of any mere success in the chase, but of her triumph over the grand enemy of the idolatrous system, in which she occupied so conspicuous a place...in memory of the deed that the mystic boar had done, many a boar lost its head or was offered in sacrifice to the offended goddess" (Ibid. P. 100).

The same authority describes how the Saxons in Europe (sons of "Saac," or "Saccae," the sons of Isaac, and thus part of the so-called "Lost Ten Tribes") offered a boar in sacrifice "on Christmas day" to Venus for the "loss of her beloved Adonis."

Hislop wrote, "In Rome a similar observance had evidently existed; for a boar formed the great article at the feast of Saturn, as appears from the following words of Martial: 'That boar will make you a good Saturnalia.' Hence the boar's head is still a standing dish in England at the Christmas dinner, when the reason of it is long since forgotten. Yea, the 'Christmas goose' and the 'yule cakes' were essential articles in the worship of the Babylonian messiah, as that worship was practiced both in Egypt and at Rome" (ibid. P. 101).

Hislop includes two pictures; one features an Egyptian hieroglyph of the Egyptian god "Seb," with his symbol the goose on his head; the other shows a Roman sacrificial goose, bound, and placed on a stand, its head drooping down in death.

Once the apostate church had established December 25<sup>th</sup> as the *birthday* of Christ, it was a simple matter to count backward 9 months, and establish the festival called "Lady Day," on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March. "Lady Day." Was it mere coincidence that March 25<sup>th</sup> was a pagan celebration in Rome in honor of the *Babylonian messiah*, and his alleged miraculous conception in "Cybele," the "mother of god," or the "mother of the messiah?"

Of course, the pagan festivals all featured sumptuous feasting (the meaning of "festival"), so it was natural that those animals upon which they feasted carried symbolic meaning. In the United States, the turkey came to be the centerpiece of "Thanksgiving" because of the gifts of Indians to the Puritans, and because of the harvest of wild game such as the turkey, which was easier to kill once the leaves had dropped in late November. However, the turkey has no mystic symbolism whatsoever, and Thanksgiving is purely a national celebration in honor of God's blessings, and is utterly devoid of any pagan trappings or rituals.

### *"Here We Go `A-Wassailing'"*

One of the familiar "Christmas carols" is "Wassailing." To most, it is merely some ancient word they assume came from England or somewhere—perhaps Germany—they don't really know, which means, "Here we go, singing carols in the neighborhood on Christmas Eve."

But the old English word meant "Be whole," or "Be well."

Allegedly, the custom of "wassailing" began with "...the reception of King Vortigern by Hengist, when Rowena `came into the king's presence, with a cup of gold filled with wine in the hand, and making a low reverence to the king said, *Waes hael hlaford Cyning*, which means `Be of health, Lord King.' In a collection of ordinances for the regulations of the royal household in Henry VII's reign, the steward on the Twelfth Night [of the `Twelve nights of Christmas] was to cry `wassail' three times on entering with the bowl, the royal chaplain responded with a song. Wassailing was as much a custom in the monasteries as in laymen's houses, the bowl being known as *poculum Caritalis*. What is popularly known as wassailing was the custom of trimming with ribbons and sprigs of rosemary a bowl which was carried round the streets by young girls singing carols at Christmas and the New Year. This ancient custom still survives here and there, especially in Yorkshire, where the bowl is known as `the vessel cup,' and is made of holly and evergreens, inside which are placed one or two dolls trimmed with ribbons. The cup is borne on a stick by children who go from house to house singing Christmas carols. In Devonshire and elsewhere it was the custom to wassail the orchards [trees again!] on Christmas and New Year's eve. Pitchers of ale or cider were poured over the roots of the trees to the accompaniment of a rhyming toast to their healths" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, vol. 28, p. 361). One will recognize the English word "hale," as in "hale and hearty," in the word "wasshail," or "wassheil."

Thus various "quaint" superstitions were added to the custom of "wassailing." In Germany, the gamekeeper, once his hunter has killed a stag, breaks off a twig of evergreen, dips it into the blood of the animal, and then presents it with a "toast," pronouncing similar words, "Wass-heil!" The sprig of bloody evergreen then is worn in the successful hunter's hat band.

