

# Christmas

## A Holiday Rooted in Paganism That Christians Must Avoid

Most people in the so-called Christian world observe the season of Christmas in some form. Few challenge that it is not a “Christian” observance, but go along with the masses that hardly blink an eye when the yuletide season arrives each December. “Of course it is Christian!” speak millions of the faithful, parroting millions of others across the land who dare not challenge the vast majority in their sheeplike pattern of compliance. “It is the day Jesus Christ was born. How could it be anything other than Christian?” “How can such a vast majority be wrong on so critical an issue as the nativity of our very Lord and Savior?”

Yet, gnawing questions continue to rear their heads as Scriptural and secular records are searched.

- How could the shepherds still be in the outlying fields if it was the dead of winter, when the sheep were already in the sheepfolds?

- Why would Christ be born when the sun was at its lowest in the sky, corresponding to the time of the ancient Babylonian festival of sun worship that occurred at the same time...at the winter solstice?

- Why did not God reveal the exact time of Christ’s birth if He meant for us to observe it in the first place? Did God command us to keep Christ’s birthday?

- How does a jolly fat man clothed in a bright red suit fit into the observance of our Saviour’s birth ... and what do those gravity-defying rein-

deer have to do with Him?

- Why do people give gifts to each other at Christmas time when the only gifts given in Scripture at that time were from the wise men to Christ, the newborn king?

Many other questions could be asked about this time of Christmas and its surrounding customs. Few people realize that Christmas was banned in parts of the United States early in its history. Note the following quotes.

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In 1659 the Puritan colony in Massachusetts passed a law that anyone ‘found observing any such day as Christmas or the like either by forbearing labor, feasting, or in any other

way, shall be fined five shillings.’ Many early Americans who refused to work on Christmas either went to jail or paid fines.”<sup>1</sup>

“Christmas was once banned in Boston. The Puritans forbade the celebration of Christmas because it was a ‘pagan feast’. Epicureans were the first in Boston to observe the holiday. They were followed by increasing numbers of young people who raised the 18th century eyebrows with ‘frolics, a reveling feast and ball.’ But it wasn’t until 1856 that the legislators — recognizing a losing battle when it saw it — gave in and made Christmas a legal holiday.”<sup>2</sup>

While Christmas was widely observed in Northern Europe by the Teutonic tribes, after “conversion”



***Whether in ancient or more recent times, the Saturnalia was a wild winter solstice celebration that had nothing to do with the birth and life of Jesus Christ, but had rather everything to do with the enemies of Christ.***

to Christianity they incorporated this heathen celebration — including the winter festival at the end of December — along with many of their customs and traditions into Christmas celebrations. During the Middle Ages Christmas became the most popular festival of the year until Protestantism rose in the 16th Century. When some Protestant theologians protested to the extravagant feasting and reveling surrounding that time. They also attached customs such as the use of Christmas trees and mistletoe whose origins were pagan.<sup>4</sup>

Going back even further in time, it was not until the third century that a festival such as Christmas was ever heard of ... and not until the fourth century was well along did the holiday gain much of a following.<sup>5</sup> The day for Christmas was fixed on December 25 as

follows:

“Long before the fourth century, and long before the Christian era itself, a festival was celebrated amongst the heathen at that precise time of the year in honor of the birth of the son of the Babylonian queen of heaven; and it may fairly be presumed that, in order to conciliate the heathen, and to swell the number of the nominal adherents of Christianity, the same festival was adopted by the Roman Church, giving it only the name of Christ. This tendency on the part of Christians to meet paganism half-way was very early developed, and we find Tertullian, even in his day about the year 250, bitterly lamenting the inconsistency of the disciples of Christ in this respect, and contrasting it with the strict fidelity of the pagans to their own superstitions. ‘By us’, says he [Tertullian] ‘who are strangers to Sabbaths, and new moons, and festivals, once acceptable to God, the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the Brumalia, and Matronalia are now frequented; gifts are carried to and from, year’s day presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar. Oh, how much more faithful are the heathen to their religion, who take special care to adopt no solemnity from the Christians.’ Upright men strove to stem the tide, but in spite of all their efforts the apostacy went on till that Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under pagan superstition. That Christmas was originally a pagan festival is beyond all doubt.”<sup>6</sup>

In England, the Puritans under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell condemned the observance of Christmas, and from 1642 to 1652 issued a series of laws forbidding all Christmas services and festivals.<sup>7</sup> After the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, however, Christmas celebration and revelry revived. The Pilgrims brought the Puritan views of the evils of Christmas with them when they settled in America, and in 1659 passed a law forbidding Christmas observances in their settlements. This law was repealed in 1681, but even so Christmas was not widely celebrated in New England until the mid-1800’s. Only the Dutch, Germans, non-religious English, and Scandinavians always observed the pagan holiday in their dwellings.<sup>8</sup>

Thus it is plain to see that there was not unanimity amongst early Americans in observing Christmas. Yet, people are like sheep and love to follow the crowd, not to be viewed as being different and seldom checking out facts for themselves.

Most any encyclopedia, in discussions on Christmas, make note of the ancient origin of the day. The *Merit Students Encyclopedia*,<sup>9</sup> for instance, says December 25 was an important holiday long before the rise of Christianity. The Romans called the day *natalis solis invicti* [“the day of the birth of the unconquered sun”], when they gave thanks for the lengthening days which appeared to mark the rebirth of the sun. The day fell during the great Roman winter festival called the Saturnalia ... which festival will be discussed later. It was also the most important feast day of the pagan Mithraic religion, a chief rival of early Christianity.

Leaders of the early church willingly accepted December 25 as the date for Christ’s birth. This willingness came about because of the ease with which a so-called Christian festival such as Christmas — though Christ’s birth was never commanded in the Scriptures — could be substituted for heathen celebrations, and Christ, though not born on December 25, could replace pagan deities without completely changing the form of worship.<sup>10</sup>

This practice of amalgamating pagan practices into Christian ones is called *syncretism*, and has been rampant throughout the history of the great false, perverse Roman Catholic Church, the anti-Christ organization that took shape shortly after the New Testament Church was formed in the First Century A.D. One might even say that this great false church has existed since mankind has populated the earth, for it is the product of Satan’s efforts to deceive people into worshipping him. That effort began way back in the Garden of Eden. This great false church was finally given state recognition and protection in 325 A.D. by Constantine, King of the Roman Empire at that time.

Constantine the Great became the undisputed ruler of both the eastern and western domains of Rome when he decisively defeated his challenger, Licinius, in 324 A.D.<sup>11</sup> He had shown a preference for Christianity most of his adult life, and when he became emperor he greatly promoted this philosophy. While Galerius in 311 A.D. had decreed the

legal recognition of Christianity, and in 313 A.D. Constantine and Licinius had issued an edict assuring religious freedom throughout the empire,<sup>12</sup> in 325 A.D. at the Council of Nicea — the first of many ecumenical councils which were invoked over the centuries by the Roman Church — was convened personally by Constantine. At this meeting he worked with various religious leaders on certain problems of doctrine and religious practice. This definitive effort to amalgamate the Roman government with so-called Christianity resulted in him being the absolute ruler in all things secular as well as religious. The Council of Nicea may be termed the beginning of the formalized Roman Catholic Church, wherein many practices of heathenism (especially Sunday-observing Mithraism) within the Empire were syncretized with “Christian” doctrines,<sup>13</sup> the result being that Sunday

**Syncretism: the blending of two or more religious belief systems into a new system, or the incorporation into a religious tradition of beliefs from unrelated traditions.**

keeping was approved and Sabbath keeping was outlawed. Pagan customs and celebrations were incorporated into the new Christianity, making it a diluted and polluted religion far removed from the Scriptures.

