

Bible History and Archeology

7. Christmas, Easter and Lent

History and the Bible

How Pagan Holidays got into the Church.

People like to consider themselves very modern today. They think they are smarter than ever before in history and like to feel they are free from all those old superstitions of the past. They talk about having 'evolved' to higher intelligence, and laugh at people who are so old-fashioned as to believe in the literal interpretation of the Bible. They idolize the teachings of 'science, falsely so called', while failing to discern that what they are taught as 'science', is really influenced more by certain power-hungry forces seeking to promote their own goals, and also by big corporate money-making schemes. In many cases the 'superstitions' of the past may have had more truth in them than 'science' as presented by the popular media of today.

How surprised they would be if they knew the truth, that many of the customs, habits and the events of our social calendars today, have actually come down to us from dusty, old, pagan idolatrous rituals. People of today follow patterns of behavior that have no basis in reality or fact and stem only from the teachings of ancient pagan priests. Let's explore this, shall we?

"Now when Jesus was born In Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem." Matthew 2:1.

Now there is no evidence at all that Jesus was ever born on December 25. History does not record the date of Christ's birthday. The Bible is as silent as a tomb on the subject of the birthday of Jesus. It's very evident that God never wished us to know the date; if He did, He would have told us clearly in the Bible what date Jesus was born.

December 25 has been handed down to us from the Catholic Church. It comes from Pope Julius. The Catholics even admit themselves that it's only a traditional date. The Greek Orthodox Church celebrates Christmas on January 6. So we have two great divisions in Christendom today who are divided over the date of Christ's birthday.

In Matthew 2 it says, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king. Now we know the year that Christ was born, in 4 B. C. By the way, that harmonizes perfectly with the great prophecy that we dealt with before on the great time period of Daniel 9. It brought us right down to the fact that Jesus was born in 4 B.C.

"And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt. And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son." Matthew 2:12-15.

So you see, Christ was down in Egypt until the death of Herod. Now Herod died in March, 4 B. C., and Jesus was born before that in the year 4 B.C, We can be absolutely certain regarding the year of Christ's birth, but no one knows the exact date within that year that Christ was born.

There are two reasons that make December 25 a most unlikely date for the birthday of Jesus. In Luke 2:1 it says that Caesar Augustus passed a law that all the world should be taxed. Now he had an idea that the taxation would not take on too well. We've had taxation now for over two thousand years, and still the thing isn't popular.

Augustus passed this decree that everyone had to return to the town of their birth. That's why Mary and Joseph, living up there in Nazareth, had to travel down to Bethlehem, the town of their birth. December 25, of course, in the Northern Hemisphere is in the middle of winter. No emperor would pass a decree which was impossible to keep because it was impossible to travel in snow at that time of the year.

Another reason that December 25 is the most unlikely date for the birthday of Jesus is the fact that the Bible says that shepherds were out on the fields minding their sheep. Now no shepherds would be out minding their sheep in the middle of winter in the Northern Hemisphere. Some people in Australia, who come from the northern hemisphere, they know what they do to the beasts. They house them. So it's very evident that December 25, of all the dates that have been suggested, could not be the date of Christ's birth.

In fact, Dr. Adam Clark of the Methodist Church, in his commentary, he says, "The cold is so intense in the Middle East in winter, as to kill both men and beast." So December 25 is the most unlikely date that has ever been suggested for the birthday of Christ.

Here are some of the dates that have been put forth by writers as to be the birthday of Jesus. January 2, May 20, April 18, March 28, January 6. In fact, 136 different dates have been suggested for the birthday of Jesus. Obviously, no one knows the exact date of Christ's birthday. In Jerusalem alone today, there are fourteen different dates that are celebrated as the birthday of Jesus.

In the days of Oliver Conwell, a decree was passed in England, forbidding the Scots and the English to celebrate December 25 as the birthday of Christ. The reason they gave, was because they said it came from paganism, through the Catholic Church. They didn't want to have anything to do with paganism, with heathenism. In fact, I don't know whether it is still true today, but I know that up until a few years ago in Scotland they do not celebrate Christmas on December 25. They believe that the origin was from paganism, handed down through Catholicism, and they wanted to have nothing to do with that. So they keep the New Year's day rather than Christmas day.