Here is a list of sometimes idiotic superstitions as practiced today from countries around the world during the middle of winter, about Christmas and New Years. As the *Back to Christmas Chronicles* gaily admits, "Midwinter has always been a time when spirits and monsters were on the prowl. It is also a time that looks forward to the coming of Spring, hence a good time for fortune-telling and weather forecasting." Then, the following list is included:

- 1) At midnight on Christmas Eve, all water turns to wine; cattle kneel facing the East; horses kneel and blow as if to warm the manger; animals can speak, though it's bad luck to hear them; [how cute—that way no one will be sure to destroy the myth by listening in!] bees hum the hundredth psalm.
- 2) In Ireland, it is believed that the gates of heaven open at midnight on Christmas Eve. During this brief period, those who die get to go straight to heaven, instead of having to wait on purgatory—where is Dr. Kevorkian? Sounds like he could be very busy in Ireland on Christmas Eve.
- 3) A child who is born on Christmas Eve is considered very lucky in many countries; however, in Greece, he is considered to be like an evil demon, and in Poland he may turn out to be a werewolf, according to pagan superstition.
- 4) Some idiotic people once conjured up the notion that each of the twelve days of Christmas indicates what the weather will be on the ensuing twelve months. Pretty stupid in the tropics, or anywhere else, for that matter.
- 5) In Germany, time was when unwed girls would sit in a circle, blindfold a goose, and the first girl the goose blundered into would be sure to marry within the year.
- 6) In northern Europe, it was considered bad luck to let the fire go out in the house during Christmas season—the yule log was a feature of such fires.
- 7) Another "quaint" custom was to see which spouse brought a holly wreath into the house first; if the husband, he would rule the house for the next year; if the wife, she would do so. This may have resulted in a mad scramble for holly.
- 8) In Greece, it was believed you should burn your old shoes in the fire during the Christmas season to avoid bad luck in the coming year.
- 9) Some believed one should never allow to fall, drop, or throw away the evergreen decorations once set up in the home. Instead, they should either be burnt, or "fed to your cow." Personally, I have never seen a cow eat a fir tree, and holly is rather prickly.
- 10) It is said that in Hertfordshire, England, the harvest is predetermined by sticking a plum cake on a cow's horn, then throwing cider into her face. If the cake falls forward, it will be a good harvest, if backward, a bad one.
- 11) In Sweden, Christmas Eve bodes evil. It is believed "trolls" roam the countryside during the night hours, and that one should remain indoors.

There are dozens more such idiotic and silly customs—so many space would not permit them to be catalogued. Many revolved around eating mince pie for luck, and of course, there is always the ancient Druidic belief that the parasite "mistletoe" is an aphrodisiac, since its waxen-white berries are present in the winter. Thus, mistletoe is hung over doorways and upon light fixtures and from the ceilings, so that, if one encounters one's neighbor's wife "under the mistletoe," it is mandatory to kiss. There is no record of how many fights, arguments, or even divorces have resulted from this practice.

Like the ignorant heathen of the past, modern professing "Christians" cheerfully indulge in such silly customs, believing them harmless and "quaint."

***When Was Jesus Christ Really Born?***

Since Jesus Christ was not born anywhere near December 25<sup>th</sup>, when was He really born? And, if we can determine the date with any reasonable degree of accuracy, are we to "observe His birthday"?

Believe it or not, there are biblical clues concerning the true date of Jesus Christ's birth. However, it is obvious the writers of the gospels did not think it important to include the exact date, speaking only of the *events* surrounding His birth, or events when he was 12 years of age, answering the learned doctors in the Temple, or when He began His ministry, being "about thirty." The Bible nowhere enjoins upon Christians to observe the birthday of Jesus Christ, or the birthday of any other famous biblical person, whether Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, or the apostle Paul!

Satan the devil is the great counterfeiter. He is the arch *deceiver*, who will go to any lengths to deceive and mislead God's people. He knows the old adage, "a miss is as good as a mile." Actually the word for "sin" means "to miss the mark." Just one tiny slash of a knife across the "smile" of the Mona Lisa would be enough to destroy the painting, just as only a "little" poison in an otherwise good meal can kill you. If people "miss the mark" in observing purely pagan customs, with pagan, mystical symbols all about, but call it "Christian," the devil is satisfied, for he has duped the people into committing SIN against God; "missing the mark" of the pure worship of the Creator of all things by doing the opposite of what He has commanded, "Learn NOT the way of the heathen."