These church leaders, intent on amassing power to themselves and changing the pure ways of God into a distorted, deceptive mimicry of the true faith, regulated the plain teaching of God’s word:

“... it was needful for me [Jude] to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of all ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God unto lasciviousness ....”<sup>14</sup>

What better description could there be of the Roman Church leaders and of King Constantine himself, men who crept into the fabric of the True Church to try and destroy it from within, amalgamating erroneous, Satanic beliefs with true Biblical doctrines.



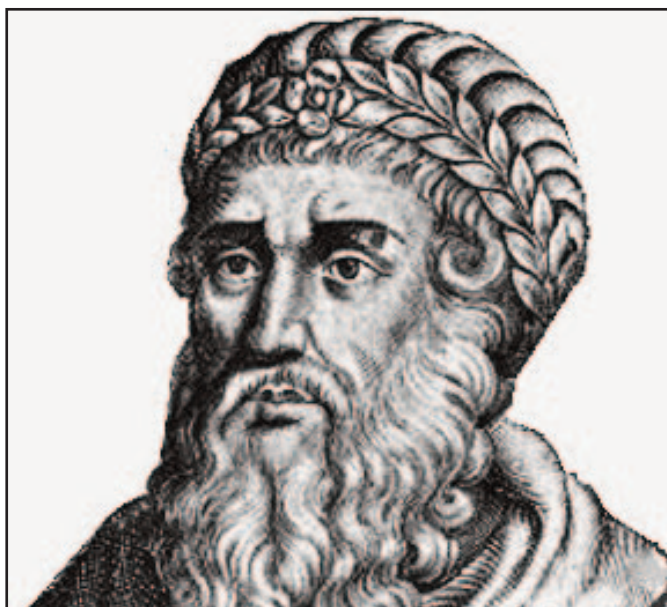
Satan has never relented in attempting to destroy the “...faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

The popes now held power along with the Roman emperors, and the stage was being set for future purgings and inquisitions of Sabbath keepers and others who dared to challenge the new alliance of secular and religious power ... even when the plain light of Scripture proved the Roman Church was in error. The observance of Christmas, which had its origins long into antiquity, clear back to Babylon, was part of the new state religion that was tolerated — even embraced — by the newly empowered Roman Catholic Church under the absolute dictatorial power of Constantine. The origins of Christmas traditions will be explored later in this paper.

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

This discussion will show conclusively that Jesus Christ could not have been born on December 24 or 25, in the dead of winter. Not only that, but He was born in the spring of the year, near the Passover season. Shepherds would not be out in their fields watching over their sheep during the winter solstice, but in Luke 2:8 at the birth of Christ the shepherds are indeed in the fields.

Also, since Jesus was about 30 years old when His ministry began,<sup>15</sup> and this ministry began in the



***Herod the Great, an Edomite, had little pity for the Israelites who inhabited his jurisdiction in Judea, and slaughtered his enemies.***

spring about Passover time,<sup>16</sup> then His birth had to be about the same time of the year, around Passover time. After His baptism by John the Baptist He immediately went into the wilderness for 40 days to be tempted by the devil.<sup>17</sup> After the temptation Christ began to call together His disciples,<sup>18</sup> and three days after being called by John the “Lamb of God” He attended a marriage at Cana of Galilee, where He performed His first miracle, that of changing water to wine.<sup>19</sup> There He stayed “not many days”, and “The Passover was at hand”, so He went to Jerusalem from there, 60 miles away or about three days by foot. Thus began Christ’s ministry, in the springtime near the Passover.

There are three major approaches to uncovering within a few days the time of Jesus’ birth<sup>20</sup>: the date for Herod the Great’s death, Christ’s birth in relation to the death of Herod the Great, and the Course of Abijah.

### **The Death of Herod the Great**

It is easy to ascribe the death of Herod the Great, the wicked Edomite ruler over Judea, to the spring of 4 B.C., primarily because an eclipse of the moon occurred near his death date. That fact is recorded by Flavius Josephus, and will be elucidated in this section.

All reputable historians place the death of Herod in the spring of 4 B.C. Jesus Christ was born about two years before this date, since Herod, after quizzing the magi, had all the children slaughtered in Bethlehem who were two years old or less (Matthew 2:16), which also was the time near an eclipse of the moon. This eclipse can irrefutably be dated to having occurred on March 13, 4 B.C.<sup>21</sup> Flavius Josephus in *The Antiquities of the Jews* clearly mentioned this fact, while giving a thorough outline of the events surrounding Herod’s life, rulership, and death.<sup>22</sup> Josephus mentioned that Herod died just before the Passover, and described in detail the events of his life between the lunar eclipse and his death. The only question that arises concerning these events, to ascertain the date for Christ’s birth, is whether these events occurred in one month or in 13 months. These events are covered by Josephus in *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 17, Sections 6 to 9, which sections are included in Appendix I.

	Lunar eclipse March 13, 4 B.C.					Passover 4 B.C.			
Days:	1	8	1	3	5	7	5		
	Eclipse	Trip to Callirrhoe	Hot baths	Return from Callirrhoe	Principle men of Judea assembled	Antipater killed, Herod stabs himself	Herod dies	Mourning for Herod	Archelaus and Jews talk, and the mob is massacred

During Herod's 70th year he became very ill; he believed he was dying. He was often mentally deranged during his final illness. During this time two eloquent Jewish religious leaders convinced a crowd of followers to pull down a statue of an eagle that Herod had erected in Jerusalem over the temple gate. A message came at that time that Herod had died so they rushed at the gate and tore down and destroyed the image. The rumor of his death was false, and 40 perpetrators, including the two leaders, were burned alive. That very night the eclipse occurred (March 13, 4 B.C.).

Herod's condition suddenly grew much worse, and near death and in much pain he traveled 25 miles to Cillirrhoe for a bath in warm oil, but nearly died. Having lost hope of recovery, Herod returned to Jericho and arranged to have all of the principle men of Judea locked up in the Hippodrome, with orders that they be slaughtered as soon as he died so there would be great lamentation at his death. Herod tried to stab himself, and in the commotion his son Antipater, who was in jail at the time, thought his father had died, so demanded to be released. Herod heard of it and had him killed immediately. Five days later Herod died.