Then notice the Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume 3, page 724, mentions March 28, April 19, and May 20, as dates that have been advocated by early writers for the birthday of Jesus. Then they say, it was shown that there has been no month in the year to which, respective of authority, have not been assigned to Christ's birth. So it's evident that no one has any idea as to the exact date of Christ's birthday.

You see, round about the fourth century after Christ, when paganism was starting to infiltrate into the Christian church, the Bible says that there would come a great falling away from the truth. Paul warned about that in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 that there would come an apostasy, error, which would start to creep into the Christian church and it crept in for two reasons.

The first reason is because the early Christians hated the Jews. Now no one should hate the Jews, but the early Christians did. The reason they hated the Jews was because the Jews crucified Christ. So anything that was Jewish, the early Christians wanted to keep away from. You know, the Jews cost the Romans an awful lot of headaches. When Jerusalem fell in the year 70 A.D., they said, "Hip, Hip, Hooray!" Hip, Hip, Hooray!" You probably have said those words many times at parties, and wondered where they originated. Well, actually, they come from the old Roman days; when Jerusalem fell, they said, "Jerusalem is fallen, Jerusalem is fallen, Hooray, Hip, Hip, Hooray! We still carry on those words even though most of us don't understand what they're all about. It comes from the Anti-Jewish feeling that generated back in the Roman days. So the early Christians wanted to get as far away from the Jews as they possibly could; anything that the Jews did, they didn't want to do.

You know, it's a very foolish attitude because everything that we have, as far as the Bible is concerned, comes to us from the Jews. Every Bible writer, with a possible exception of Luke, was a Jew. So if you're going to do away with a thing because it is Jewish, the Bible would have to go. Jesus Himself was a Jew. His mother was a Jewess. And every particle of Christianity that we have, has been handed down to us, through the Jews. God entrusted the Jews with the truth of God. They were the depository of all the truth. So we should never hate the Jews because they were God's special chosen people. But the early Christians, because of what the Jews had done to Christ and in persecuting the early church, wanted to get away from anything that was Jewish.

The second reasons that error started to creep in, within the Christian church, was because the pagans were living right throughout the Roman Empire. And in the time of Constantine, he wanted to combine the Christian church with the pagan sun-worship. So he claimed to have had a vision and marched his army through a river and told them they were all now Christians. So many pagans began to come within the church and they wanted their old customs.

So these two reasons largely explain why pagan teachings or heathen teachings began to come into the Christian church. This new official church was simply baptized paganism. Pagan ideas came into the church and were given a Christian name, and were adopted and accepted by some of the Christians. That's why they referred to this period as baptized paganism. This is the period when December 25 was set as the birthday of Jesus.

The Encyclopedia Britannica says in the 11th edition, Volume 18, page 622, "December 25 was celebrated as the birthday of the ancient Persian sun god, Mithras, whose religion was a rival of Christianity during the early Christian centuries." So the Encyclopedia Britannica points out that December 25 was actually the birthday of the Persian sun god, Mithras, and they're quite correct.

"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before [or against] the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord." Genesis 10:8, 9.

Nimrod was the first king of the earth. In fact, his name means, rebel. He set up his kingdom in a place later called Babel or Babylon. His kingdom was set up in direct opposition to what God had said. God had said, "Go out and fill the earth," after the flood. But Nimrod said, "No." He was going to build up a great empire in Babel or Babylon, and he built it up in direct defiance of what God had said.

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." Genesis 11:9.

"Babel" means confusion. God confounded the language of those people because they were building up a city in direct opposition to what God had said. All through the Bible, from Genesis clear through to Revelation, you find that God sets aside two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem. Babylon is used in the Bible always as a symbol of that which is the counterfeit to the truth of God, that which is error. On the other hand, Jerusalem stands for the truth of God. Really, the Bible is simply a tale of two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem.

When you get over to the book of Revelation, you'll find once again that Babylon is brought into prominence because Babylon stands for that which is counterfeit. From Babylon, the counterfeit, sun worshiping paganism spread all around the earth. That's why Jeremiah says, "Babylon hath made the nations mad [crazy]."