For decades, I knew that Satan had obfuscated, or concealed the real truth about the Passover by the pagan substitution of "Easter," or *Ishtar*, a celebration of fecundity, procreation, and new life. I knew that eggs and rabbits symbolize fertility, and have nothing to do with Christ's resurrection. Hallowe'en is blatantly pagan, but is a HARVEST celebration of sorts, featuring corn stalks, squashes and pumpkins, along with all the demonic symbolism, and obfuscates God's true fall harvest festival, the "Feast of Tabernacles," which always falls on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month of God's sacred calendar.

But what does "Christmas" obscure?

What is hiding behind it? Is there something we would be better off if we knew about the latter part of December? Originally, there were those who celebrated December 25<sup>th</sup> as "St. Michaelmas" day, claiming it was the day of the *annunciation to Mary by the archangel*, and therefore was CONCEPTION day; the day God "became flesh." Was it?

There are some important clues we should understand. They begin with the miraculous birth of John the Baptist, who was Jesus' second cousin, and the "voice in the wilderness" who was to announce the coming of the Messiah.

Notice what the Bible says about this great event: ""There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, *of the course of Abia*: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

"And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

"And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

"And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God *in the order of his course*,

"According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

"And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

"And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

"And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

"But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

"And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

"For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

"And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

"And he shall go before him *in the spirit and power of Elias*, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

"And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

"And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.

"And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

"And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

"And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

"And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house" (Luke 1:5-23).

Zacharias served during the "course of Abia," or the EIGHTH of the priestly courses (meaning their assigned times of service) in the Temple (see 1 Chronicles 24:10). This took place twice each year. Each time of service, or "course" changed each week, commencing on the Sabbath. The reckoning commenced on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of Tisri or Tehanim, which was the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the "Last Great Day."

Remember that the courses *served together* at the three great feasts. The dates for the twice-yearly ministrations of Abia fall on the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of Chisleu (our December 6<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup>), and from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of Sivan, or our June 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup>.

Therefore, the announcement about the CONCEPTION OF JOHN occurred somewhere between our June 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> in 5 BC!

Old Zacharias' course ended on the Sabbath, our June 20<sup>th</sup>, which would have been a Sabbath. Therefore, he could not have journeyed to his home on that day, but would have left on the 21<sup>st</sup>, our Sunday. He lived "in the hill country of Judaea," about 30 miles away. Easily, this was a two day journey for an elderly man, putting him home late on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Sivan, or our June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Therefore, the miraculous conception of John HAD TO TAKE PLACE somewhere on June 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> of 5 BC!

To this day in England, the "Day of the Nativity of John the Baptist" is June 24<sup>th</sup>! In reality, it is not the date of his BIRTH, but the date of his conception!

Elizabeth and Mary were first cousins. Therefore, John the Baptist and Jesus were second cousins. John was conceived on the 7th of Nisan, corresponding to our June 23rd or 24th, in 5 BC.

Six months later, on the first day of the Jewish month Tebeth, which corresponds to our December 25th, 5 BC, Jesus Christ was begotten. Nine months later, when the shepherds were still "abiding in the fields by night," Christ was born in Bethlehem on our September 29th, which fell on the FIRST DAY OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES!"

*Bullinger's Companion Bible* says, "The fact of the *birth* of our Lord having been revealed to the shepherds by the Archangel Michael on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Tisri, corresponding to September 29<sup>th</sup>, 4 BC—the FIRST DAY OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES—must have been known to believers in the Apostolic age. But the 'mystery of iniquity' which was already working in Paul's day (2 Thessalonians 2:7) quickly enshrouded this and the other great fact of the day of the Lord's 'begetting' on the first day of the Jewish month *Tebeth*, corresponding to December 25<sup>th</sup>, 5 BC, as well as other events connected with His sojourn on earth, in a rising mist of obscurity in which they have ever since been lost.

"The earliest allusion to December 25<sup>th</sup> as the date for the Nativity is found in the *Stromata* of Clement of Alexandria, about the beginning of the *Third Century AD*.