Salome and Alexas, Herod's sister and her husband, released the Jews imprisoned in the Hippodrome after Herod's death. Archelaus, another son of Herod, made his bid for the throne by flattering the Jews, but would not accept the crown until it was officially granted by Caesar. At that time the Jews demanded revenge for the death of those who tore down the eagle image, and wanted Herod's appointed high priest removed. This was at the beginning of the

Passover, and fearing a mob uprising Archelaus had the people surrounded and killed all he could, about 3,000 men; the rest fled to the mountains. Archelaus called to Rome immediately to appeal to Caesar for the throne; a Jewish delegation also sailed to Rome at this time to protest the harsh treatment from Archelaus' soldiers, but the Jews' arguments did not prevail

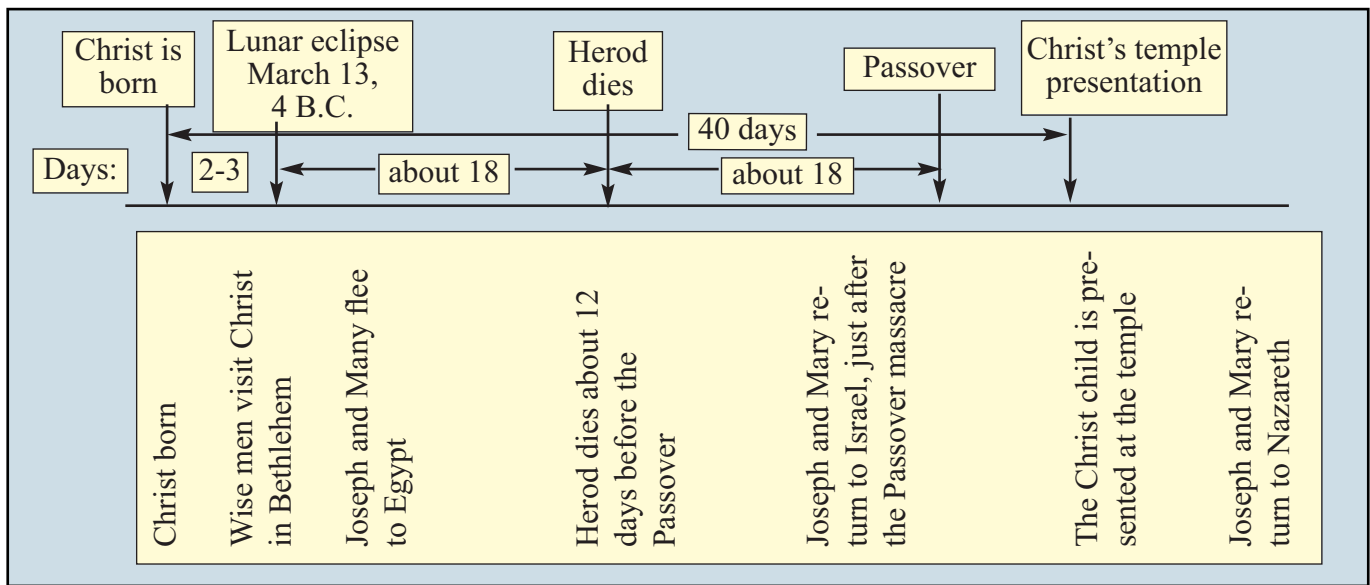
These events could have occurred in 1 month, not 13 months as some writers have claimed.<sup>23</sup> Note the scenario surrounding Herod's death on the timeline shown on the next page.

In addition, it is unreasonable to think that the time between the mob action that caused Archelaus to slaughter the Jews would have waited 13 months until the following Passover; those events would have been closely spaced, or the complaints of the Jews would have been largely forgotten, or greatly diminished. Finally trips to and from Rome would not have taken 13 months, but rather a few days; note that ambassadors from Herod arrived back from Rome concerning Antipater only five days before Herod's death. (See Appendix I).

These facts show conclusively that the events ascribed to Herod in The Antiquities of the Jews occurred in one month, not 13 months. These events also had to occur in 4 B.C. just before the Passover of that year.

### Christ's Birth in Relation to Herod's Death

Herod was disturbed to discover a king had recently been born.<sup>24</sup> At that same time an angel ap-



peared to Joseph so that he, Mary, and Jesus would flee from Herod to Egypt.<sup>25</sup> After reaching Egypt, Joseph heard from an angel that Herod had died and Archelaus was now reigning; warned in a dream he returned to Nazareth, not to Judea.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Herod was alive when Christ was born, when the wise men came, and when Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt.

The angel must have told Joseph of Herod's death just when Herod died, or news would have soon been passed to them by other travelers they met coming from Judea. Also, Archelaus must have been installed as ruler just as they returned to Israel or they would also have learned of this from travelers. God would have warned Joseph to stay away from Judea, and Jerusalem in particular, because Archelaus was going to surround the temple and kill 3,000 people; his family could conceivably have been there at that time had he not gone elsewhere.

Joseph and Mary presented Christ in the temple 40 days after He was born for purification, according to the Scriptural instructions.<sup>27</sup> This purification had to be after their return from Egypt, because they would not stay in Bethlehem except for the census and birth. Nazareth was the home of both of them. They were poor (they offered turtledoves rather than a lamb at the purification) and stayed in a stable; if they had stayed longer than a few days after the birth they would no doubt have been put up by some benevolent citizens of the area, especially after hearing about the child's notoriety.<sup>28</sup>

Note that if the visit of the wise men and the flight to Egypt took place after the presentation of the child in the temple, they would have had to remain in Bethlehem for 40 days following the birth, and then return again to Bethlehem to meet the wise men. This makes no sense in the light of God's command for them to go to Nazareth in Galilee upon their return from Egypt. Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth in Galilee after the presentation in the temple, not to Bethlehem.<sup>29</sup>

The scenario of Christ's birth and Herod's activities are summarized on the time-line on the next



**Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt when prompted by the Eternal to preserve the life of the Son of God ... a journey none too easy for a newborn.**



page. The distance to Egypt was about 150 miles (possibly more), taking about 15 to 18 days at 8 to 10 miles per day allowing a day for a Sabbath rest, and not too rigorous a rate of travel for a mother and newborn son. The most probable time for Christ's birth, considering the fact that Herod had the children in Bethlehem killed who were two years old and under, is therefore the last part of February or first part of March, 6 B.C.

### **The Courses of Abijah**

The 24 courses of the Aaronite priesthood served one week twice a year (from Sabbath to Sabbath), and besides that all the priests served at the Feasts.<sup>30</sup> The courses began on Tishri 1 and again about 6 months later.<sup>31</sup> Zacharias, John's Father belonged to the eighth course, the course of Abijah. (See Luke 1:5-57 for the full story.)

In 6 B.C., Tishri 1 was on Monday, September 13 according to the Roman Calendar. The first course likely began serving September 19 (the first day of the week) to September 25 (the Sabbath).<sup>32</sup> The Feast of Tabernacles had all priests serving, so the eighth course (of Abijah) would serve on the ninth week, November 14 to 20, 6 B.C.

Elizabeth would have conceived about November 23, since Zecharias undoubtedly went right home after his duties. In Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy Mary conceived, likely in the latter part of that month since Mary went to see Elizabeth right after she conceived, and then stayed with her for three months, likely on through the delivery. They were close relatives, so logically Mary would help her older relative with her first birth. The fourth week of Elizabeth's sixth month was about May 17 to 23, 5 B.C. Two-hundred eighty days later would bring Christ's birth date to late February, 4 B.C., which corroborates the calculations in the previous two sections.<sup>33</sup> Thus, since the courses of the Aaronic priesthood occurred twice a year they can support a springtime birth of Christ as easily as they can support a fall birth.