When the Medo-Persians conquered Babylon, their sun worshiping priest fled down there to a place in Asia Minor called Pergamos. It's interesting that in Revelation 2, when the Bible talks about Pergamos, it says, that's where Satan's seat is. Finally when Rome came across and conquered the world, it took the religion of Pergamos, which was in fact the religion of Babylon, and took it over to Rome.

So the religion of Pagan Rome was nothing more or less than the religion of ancient Babylon. That's why the book of Revelation doesn't refer to it as Rome, but calls it Babylon, because the same religious counterfeit system established back there in Babylon is found in Rome. From Rome it has infiltrated right around the world. Sun-worshiping spread from Babylon, into Medo-Persia, the Greeks got it from the Phoenicians, and then the Romans got it from the Greeks. It all traces back to ancient Babylon.

When God called His people out of Egypt, I want you to notice the warning that He gave, especially to His people.

"After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances." Leviticus 18:3.

God made it very clear that His people were not to copy the religion or the ordinances or the ceremonies of the Egyptians. These people were a very, very religious people, "but don't copy their religion". In fact, God repeated this warning.

"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. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." Deuteronomy 12: 30, 32.

They were not to copy the religion of the surrounding nations around Israel. They were not to add anything to what God said, and they were not to subtract anything from what God said. Just do exactly what I say, what I've commanded. But the tragedy of Israel was that they did exactly what God said don't do. Here's the prophet Ezekiel:

"He said also unto me. Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz." Ezekiel 8:13, 14.

Who or what was Tammuz and why did they weep for him? It is a most interesting story and we can't give all the details here, but Nimrod, that Mighty Hunter, had a wife named Semiramis. Nimrod was killed in some way while still fairly young and his widowed Queen had some ideas of her own as to how to remain in power. She had an illegitimate son whom she called Tammuz and claimed that Nimrod was now the sun-god and she had conceived by the rays of the sun! We can recognize a counterfeit of the virgin birth in this.

Tammuz grew up to be a handsome and dashing young man and all the ladies admired him. Like Nimrod, he also loved to hunt but one day he was attacked by a huge wild boar (pig); grievously wounded, he soon died. This is how the boar became known in mythology as the 'Killer of the gods' and the boar's head came to be served on feast-days. It was then that all the ladies of the realm gathered to weep and mourn for their fallen hero the son of the sun-god, for 40 days! It became a custom that every year in the spring, women would fast and weep for Tammuz for those 40 days. Here the Bible says that in Israel there were women weeping for Tammuz, celebrating those pagan 40 days.

But first we need to see what that has to do with December 25. Now the 22nd in the northern part of the world is the shortest day of the year. People believed the Sun was dying, then by the 25th, the days were again getting longer and so it was declared to be the birth of the Sun-god. Nimrod had died and now Tammuz was the Babylonian sun god.

The Babylonian symbol for Tammuz was like our '+' or the cross. Usually, what they put a circle around it as the symbol of the sun. All over their pagan temples they would have the cross and the circle, the symbol of Tammuz.

"Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shall see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshiped the sun toward the east." Ezekiel 8:15, 16.

The Bible says that right in the very church of God there were men who had their backs towards God's church bowing down toward the east, worshiping the sun toward the east.

The ancient pagans named the days of the week in honour of their gods. Because the sun was the great male god, the most important god, naturally when it came to naming the week, the first day of the week was named in honour of the sun. That's where the name Sunday comes from, the day of the sun. It was named in honour of Tammuz.

The next most important god was the moon. She was the female, and so the next day was named Moon's day. Now in English we have shortened this down to become Monday. The rest of the days of the week were all named in honor of different pagan gods, right through to Saturday which was really Saturn's day.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" Isaiah 14:12.

When Satan set up his counterfeit religion, he chose the first day of the week, and the sun to be his symbol; sun worship is his religion set up in direct opposition to the truth of God.

"But I say, that the things, which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." 1 Corinthians 10:20.

Paul is pointing out that pagan worship is nothing more or less than devil worship. It has been followed in some form by all pagan religions.