"That 'Christmas' was a pagan festival long before the time of our Lord is beyond doubt. In Egypt, Horus, the son of Isis (queen of heaven), was born about the time of the winter solstice. By the time of the early part of the fourth century AD, the *real* reason for observing Christmas as the date for the miraculous 'begetting' of Matthew 1:18 and 'the Word becoming flesh' of John 1:14 had been lost sight of...If, however, we realize that the centre of gravity, so to speak, of what we call the Incarnation is the *Incarnation itself*—the wondrous fact of the Divine 'begetting' when 'the Word *became flesh*'—and that this is to be associated with December 25<sup>th</sup>, instead of March—as for 1,600 years Christendom has been led to believe—then 'Christmas' will be seen in quite another light..."

"The announcement to the shepherds by the Archangel Michael marked the birth of our Lord. John 1:14 is read as though 'the Word *became flesh*, and *dwelt among us*' were one and the same thing, whereas, they are *two* clauses. The paragraph should read thus: 'And the Word became flesh; [Gr. *Ho logos sarx egeneto.*] 'And tabernacled with [or among] us,' [Gr. *Kai eskenosen en hemin*].

"The word *tabernacled* here [preserved in the RV margin] receives beautiful significance from the knowledge that the 'Lord of glory' was 'found in fashion as a man,' and thus *tabernacling* in human flesh. And in turn it shows in equally beautiful significance that our Lord was born on the FIRST DAY OF THE GREAT JEWISH FEAST OF TABERNACLES, vis. The 15<sup>th</sup> of Tisri, corresponding to September 29<sup>th</sup>, 4 BC [modern reckoning].

"The circumcision of our Lord took place therefore on the *eighth* day, the last day of the Feast, 'The Great Day of the Feast' of John 7:37" (ibid. Appendix 179, emphasis mine).

Christ is the central figure of all the annual Sabbaths, or Feasts, of God. He is the Passover Lamb. He is the "living Bread" depicted by the unleavened bread of the "Days of Unleavened Bread" following the Passover. He is the FIRST of the "firstfruits" depicted by the "Feast of Sabbaths," or the "Feast of the Firstfruits," which was celebrated by counting until the 50<sup>th</sup> [the word "Pentecost" is Greek for "fiftieth"] day following the wave sheaf offering during the Days of Unleavened Bread. He is the soon-coming King of kings and Lord of lords, whose arrival is heralded by the blowing of the great trumpet of the archangel on the "Feast of Trumpets." He is our "Atonement" pictured by the fast day of Atonement.

The feast of temporary booths, or kiosks, or shanties, or huts, or "tabernacles," portrays our total transitory nature; our impermanence on this earth during our short physical life span.

In a shadowy type, it also looks forward to our eventual inheritance of our permanent, spirit body, when we inherit the Kingdom of God.

Notice, "Now this I say, brethren, that *flesh and blood* [this means you and me, in our physical bodies] cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep [die: the Bible continually uses profound "sleep" as a type of death], but we shall all be *changed*,

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be *changed*.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

Read the entire 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians. Paul explains how the physical body is to decay, but that, in the resurrection, a new spirit body is given to the dead in Christ, or the living in Christ, who are changed, in a "twinkling of an eye."

Notice, "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"

"Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened [made alive], except it die:

"And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

"But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

"All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

"It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and *there is a spiritual body*" (1 Corinthians 15:35-44).

You and I reside in a physical body. We may lose a leg, or an arm, or an eye, and we are still here. Our volition; our psyche; our personality; our conscience and will power reside in the frontal lobes of our brain, not in our kneecap or our elbow.

God's Holy Spirit enters into our MIND, changing our mind from carnal to spiritual—it does not enter into our kneecap or our elbow.

When God begets us with His Spirit, we become one more of His spiritual children—He is our FATHER, not merely in an intellectual sense, or as a "spiritual title," but in a very REAL sense! Notice how Paul puts it, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption [the Greek word means more than legal adoption. [It connotes "sonship"], whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with *our spirit*, that we are the *children* of God:

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:14-17).

God's Word says "there is a spirit in man." Most people falsely call it the "soul," believing in the pagan doctrine of the "immortality of the soul."

But the human spirit has no consciousness apart from the physical life sustained by the bloodstream. It is said to be deeply ASLEEP when the body dies. Notice how Paul said this several times: "...And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

"Then they also which are *fallen asleep* [meaning, "are dead"] in Christ are perished.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of *them that slept*" (1 Corinthians 15:17-20).