### **Christ Began His Ministry at Age 30**

Some may question whether Christ could have been born in the spring, since they assume that his

ministry took 3 1/2 years, and we know He was crucified at the Passover season.<sup>34</sup> Three and one-half years before the Passover would place the beginning of His ministry in the fall, around the Feast of Tabernacles. Thirty years before that would place His birth in the fall as well. However, we have already shown that Christ had to be born near Passover time, in the spring of 4 B.C. Let us therefore examine the simple scriptures in Daniel that theologians use to support a 3 1/2 year ministry of Christ and see if it is truly applicable to His ministry.

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the midst [middle] of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and upon the battlements shall be the idols of the desolator, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”<sup>35</sup>

This obscure series of prophecies begin by talking about Jesus the Messiah, but before long the personality referred to, the *prince*, can hardly fit the image of the Messiah. This prince destroys the city and its sanctuary, ends his exploits with a “flood” [an army, assuredly], confirms the “covenant” [an obscure prophecy], causes the sacrifice and oblation to stop, and ends up having idols on battlements somewhere in the vicinity of the city until the consummation. This personality hardly fits Jesus Christ. Whomever this person is will indeed cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease in the middle of the week, but what week is this? Is it referring to a supposed seven years of Christ's ministry that is cut short because of his crucifixion after 3 1/2 years, to be resumed sometime after His return to resurrect the saints? There is no clear pronouncement of the identity of this “prince,” nor of the identity of the week here. There certainly is no solid evidence to support

that Jesus Christ's ministry was 3 1/2 years ... but rather on the contrary there is very strong evidence that since He was born in the spring, His ministry also began in the spring. Recall the discussions earlier concerning John 1:25-51, which showed that His calling of the disciples, the miracle of changing water to wine at Cana, and the journey to the spring feast in Jerusalem all happened in rapid succession following the 40-days' temptation in the wilderness.

There are several reasons for saying that Jesus Christ began His ministry at age 30 about Passover time, the spring of 27 A.D. Perhaps the best summary available for these points is given by John Sash in his work *The Dates of the Birth, the Ministry, and the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ*.<sup>36</sup> Each of these points is summarized below.

**1. As already discussed, Christ is shown as having chosen disciples, attended the wedding in Cana of Galilee, and traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread in rapid succession following his baptism and 40-day temptation in the wilderness.**<sup>37</sup> After the wedding, Jesus went down to Capernaum for a few days, and then "... the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."<sup>38</sup> This



**At age 30 in the spring Jesus began His ministry, which lasted three years until His crucifixion during the Days of Unleavened Bread.**

was the beginning of Jesus' ministry, in the spring, when his first miracle was performed which was the "... beginning of signs ..."<sup>39</sup> Jesus did.

**2. Daniel 9:23-26 states that the Messiah would come 69 prophetic weeks after the decree was issued to restore and build Jerusalem.**

"Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off ...."

King Artaxerxes of Persia made this decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in the spring of 457 B.C. This decree is recorded in Ezra 7:6-9, and is different from two other decrees in Ezra and Nehemiah that do not fit the prescription of the 70-week's prophecy in Daniel 9. Counting 69 weeks from the decree, or  $69 \times 7 = 483$  days; with each day meaning a prophetic year, then the time until Messiah should

come would be 483 years. Counting from the spring of 457 B.C. brings one to the spring of 27 A.D. (There is no "year 0" in the counting.) The decree did not go out in the fall of 457 B.C., to make the prophetic period begin the fall of 27 A.D., as some would like to believe in order to squeeze in 3 1/2 years of ministry, not 3 years. Yet, while Ezra arrived in Jerusalem the fall of the year, the decree went out half a year earlier.

**3. Jesus was about age 30 when His ministry began.** This fact is recorded in Luke 3:23 ... and Luke, being a historian, is very precise in his counting and dating. This age of 30 was given right after his baptism, which has already been shown to have occurred not long before Passover (about 50 days before) in the spring of 27 A.D. This fact correlates well with the fact, as already proven earlier, that Jesus was born not long before the Passover in 4 B.C.

It is also clear that the priests began their duties at age thirty,<sup>40</sup> so Christ, being our High Priest, followed this same pattern according to the law. The



dates of 4 B.C. to 27 A.D. fit perfectly in allowing for the 30 years as indicated by Luke.

**4. The temple in Jerusalem had been 46 years in building when the Jews were talking to Jesus in John 2:20.** These words were spoken to Christ while in the temple during the Passover at the very beginning of Christ's ministry in 27 A.D. That means that Herod the Great had to have started building the temple in the spring of 20 B.C., a fact that can be proven by a fairly in-depth study of Josephus in both *The Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Wars of the Jews*.<sup>41</sup>

**5. John the Baptist began to preach in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1-2).** John by all indications began his ministry just a few months before Christ did. Since John was six months older than Christ, and if John also began his ministry at age 30, then John would have begun preaching the fall of 26 A.D. According to sources available,<sup>42</sup> the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar was indeed 26 A.D., since Tiberius was elevated to joint authority in rulership along with Augustus Caesar at the end of A.D. 11 or the beginning of A.D. 12.<sup>43</sup>

**6. Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea when John the Baptist began preaching (Luke 3:1-2) in the fall 26 A.D.,** and it can be demonstrated that Pilate began his rulership in Judea in 26 A.D. ... not in 27 A.D. as some researchers have tried to show to try and push forward the dates for John's and Christ's preaching. The main source of this evidence is once again Josephus' *The Antiquities of the Jews*.<sup>44</sup>

### More Clues to the Birth Date of Christ

A documentary film called *The Mishkan Clue* has provided additional proofs to the time of Christ's birth. In the documentary, Jonathan Cahn first proves that December is probably the least likely time for a Jewish couple from Nazareth to be traveling to Bethlehem for the Roman census while the woman, Mary, was pregnant. Not only would the weather be too cold and rainy that time of year for shepherds to be "out in their fields,"<sup>45</sup> as covered earlier in this paper, but the Romans would not have held their census during the winter

because it required families to travel back to the father's hometown to register. Joseph's family hailed from Bethlehem.<sup>46</sup>

Cahn debunks the idea that Jesus may have been born during the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), also called the Feast of Booths, which occurs in late September or early October each year on the Hebrew calendar. Proponents of this theory say Jesus was born in a sukkah or booth and that this temporary shelter was later referred to as a manger.<sup>47</sup>

While this is well meaning and sounds nice, Cahn says it would have been impossible for several reasons. First, Jesus was born in a manger, not a sukkah, and a manger is a type of feeding trough. Second, the spiritual meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles lines up with the end times and the closing of



**Top: Herod had all of the children killed who were about age two and under in the effort to destroy Jesus. Bottom: Shepherds would not be in the fields in the cold and damp of winter, but would indeed be tending the ewes during spring lambing.**

an era, not the opening or beginning of an era. The Messiah's birth, death, resurrection, and second coming must come in the proper chronological order.<sup>48</sup>

Tabernacles "is all about the closing of the age. It's the wrong order," Cahn says. Besides, the Tabernacles theory puts Mary and Joseph in the wrong place. Jewish families traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. "He was born in Bethlehem, not Jerusalem. It would have caused a revolution to require travel [for the census] at a time when Jews were supposed to be in Jerusalem."<sup>49</sup> Besides, having the birth at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles would require travel back home during the onset of winter, again not convenient or comfortable for a pregnant woman.