When is the sun in the east? In the early morning; if these people were bowing down and worshiping the sun toward the east, they would be worshiping in the early morning. Sunday was their big day. Have you ever seen Christian people who get up very early on Sunday morning, often before breakfast, and go to church for the 'Mass'?

You often see that very Tammuz-sun symbol on top of churches. Inside you'll find, down at the altar, a big round gold disk. Gold was the symbol of the sun, and the circle is the symbol of the sun. What has that got to do with Christianity? Nothing; it has a whole lot to do with sun worship, that's where it originated. When a Catholic goes into his church, and they walk in front of that little red light down in the front, they always bow and kneel in front of that, they think of as god. Every Catholic knows very well that the cracker called the 'host' is always round like a sun-disc.

The Catholic Encyclopedia says, their churches are built so that when their members kneel, they face the east. The pagans were doing that hundreds of years before Jesus was ever born in Bethlehem.

As we said, in the Northern Hemisphere, on December 21 and 22 it appeared that their sun god had sort of died. In many places they thought they had to offer human sacrifices to the sun at this time to bring it back to life! Then as they saw the days getting longer again they were sure their sacrifices had done it. So by December 25 it appeared that their sun god had a resurrection, a new birth. So December 25 was chosen by those sun worshiping pagans as the birthday of the sun.

Now when Christianity was becoming mixed with paganism, they decided to keep the date, December 25, and call it the birthday of the Son of God. The change was made just as simply as that, from the son of the sun-god to the Son of God. That's briefly how December 25 came into the Christian church.

So what has big dinners and getting drunk got to do with celebrating the birthday of Jesus? Absolutely nothing; but it's got a whole lot to do with paganism. Pagan feasts always had a big dinners, feasting and alcohol to celebrate the birthday of the sun. so right into Christianity, came the same concept of having big dinners and getting drunk at Christmas that the pagans were doing hundreds and hundreds of years before Jesus was even born.

Here's something else God warned about.

"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." Jeremiah 10:1, 2.

Remember how the pagans would be worried and afraid when they saw the days getting so short? They went and offered human sacrifices!

What God said also includes astrology; "Don't copy the way of the heathen, don't be dismayed at the signs of the heavens such as the zodiac." Yet even today, when people ought to know better, there are millions in the world who never start the day without reading their luck in the stars. The heathen worried about astrology and their luck in the stars in the zodiac, and God tells us not to copy them.

Here is another pagan custom:

"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. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not," Jeremiah 10:3, 4.

The pagans, hundreds of years before Jesus was born, used an evergreen tree as another symbol of Tammuz. They would cut a young evergreen tree, bring it inside, and deck it with gold and with silver. Then on the top of the tree they would always have a round gold disk or a star. Have you ever seen Christian people do the same thing? About Christmas time they go out and get an evergreen and they bring it inside their house. Then they deck it with silver and with gold. The very thing that Jeremiah was talking about over five hundred years before Jesus was even born.

Why did they use silver and gold? Well, the gold is very obvious. That would be the symbol of the sun. Why the silver? It's the symbol of the moon. We still talk about the silvery moon. It comes to us from Babylonian sun worship, and they were doing it hundreds and hundreds of years before Jesus was ever born. Not only were they cutting trees down and decorating them with silver and gold, but what else?

"Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven...." Jeremiah 7:17, 18.

Now if the king of heaven was the sun, the moon would be the queen of heaven. The Babylonians called the sun god, Tammuz, but the moon goddess, her name was Ishtar.

The main entrance into ancient Babylon was through the Ishtar gate. Ishtar was the name of the moon goddess. The same as Tammaz was the name of the sun god. It's very significant that

when you translate this Babylonian "Ishtar" into English, it comes out as Easter. That's where we get our name "Easter" from. Ishtar, Easter, it sounds almost the same, doesn't it? Of course, Easter every year, to those Babylonians, moved about on the basis of the moon. Now if Easter is supposed to commemorate the death and the resurrection of Christ, then like your birthday, it ought to be the same date every year, isn't that right? But Easter is never on the same date every year. It moves around, by the moon, it can vary up to six weeks from year to year.

Way back here in the book of Jeremiah, the Bible says, they were baking cakes to the queen of heaven. In other words, at Easter time, at Ishtar time, the Babylonians would always bake cakes to Easter. When they made them, they always made them round. Then they would put on them the symbol of Tammuz.