The human spirit, together with God's Holy Spirit, becomes a new, never-before, unique SPIRIT BEING; a new spiritual creation!

### *You Are Unique*

There is no one else quite like you. You are unique. Your fingerprints are different from anyone else among the more than five billion living humans. Your DNA is unique. The "pattern" that was imparted to the fertile egg in your mother's body by your father made you what you are.

In a tiny, microscopic beginning, YOU became you. It happened in only a moment of time, yet, all that you were to become—your unique fingerprints; color and texture of hair; color of eyes; skin color and texture; musculature and physical stature—everything about you, including inherited proclivities such as music or athletic prowess, began at the moment of conception. At that moment, YOU became you. You WERE, from that moment. Yet, you were smaller than the period at the end of this sentence.

Millions take human procreation; life itself, for granted. But human life, and the awesome law of "biogenesis," that kind reproduces after kind, is a miracle.

The Bible uses begettal (conception) and birth as analogies to help us understand spiritual begettal and rebirth. Almost intuitively, societies all over the world, from the most primitive to the most developed, believe that there is something "spiritual" about human life—that there is life after death in some form. Few seem willing to accept the plain truth about the next life from He who conquered death in human flesh: Jesus Christ.

He said to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:5-8). Nicodemus knew Christ used a term for birth which was exactly the same term one would use in describing human or animal birth. This is why He retorted, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3:4). Nicodemus was not attempting bawdy humor. He knew Christ spoke of actual BIRTH, not some emotional human experience, and the proof is in what he asked.

Christ then stated a simple fact. That which is born of flesh IS FLESH. But that which is born of the Spirit IS SPIRIT. Simple, and yet millions refuse to believe or accept it, and prefer to twist this plain statement into a pretzel-like shape of confused contortion, and believe that being "born again" is an emotional experience—or "speaking in tongues."

The Greek word John used is *gennao*. In the Greek, the entire process of conception, fetal development and parturition, or birth, is encompassed in that one word. Just as you and I were BEGOTTEN at the moment in time when our father's sperm impregnated our mother's fertile egg, so we can become BEGOTTEN CHILDREN OF GOD at the moment when God's Holy Spirit comes into our mind, to join with our human spirit, and form a "new creature" in Christ!

### *The Inspiring Truth About "Tabernacles"*

It is because Satan has obfuscated the fabulous truths contained in the types presented to us in God's annual Sabbaths that millions are confused and deceived.

Paul knew he was dwelling in a "temporary tabernacle"; his body—and he knew that at his death, the body would be laid down in the grave, but that the new spiritual creation; the "new creature in Christ" would merely be "asleep," and would be resurrected at the second coming of Christ.

He wrote, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"But we have this treasure [this priceless knowledge of salvation and God's plan] in *earthen vessels*, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:6, 7). Paul knew our bodies are like clay bowls, or urns. They are merely temporary, fragile, earthen vessels, which contain something very precious.

He said, "For which cause we faint not; but though our *outward man perish* [the aging process, and eventual death], yet the *inward man is renewed day by day*.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment [in comparison, our fleshly lives are but a brief span], worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are *temporal*; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). How true. We cannot see, taste, smell, hear or feel spirit. We know physical things by the physical senses, but we can only understand

spiritual things by the power of God's Holy Spirit. Our bodies are "temporal," meaning transitory, temporary. But the spiritual life which can be begotten within us is PERMANENT—eternal.

Paul wrote, "For we know that if *our earthly house* of this *tabernacle* were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

"If so be that being clothed [with a spirit body; with eternal life!] we shall not be found naked.

"For we that are *in this tabernacle* [we "new creatures in Christ" who live temporarily in a human, physical body] do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Corinthians 5:1-4).

Can anything be plainer?

The beautiful type of dwelling in "tabernacles" or "booths" during the Feast of Tabernacles in the Autumn impresses upon us the TEMPORALITY of this human life; the impermanence of our physical bodies, and the yearning for life after death; eternal life with Christ in His kingdom. Notice further, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, *he is a new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Being "in Christ" means to be converted, baptized, and to receive God's Holy Spirit. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9).