What about summer for the birth? That would have been difficult during Israel's brutally hot, dry summers, but perhaps doable for a woman with child. The big problem, however, is that there is no major Feast day in the summer. Passover in the spring lines up with Jesus' death, He rose on the Wave Sheaf Offering day during the Days of Unleavened Bread, he began the church with the sending of the spirit on Pentecost, and the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) foretells the Messiah's second coming. "There must be a time when travel is practical and comfortable, when shepherds would be out with their flocks and a pregnant woman could travel."<sup>50</sup>

That leaves only one option: spring. In Israel, this would have been known as the lambing season. Only in the lambing season do shepherds watch their flocks by night, which would have been in late March and into April when shepherds were out watching for lambs to be born in the fields. "So here they are out looking for lambs to be born and who do they find? The Lamb of God!"<sup>51</sup>

That brings one to the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, which begin on Nisan 14, two weeks after the first day of the sacred year on Nisan 1, in late March or April. The birth, death, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus thus fulfill the Hebrew Holy Days, in their proper order, starting with Nisan 1 for His birth and continuing through the seventh Hebrew month (Sivan) for His second coming. Nisan

1 represents a new beginning, a new year.

Cahn also brings up the writings of the early Christian church father Hippolytus of Rome, who lived and taught in the third century A.D.; he was martyred in 235 A.D. His writings are among the first that refer to December 25 as the birth of Christ. However, because one page of Hippolytus' writings still mentions springtime as the proper birth date of Christ, some historians have speculated that his writings were later doctored to reflect the new December 25 date, but apparently one reference to spring somehow got past the censors. In fact, the statue of Hippolytus in Rome today still mentions April 2 as the month of Christ's birth.<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, the Hebrew word *goel* gives an indication of when Jesus was born. *Goel* means "redeemer," which denotes a person who as the nearest relative of another is charged with the duty of restoring the rights of another and avenging his wrongs.<sup>53</sup>

God's instructions for the *goel* redeemer, as related in the Torah, said that when a man died, his next

closest male kin was allowed to marry the widow. He could "redeem" her if he was not already married, and raise up children in his brother's name. This was

the case when the widow Ruth was wedded to Boaz, her "kinsman redeemer" by whom she had a son. Boaz is a type of the Father who brings the childless widow a Redeemer. Boaz is the new father who brings a son.

From that son of Boaz several generations later comes the Messiah. In the book of Ruth, this son is conceived in Bethlehem at the end of the wheat harvest. Going forward nine months brings one to the month of Nisan for his birth.<sup>53</sup> If indeed Nisan 1 was the date on which the Savior was born, then that date in the Gregorian Calendar would be March 29, 4 B.C.<sup>54</sup>

### The True Origin and Meaning of Christmas

Now that the truthful birth date of Jesus Christ has been shown — the spring of 4 B.C., not December 25 — what can be the real meaning behind a December 25 birth date? Was someone else born at that

**The correct birth date of Jesus Christ: the spring of 4 B.C., and possibly the first day of the new sacred year, March 29 of the Gregorian Calendar.**



time of great importance whose identity can be ferreted out in historical records? Recall that Scripture carefully conceals the *exact* birth date of Christ — but December 25 is an exact date for all to see. Recall also that the observing of birthdays throughout history has been a pagan custom; as the Scriptures reveal, “The day of death is better than the day of birth.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, is it possible that one is dealing with a pagan entity when researching the personality behind a December 25 birth date?

Truth is indeed stranger than fiction! There is a personality who was born on December 25, who, ac-



***Nimrod of ancient Babel has been depicted in several ways, two of which are shown here. He may have been a giant, synonymous with Gilgamesh, the historical king of the Sumerian city-state of Uruk, though he was the great-grandson of Noah (Genesis 10:6-8), but genes for giantism may have entered through intermarriage with the post-Flood irruption of the sons of God (Genesis 6:4).***

ording to the available sources we have today, was none other than Nimrod, the arch-enemy of God who is mentioned in Genesis 10:8-10 as being a “...mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord, wherefore it is said, ‘Even as Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord.’” This could mean that he placed himself before the Almighty and coerced men to worship him instead of the Creator.

From many ancient writings much can be learned of this man, who started the great organized worldly apostasy from God that has dominated this world even to the present time. Nimrod was so evil that it is said he married his own mother, whose name was Semiramis. After Nimrod’s untimely death — supposedly because Shem killed and dismembered him<sup>56</sup> — his so-called mother-wife, Semiramis, propagated the evil doctrine of the survival of Nimrod as a spirit being. She claimed a full-grown evergreen tree sprang overnight from a dead tree stump, which symbolized the springing forth unto new life of the dead Nimrod. On each anniversary of his birth, she claimed, Nimrod would visit the evergreen tree and leave gifts upon it. December 25 was the birthday of Nimrod. So originated the Christmas tree, which will be discussed later.<sup>57</sup>

Through her scheming and designing, Semiramis became the Babylonian Queen of Heaven. and Nimrod, under various names, became the divine son of heaven. Through the generations Nimrod also became the false Messiah, son of Baal the Sun-god. In this false Babylonish system, the Mother and Child (Semiramis, and Nimrod reborn) became objects of worship, and such worship of Mother and Child spread over the entire world. The names varied in different countries and languages: in Egypt it was Isis and Osiris, in Asia Cybele and Decius., in pagan Rome Fortuna and Jupiterpuer, and even in Greece, China, Japan, and Tibet is to be found the counterpart of the Madonna, long before the birth of Christ!<sup>58</sup>

So, in reality the baby Jesus of Christmas is the person of Nimrod, or his resurrected being after his death through a so-called “rebirth” by Semiramis, his mother-wife. The nature of this feast of the Saturnalia follows closely the licentious character of Nimrod himself. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowl-*



edge explains it clearly.

“How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia (December 25) following the Saturnalia (December 17-24), and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the ‘new sun’ ... cannot be accurately determined. The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were to 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 of 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.”<sup>59</sup>

Let us also understand that the very word “Christmas” is a compound of “Christ” (anointed) and “mas,” (mess, or feast). Thus, the festival is a feast commemorating the anointed one, who in this case is Nimrod himself, or his incarnated replacement born on December 25.

Alexander Hislop in *The Two Babylons*, makes the case for December 25 being the time of the Saturnalia and Nimrod’s birth.