Have you ever heard of hot-cross buns? Well, that's where they originated, right back in Babylonian sun and moon worship. They're always round, and they have the cross which is the symbol of Tammuz. Don't let anyone tell you that hot-cross buns originated because of Christ. Nothing doing. They were being baked over five hundred years before the baby cry of Jesus broke the stillness of Bethlehem.

What have Easter eggs got to do with the resurrection of Christ and His death? They've got nothing. What have bunny rabbits got to do with the death and the resurrection of Christ? They've got nothing to do with the death and the resurrection of Christ, but they've got a whole lot to do with moon worship and Ishtar worship.

Let me explain; in the Northern Hemisphere, Ishtar worship or Easter always comes at spring. In our Southern Hemisphere it comes at autumn. But it's always spring in the Northern Hemisphere. Spring is the time when life is generated, especially in the animal world. It's interesting that Easter is about nine months before Christmas. Easter stands for conception, whereas Christmas stands for birth, and they're about nine months apart. Easter always came in the spring, and about nine months later the birth took place. The egg is a symbol of fertility, and that's why the egg is associated with Easter.

What have bunny rabbits got to do with it? Well, a rabbit is about the most fertile of all animals. If you have a pair of rabbits, it's not long before you have a lot of rabbits, and it won't take many weeks either, about every six weeks or so, they breed. So the rabbit was chosen because it was about the most fertile.

These things have come down to us down through the ages with nothing at all to do with Christ and His resurrection, but a whole lot to do with Ishtar worship, which came from Babylonian sex worship. Tied up with moon worship was an awful lot of corruption, as far as morality was concerned.

Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume 5, page 277, says, "A great many pagan customs, celebrating the return of spring, generated in the Easter." So they admit there were many pagan ideas that have come down to us through Easter."

We can be fairly certain of the date of Christ's death and His resurrection, because it was associated with the Jewish Passover, and we can trace that back. And yet the date of Easter jumps around every year, depending upon the moon. Whereas the date of Christ's birthday,

which no one on earth knows, they celebrate as a fixed day. The origin of these things is from paganism.

Lent is forty days before Easter. You show me in the Bible a period of forty days before Easter connected with the death of Christ. You won't find it. But the pagans had a forty-day fast before Easter, when the women wept for Tammuz. Then when it came to Easter they celebrated new life, they would let all the reins of lust and immorality loose, as Easter, the symbol of fertility, came about.

The Greeks and the Romans called their queen of heaven Venus. So corrupt was this worship that that's where we get our word "venereal" from, like in venereal disease—diseases from immoral sexual indulgence. It will give you some idea of the corruption of that worship.

The same apostasy which brought these pagan ideas into the Christian church, is the same paganism that has brought Sunday into the church as a day of Christian worship. We have been brought up to thinking it is right, the same that we have been brought up to believe in bunny rabbits and Easter eggs, without understanding the origin of these things. We hardly ever question them.

When the devil had Jesus crucified, it was on a cross, symbol of the sun-god. The devil thought he had triumphed in having Jesus crucified on his own symbol, the cross. But the Bible says that Jesus came forth from the grave, on Sunday morning, very early, before the sun got up, to show His triumph over sun worship, the big day the devil had set up in opposition to the Sabbath of God. Jesus come forth from the tomb a victor, crucified on the devil's own symbol, but rose on the devil's own day, to show that He was a victor over sun worship.

Jesus said. "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Matthew 15:13. Jesus wants us to get every last vestige of paganism and sun worship, out of our lives. He wants us to come back to the commandments of God and the faith, the teachings of Jesus.

"Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." Galatians 4:8-11.

Paul said, "What are you doing going back to observing all those pagan days now that you've become a Christian." They were going back to observe all those pagan ideas. But you will read the Bible from cover to cover, and you'll find that God never asked you to keep those days. These Christians in Galatia were going back to the pagan ideas, and Paul says, "What are you doing observing days, and months, and times, and years."