These words are not so much spiritual "salt and pepper" sanctimonious-sounding phrases to be quickly read or intoned in a sermon, with almost no meaning. Paul meant that, once we have been begotten of God's Holy Spirit, our very lives are no longer constituted only in the flesh; a physical, temporary, metabolic organism dependent upon food, water and air for daily survival, but constituted IN SPIRIT, because a new spiritual CREATION has been begotten within us. If you are a repentant, converted, baptized person who has had hands laid on for the receiving of God's Holy Spirit, you are a "new creation" inside a temporary physical body.

One may say, "I lost my leg in the war," but the PERSON is still there; the personality, the character, the memory, the will power, the decision-making ability, the conscience — all are intact. Carried to its bizarre extreme, even a blind, armless, legless human being is alive, so long as the human intelligence survives in the brain.

Paul wrote, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with *our spirit* [each of us possesses a human spirit in the frontal lobes of our brain] , that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

When you were born, you had the physical characteristics of both parents. This became more obvious as you matured. When God gives us of His Holy Spirit, which begets us as His children, He imparts to us a bit of His own nature: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be *partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

As I partook of the *nature* of my human, physical father, Herbert W. Armstrong, and possess many of his personality traits and characteristics, so we partake of the *nature* of our Divine Heavenly Father in the "inner man," or the "new creature in Christ."

Notice how the apostle Peter reminded Christians about this temporary "tabernacle" in which we live: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

"Yea, I think it meet, *as long as I am in this tabernacle* [meaning as long as he was living physically within his body], to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

"Knowing that shortly I must *put off this my tabernacle*, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me" (2 Peter 1:12-14). Jesus had told Peter that the time would come when he would be martyred. Peter knew that time was drawing near. With the powerful HOPE the knowledge of God engendered, Peter knew that HIS LIFE was constituted in the "new creature in Christ"; a SPIRITUAL life which was only dwelling temporarily in a human, physical body.

Such faith inspires courage and confidence. Peter could face martyrdom with stolid determination, knowing what lay beyond. He wrote, "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able *after my decease* to have these things always in remembrance" (Verse 15).

How plain! Peter spoke of his physical body as a temporary dwelling place; a "tabernacle," which was subject to death.

The profound and moving truth about Christ's begetting and birth has been buried beneath a jangled, confusing, convoluted, avalanche of pagan myth and superstition! Christmas obscures the TRUE time of Christ's birth, which was on the FIRST DAY OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES!

Tabernacles pictures the beautiful truths you have just read; that we are only temporarily dwelling in human, physical bodies, but that a new creation; a never-before, never-to-be-again, once only, UNIQUE spiritual creature in Christ, possessing the Divine Nature, is to be born into God's Kingdom.

Christ came to this earth to "tabernacle" in human flesh! That is the very meaning of the word of John 1:14, "...And the Word was made flesh, and *dwelt [tabernacled]* among us...."

His temporary sojourn among the creatures of His own design and creation was for many and profound reasons. He came to live a perfect life in the flesh through the power of God's Holy Spirit, thus becoming a flawless, unblemished sacrifice for sin. He came to call, teach, and commission His disciples, thus building His church. He came to deliver the good news (the gospel) of the coming Kingdom of God; the world-ruling GOVERNMENT of God which will rule all nations with a rod of iron for 1,000 years (Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 20:4). He came to DISqualify Satan, the "lord of the dead," and to qualify as King of kings and Lord of lords. He came to die for the sins of all mankind, and to be resurrected from the dead, to ascend to His Father, having condemned sin in the flesh. He came to qualify as our DAILY HIGH PRIEST, as the entire book of Hebrews expounds.

How FABULOUS are these TRUTHS of God, when compared to "Santa Claus" allegedly coming down chimneys, holly wreaths, mistletoe, Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer, the yule log, and orbs and bulbs on trees, symbolizing fertility and the pagan worship of the sun!

Of course, IF THERE IS NO GOD, none of this makes any difference.

But GOD DOES EXIST, and He thunders at rebellious mankind, "*LEARN NOT THE WAY OF THE HEATHEN!*"

Millions will rationalize their continued observance of heathen customs, finding comfort in the fact that "everyone else is doing it." But God says, to those who live amid "spiritual Babylon," "*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*"

"For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities" (Revelation 18:4).

Will YOU be one who will surrender your will to God, and *come out of Babylon*, and into the glorious light of God's truth? o

-End-

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