“Indeed, it is admitted by the most learned and candid writers of all parties that the day of our Lord’s birth cannot be determined, and that within the Christian Church no such festival as Christmas was ever heard of till the third century, and that not till the fourth century was far advanced did it gain much observance. How, then, did the Romish Church fix on December the 25th as Christmas day? Why thus: Long before the fourth century, and long before the Christian era itself, a festival was celebrated among the heathen, at that precise time of the year, in honor of the birth of the son of the Babylonian queen of heaven; and it may fairly be presumed that, in order to conciliate the heathen, and to swell the number of the nominal Roman Church, giving it only the name of Christ. This tendency developed; and we find Tertullian, even in his day, about the year 230, bitterly lamenting the inconsistency of the disciples of Christ in this respect, and contrasting it with the strict fi-



**Top: Here you can see Queen Semiramis (Ishtar) of Babylon (goddess of the moon), holding the torch with the eternal flame of Nimrod (the sun god). She is standing on a stepped pyramid representing Masonic orders. Middle: John Gast’s “American Progress” depicts Columbia urging pioneers to move west and conquer the land. Bottom: The Statue of Liberty also depicts this image of Columbia. See Appendix II for more information.**

delity of the Pagans to their own superstition. ‘By us,’ says he, ‘who are strangers to the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the Brumalia, and Matronalia, are now frequented’ gifts are carried to and fro, new year’s day presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar; oh, how much more faithful are the heathen to their religion, who take special care to adopt no solemnity from the Christians.’ Upright men strove to stem the tide, but in spite of all their efforts, the apostacy went on, till the Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan superstition. That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival, is beyond all doubt. The time of the year, and the ceremonies with which it is still celebrated, prove its origin. In Egypt, the son of Isis, the Egyptian title for the queen of heaven, was born at this very time, about the time of the winter solstice. The very name by which Christmas is popularly known among ourselves — Yule day — proves at once its Pagan and Babylonian origin. Yule is the Chaldee name for an infant or little child; and as the 25th of December was called by our Pagan Anglo-Saxon ancestors, Yule-day or the Child’s day, and the night that preceded it, Mother-night, long before they came in contact with Christianity, that sufficiently proves its real character. Far and wide, in the realms of Paganism, was this birthday observed. This festival has been commonly believed to have had only an astronomical character, referring simply to the completion of the sun’s yearly course, and the commencement of a new cycle. But there is indubitable evidence that the festival in question had a much higher reference than this — that it commemorated not merely the figurative birth-day of the sun in the renewal of its course, but the birthday of the grand Deliverer, among the Sabeans of Arabia, who regarded the moon, and not the sun, as the visible symbol of the favorite object of their idolatry, the same period was observed as the birth festival. Thus we read in Stanley’s Sabean Philosophy: ‘On the 24th of the tenth month,’ that is December, according to our reckoning, ‘the Arabians celebrated the birthday of the Lord — that is the Moon.’ The Lord Moon was the great object of Arabian worship, and that Lord clearly shows that the birth which they celebrated had no necessary connection with the course of the sun.<sup>60</sup>

“Even where the sun was the favorite object of

worship, as in Babylon itself and elsewhere, at this festival he was worshipped not merely as the orb or day, but as God incarnate. It was an essential principle of the Babylonian system that the Sun, or Baal, was the one only God. When, therefore, Tammuz was worshipped as God incarnate, that implied also that he was an incarnation of the Sun. In the Hindoo mythology, which is admitted to be essentially Babylonian, this comes out very distinctly. There, Surya, or the Sun, is represented as being incarnate, and born for the purpose of subduing the enemies of the gods, who, without such a birth, could not have been subdued.<sup>61</sup>

“It was no mere astronomic festival, then, that the Pagans celebrated at the winter solstice. That festival at Rome was called the feast of Saturn, and the mode in which it was celebrated there showed whence it had been derived. The feast, as regulated by Caligula, lasted five days; loose reins were given to drunkenness and revelry, slaves had a temporary emancipation, and used all manner of freedoms with their masters. This was precisely the way in which, according to Berosus, the drunken festival of the month Thebeth, answering to our December, in other words, the festival of Bacchus, was celebrated in Babylon. ‘It was the custom,’ says he, ‘during the five days it lasted, for masters to be in subjection to their servants, and one of them ruled the house, clothed in a purple garment like a king.’ This purple-robed servant was called Zoganes, the Man of sport and wantonness, and answered exactly to the Lord of Misrule, that in the dark ages was chosen in all Popish countries to head the revels of Christmas. The wassailing bowl of Christmas had its precise counterpart in the Drunken festival of Babylon; and many of the other observations still kept up among ourselves at Christmas came from the very same quarter. The candles, in some parts of England, lighted on Christmas-eve, and used so long as the festive season lasts, were equally lighted by the Pagans on the eve of the festival of the Babylonian god, to do honor to him: for it was one of the distinguishing peculiarities of his worship to have lighted was-candles on his altars. 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 a 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. As Zero-Ashta, ‘The seed of the woman,’ which name also signified *Ignigena*, or born of the fire, ‘he has to enter the fire on Mother-night, that he may be born the next day out of it, as the Branch of God, or the Tree that brings all divine gifts to men.’ But why, it may be asked, does he enter the fire under the symbol of a Log? To understand this, it must be remembered that the divine child born at the winter solstice was born as a new incarnation of the great god (after that god had been cut in pieces), on purpose to revenge his death upon his murderers.”<sup>62</sup>

“The consideration of the next great festival in the Popish calendar gives the very strongest confirmation to what has now been said. That festival, called Lady-day, is celebrated at Rome on the 25th of March, in alleged commemoration of the miraculous conception of our Lord in the womb of the Virgin, on the day when the angel was sent to announce to her the distinguished honor that was to be bestowed upon her as the mother of the Messiah. But who could tell when this annunciation was made? The Scripture gives no clue at all in regard to the time. But it mattered not. Before our Lord was either conceived or born, that very day now set down in the Popish calendar for the ‘Annunciation of the Virgin’ was observed in Pagan Rome in honor of Cybele, the Mother of the Babylonian Messiah. Now, it is manifest that Lady-day and Christmas-day stand in intimate relation to one another. Between the 25th of March and the 25th of Decem-

ber there are exactly nine months. If, then, the false Messiah was conceived in March and born in December, can any one for a moment believe that the conception and birth of the true Messiah can have so exactly synchronized, not only to the month, but to the day? The thing is incredible. Lady-day and Christmas-day, then, are purely Babylonian.”<sup>63</sup>

### Further Insights Into Nimrod

Let’s look more closely at Nimrod, the fire god, in the biblical context. We have already seen him as one of history’s false gods, but what else can we learn? As mentioned earlier, Genesis 10:9 says of Nimrod, “He was a mighty hunter before (“in place of, or against”) the Lord.” He actually tried to replace God.

Josephus, the famous first century A.D. Jewish historian, records important evidence of his role in the post-flood world. “He [Nimrod] also gradually changed the government into tyranny .... He also said he would be revenged on God, if He should have a

mind to drown the world again; for he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach: Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God.”<sup>64</sup>

Thus, one of history’s earliest rebels has been worshipped by many names in humanly devised religions ever since. Moreover, the nation of Israel kept falling into serving these false gods which originated with Nimrod.

Ezekiel 8:13-14 records a picture of the women of Israel “weeping for Tammuz”. This Tammuz, a god of fire, is also from Nimrod, and the etymology of the word itself is fascinating. *Tam* means “to make perfect,” and *muz* means “fire.” The meaning is clear in light of what has already been learned. The wor-



***The abominable practice of child sacrifice was rampant among the pagan cults of ancient societies, with offerings made to Baal, Molech, and other gods of the heathen tribes. However, this was little different than our modern sacrifices of innocent children by abortion.***



shippers of the fire gods felt their human sacrifices to these god purified them and made them perfect through fire.