One man said, "I am one of these two-day-a-year churchmen. I don't bother going to church much, but I never fail to go to church on Good Friday and Christmas day. That's two days that I never fail to go to church on." Millions are like him; never miss going to church on those two

days, and yet the Bible is as silent as a tomb on the subject of going to church on Good Friday and Christmas day. The Bible never asked you to go to church on those days.

Ancient paganism and the modern eastern occult religions have all these things in them. They have the rosary beads. They wear red robes. Their monks and nuns aren't allowed to marry. They have the confessional. They have the candles. They have the holy water. They have the incense. They have the golden images. You'll never read about any of those things in the Bible, but they came down, handed to us from paganism, from heathenism. When Christianity began to get away from the teachings of this dear Book, the Bible, they began to adopt the teachings and ways of paganism.

The further a church is away from following God's Word, the more inclined they are to follow these pagan ideas. That's what happened. They got away from the Word of God, and they began to adopt the teachings and the ways of paganism. The terrible thing is that this church turned around then, and persecuted and killed those who wanted to stand for the truth of God. Let me read that to you.

"And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." Revelation 17:5, 6.

A woman in Bible prophecy is a symbol of the church. Here was a church drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. "And when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." It doesn't mean that John admired her, but he was staggered that here was a church, supposedly a Christian church, that would go and persecute God's people. It was drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

You know, over there in the days of Henry II, there was a tailor who was caught working on one of these pagan days, and before the judge, he said, "Sir, I am a very poor man. I have nothing, but the labour of my hands to depend upon. The Bible tells me of no day to keep except the Sabbath, and hence I do not keep them." And do you know, history records that man was burned at the stake because he wouldn't observe these pagan days. That's why God has a message in these last days.

"And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." Revelation 18:2, 3.

This false teaching has infiltrated right round to every nation. "And the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her." She's in league with the political leaders of the earth. "And the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." She's tied up in high finance; just think for a minute of the huge amounts of money spent on things related to these pagan celebrations!

Verse 4. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Where are God's people, according to that verse? In Babylon, in this religious confusion; and that's why the call in the last days for God's people, is to come out of her, My people. Come out of this pagan apostasy. Come back to keep the commandments of God, "That ye be not partakers of her sins."

"Sin is the transgression of the law" 1 John 3:4. "And that ye receive not of her plagues." God is sending a message in these last days to come out of Babylon. Come back to the commandments of God and the faith, the teachings of Jesus. God is in deadly earnest about these things, it is not a light trifling thing. The last great issue is going to be over Babylon, transgressing and treading down God's truth.

I find it a marvellous thing, a wonder and amazement to me, that mankind will observe all these pagan days that God has never asked a man to observe, and yet, the one day that God has asked men to observe, the seventh-day Sabbath, they will do almost everything not to observe it. That is why God has a message to call men and women back to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He wants to bless us, but how can He when we are keeping the devil's special days and ignoring God's holy Sabbath?

In closing, let's look at a question that concerns this issue; what do we do about Christmas as people offer us wishes and maybe our friends and family offer gifts or expect them? One thing we don't do is commence a tirade attacking their happy time and telling them all we know. It is best to respond kindly in a way that shows a caring attitude towards them, but at the same time politely decline to take part in parties and celebrations. For general contacts we can just wish them well and if someone gives an unexpected gift, usually it can be received with thanks for their thoughtfulness; or if it is some indulgence we would not partake of for health reasons, it may be able to be declined while telling the person we really appreciate their thoughtfulness and wish them the best.

For lonely folk that have little joy in their lives, it is not wrong to take a simple gift of something useful and pray with them. Christmas is a good time to wrap a truth filled book or give an encouraging DVD or something to neighbors. It can be a great time to find many openings for kindly service, even while holding to our own standards of serving our Lord.

Folk who feel they must rant and rave against Christmas and denounce those who keep it, have more of the spirit of Satan than the Lord. Let your light shine, but don't bother to curse the darkness, unless it is to speak against drunkenness and intemperance. We can always pray and ask for wisdom to handle each situation wisely!

Finally, the fact that Jesus was born is a wonderful thing; There is never a wrong time to tell the Bethlehem story, and singing the sweet carols that speak of this amazing condescension of our Lord is never wrong no matter what time of year it is.