Israel worshipped Baal and Molech once they had departed from the true God. “And they built the high places of Baal which are in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin (Jeremiah 32:35).

The Eternal says that such horrible abominations never entered His mind! “Therefore behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.” (Jeremiah 19:6). God fully intended to exact vengeance upon those who participated in such abominations!

The Valley of Tophet or Hinnom was the site of a grizzly ritual. Tophet means “drum.” Drums were played to drown the screams of victims in the flames: “First Molech, horrid king, besmeared with blood of human sacrifice, and parents’ tears, through, for the noise of drums and timbrels loud, their children’s cries unheard, that passed through fire to this grim idol.”<sup>65</sup>

In the New Testament, the famous martyr Stephen was stoned to death because he indicted his listeners for the worship of this evil idol, Molech, among other sins.<sup>66</sup> When righteous King Josiah came to the throne of Judah, he destroyed the pagan structures located in the Valley of Tophet-Hinnom. Josiah realized how wicked these idolatrous practices were.

### **Cannibalism and the Fire God**

We cannot leave a discussion of Nimrod without getting into yet another gruesome side to his character. We are led to the word “cannibal”. The modern word cannibal comes directly from the Spanish *canibales*,<sup>67</sup> which is what the Spanish explorers called the Caribbean Amerindians who regularly ate captives taken in war.

Where, then, did the Spanish get this word? “A long series of classical authors ... write of the Phoenician and Punic practice of cultic child sacrifice by fire. Archaeologists digging at Carthage and other

Punic colonies in the western Mediterranean have located sacred precincts containing urns with ashes and bone remains of children...”<sup>68</sup> The Spanish would have been familiar with Punic culture which originally came from Phoenicia.

The original Semitic etymology of cannibal has its roots in a prime function of all priests of Baal. Keep in mind that the Hebrew root for a priest is *cohen* or *cahn*, and in closely related Semitic tongues *cahna*. A principle of Mosaic law was that the priest must partake of whatever was offered as a sin offering (Numbers 18:9-10).

Having the same cultural context, “The priests of Nimrod or Baal were also necessarily required to eat of their human sacrifices; and thus it has come to pass that Cahna-Bal, the Priest of Baal, is the established word in our own tongue for a devourer of human flesh.”<sup>69</sup>

The reality of this can be lost to no one. It is also true that nearly all civilizations have a tradition of cannibalism. According to Erik Eckholm, “Cannibalism has at once fascinated and repelled virtually every known society, including those said to have practiced it”<sup>70</sup> This same article goes on to show that most civilizations also attached some “divine” significance to its vile practice.

Let us pursue this matter of child sacrifice even further, as gruesome as it is, since Nimrod must be implicated in this travesty to precious human life and Godly reason as much as possible. The fire god — known by various names as Nimrod, Saturn, Kronos, Molech, Baal, etc. — was incredibly evil.

“Now this is in exact accordance with the character of the Great Head of the system of fire-worship. Nimrod, as the representative of the devouring fire to which human victims, and especially children, were offered in sacrifice, was regarded as the great child-devourer ... he was, of course, the actual father of all the Babylonian gods; and, therefore, in that character he was afterwards universally regarded. As the Father of the gods, he was, as we have seen, called Kronos; and every one knows that the classical story of Kronos was just this, that he devoured his sons as soon as they were born.”<sup>71</sup>

This legend has a further and deeper meaning, but, as applied to Nimrod, or “the Horned One,” i

simply refers to the fact, that, as the representative of Molech or Baal, infants were the most acceptable offerings at his altar. We have ample and melancholy evidence on this subject from the records of antiquity. According to the third century church historian Eusebius, “The Phoenicians every year sacrificed their beloved and only-begotten children to Kronos or Saturn.”<sup>72</sup>

But why would human sacrifice be such a key to the worship of this terrible god? What possible good could human beings think they saw in slaughtering their own children? “He who approached the fire would receive a light from divinity,” and “through divine fire all the stains produced by generations could be purged away.”<sup>73</sup> Therefore, as Scripture says, children were made “to pass through the fire to Molech” (Jeremiah 32:35).

As incredible as it seems, deceived human beings actually believed they were pleasing their god by sacrificing their own innocent little children. They believed fire purified them of original sin. The doctrine of spending time in purgatory to purge the soul of sin is based on this belief.

### Nimrod Identified With Satan

The character of Nimrod is indeed much like that of Satan the Devil, a destroyer and a murderer.<sup>74</sup> We read in Revelation 9:11 that “And there was a king over them [the *locusts*], which is the angel of



**Nimrod (left) and Santa Claus possess some startling similarities, both having beards, carrying an evergreen tree, wearing robes, and Nimrod even carrying a deer, like one of Santa's own that purportedly pull his sleigh.**

the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is *Abaddon* [a destroying angel, but in the Greek tongue his name is *Apollyon* [a destroyer].”

*Bottomless* = *abussos*, “depthless, i.e. (spec.) (infernal) ‘abyss.’”

*Pit* = *phrear*, “a hole in the ground (dug for obtaining or holding water or other purposes), i.e. a cistern or well; (fig.) an abyss (as a prison).”

Nimrod was the “fire god” who destroyed children in fire and ate his own sons. He is identified with the ball of fire in the sky, the “sun of God” whose winter solstice Saturnalia celebration was called *Dies Natalis Invicti Solis*, the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun.

“In the Roman world, the Saturnalia was a time of merry-making and exchanging of gifts. December 25 was also regarded as the birth date of the Iranian mystery god Mithra, the *Sun* of Righteousness .... Fires and lights, symbols of warmth and lasting life, have always been associated with the winter festival, both pagan and Christian.”<sup>75</sup>

The Saturnalia celebrated Saturn, the Roman “fire god” and the “god of sowing” because heat from the sun was needed for the growth of crops. This deity was worshipped in the dead-of-winter festival so that he, representing the sun, would come back and warm the earth once again so that spring planting could occur.

### The Icons of Christmas

#### The Christmas Tree.

The Christmas tree has already been discussed in this paper as being the coniferous tree that represented the reincarnated Nimrod, whose was raised from the dead on Christmas Eve as a scion from the dead Nimrod, who had been killed by Shem.<sup>77</sup> Many times a green tree is mentioned in the Scripture in relation to heathen idol worship

and heathen gods.

When Israel came into Canaan the people were ordered to destroy the heathen altars, groves, and graven images, and then they were admonished to “... utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods. upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree” ( Deuteronomy 12:2).

Among many of places in the Old Testament where Israel was warned against heathen worship, several places specifically talk about serving their gods, or worshipping under green trees. In most cases other terrible abominations are listed as accompanying these heathen practices, such as we read in Isaiah 57:3-5: “But draw near here, you sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. Against whom do you sport yourselves: Against whom make you a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? Are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood, enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks?”

Green trees were a big part of Baal worship. According to *Halley's Bible Handbook*, “Priestesses were temple prostitutes. Sodomites were male temple prostitutes. The worship of Baal, Ashtoreth (his wife — same as the Madonna), and other Canaanite gods consisted of the most extravagant orgies: their temples were centers of vice.”<sup>78</sup>

Halley further added that Baal-rites further consisted of murdering first-born children as a sacrifice to these same gods, and their temples, upon excavation, were found to be full of images and carvings of sex organs and pornographic paraphernalia.<sup>79</sup> Idol worship under green trees is further condemned in I Kings 14:22-23, II Kings 16:1-4, II Kings 17:9-10,

II Chronicles 28:4, Jeremiah 2:20, Jeremiah 3:6, 13, Jeremiah 17:1-2, and Ezra 6:13.

There is a further condemnation of those who cut down a tree for any kind of worship service. “Learn not the way of the heathen ... for the customs of the people are vain: for one cuts a tree out of the forest ... they deck it with silver, and with gold, they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not .... Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good .... They are altogether brutish and foolish ...” (Jeremiah 10:2-8).

The tree was also used in ancient pagan festivals to symbolize rebirth. A yule log) was burned to symbolize the death of the father-god (Nimrod), and then a green tree was set upright to imply his reincarnation in his son. This was followed by placing gifts under the tree, in effect offering the gifts to the god (idol) represented by the tree. Then, as in all pagan nations,

the sacrificed gifts were distributed to the worshippers to consume.

### Santa Claus

The personage of Santa Claus, that jolly old fellow who appears once a year at Christmas time, and then only to do good by bringing toys and games to good little children, has evolved greatly from what he once was. Let us take a look at his history.

In Egypt, where the mother and child were worshipped, the father-god was known as Khons or Khonos. The name

means huntsman, or god of the chase, and scholars have identified him as the Nimrod of the Bible, the mighty hunter, and the builder of Babel and other cities in Shinar (Genesis 10:10). He is represented in both Babylon and Egypt as half-man and half-bull, and also half-man and half-horse (the centaur of mythology), usually with wings, and he is called Baalabrin, the winged one. He is called the omnipo-



***Santa Claus is often depicted sitting on a throne, with children on his knee, making friends and promising gifts to those who are “not naughty but nice.”***



tent one, and also the unknown one, giving him the unknowable qualities that left him in the background. He might even be considered the unknown god worshipped in Athens in Acts 17:23.<sup>80</sup>

Over the centuries his image evolved into more of a human form, usually clothed in a leopard skin, signifying his hunting prowess over the swiftest of animals. This spotted garment became a mark of kings and priests in Africa and Asia. The priests of Bacchus in Greece were clothed in leopard skins, later adopting the spotted skin of a young fawn, or dyeing their robes to look like a spotted skin.<sup>81</sup>

The spotted deer seems to have been adopted as combining both the spots of the leopard and the bull (or calf) of idol worship. In Nineveh, the capitol of Assyria, statues of Nimrod (Baal) show him wearing a spotted deer skin, or in some cases carrying a spotted deer. Now we are getting close to Santa Claus!

The true God has not left believers without testimony of the actual identify of this personality. He is called Lucifer (light bringer) in Isaiah 14:12-14. "How are you fallen from heaven O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, who did weaken the nations! For you have said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

Let us now analyze this Lucifer and see the similarities to Santa Claus, as we know him.<sup>82</sup>

*Verse 12:* His activities prior to his destruction weaken the nations; they are not good.

*Verse 13:* His desire is to be above all things, to have a throne even above God. Santa Claus in the department stores is often seated on a throne, and little children are encouraged to approach him to solicit his good favor. He will be in the congregation — in the church of God — where indeed he does reside to some degree. Even the direction of his abode is given as being north. Santa is supposed to reside at the north pole, or the regions of the north! (More on this later.)

*Verse 14:* We are told Santa comes to every home, flying through the air with his reindeer and sleigh. Modern promoters now often have him arrive at a shopping center by helicopter. He tries to appear as the Most High.

- Hair white like wool (Daniel 7:9; Revelation 1:14)
- Sparkling eyes, like a flame of fire (Revelation 1:14)
- A voice like many waters, with a low, deep laugh (Revelation 1:15)
- A garment to his feet, a long coat (Revelation 1:13)
- The color of red, like Satan, which represents blood and death
- Obesity, typifying Satan's immoderation in eating and sensual habits

Santa loves to get close to children, like Jesus Christ did: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). He asks them to reveal the gifts that they want as they sit on his knee. He wants them to obey him, often sitting on a "throne" in stores so children come up to him to solicit his good favor, so they can get gifts. As one popular Christmas song says,

"You better watch out, you better not cry,  
You better not pout, I'm telling you why,  
Santa Claus is comin' to town.  
He's making a list and checking it twice,  
He's gonna find out who's naughty and nice,  
Santa Claus is comin' to town.  
He sees you when you're sleepin',  
He knows when you're awake,  
He knows if you've been bad or good,  
So be good for goodness sake ...."<sup>83</sup>

Santa is shown to be omnipotent and able to read children's minds! He wants children to obey him and think well of him by his winning them over with material gifts in a *get* fashion. He takes the place of God by winning the hearts and minds of millions of little children every year as foolish adults tell of the "good things" of Santa (bearer of gifts, etc.), not God, who will reward them at Christmas. The true God is not made real to them, but Santa Claus is! Truly, this Santa Claus is mimicking the very nature of the Eternal, but with malicious schemes on his mind ... to capture their hearts and then deceive them into following his darkened, carnal ways.

It is most interesting that Lucifer said, “I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides [outer regions] of the north” (Isaiah 14:13). In modern caricature he traverses the heavens in a sleigh, a vehicle that flies through the air like a U.F.O, propelled by reindeer like the living creatures of Ezekiel 1 propelled the throne of God; of course the reindeer are not like the living creatures, but they act as transporters of the throne represented by the sleigh.

Satan likes to mimic everything that the Almighty God does, and ultimately he would like to replace Him at the seat of universal government, as we read in Isaiah 14:14. Some authors and explorers contend that there is an opening at the North Pole that leads to an inner earth kingdom of Satan, and U.F.O.s come and go through this opening, and that this may be the opening to the “abyss,” or “bottomless pit,” mentioned in Revelation 9 from which the “locusts” emerged to torment mankind for five months. The king of these locusts is Abaddon or Apollyon, which is Satan the devil (Revelation 9:11). If these ideas are valid, then they fit well with Santa being dressed in winter clothes to confront the cold northern climes to which he must travel in his going to and from the abyss and his kingdom.<sup>84</sup>

Of special interest is that some UFOs give the sound of “jingle bells” when they move — I have personally witnessed this sound — which ties in with yet another common accoutrement of the Christmas season: jingling bells and other bell sounds on many street corners signaling the Salvation Army’s winter fund drive.

### Madonna and Child

We have already discussed the mother and child being Semiramis and Nimrod, he being reincarnated on December 25, represented by the coniferous tree that supposedly sprang from the dead yule log. This duo is found in cultures all over the world, and has been appropriated by the Roman Catholic Church as Mary the Mother of God and Jesus



**The Madonna and Child are portrayed in many civilizations across the world, in particular as the virgin Mary the Christ child in Catholic circles, and trace their origins to none other that Semiramis and her baby Horus, the supposed resurrected Nimrod who was born on January 25.**

Christ. How close an imitation of Satan for the true God and His Son Jesus can one get!

The name Madonna should be explained, as it demonstrates the paganism of Roman Catholicism and also leads us back to a goddess mentioned in the Bible. Babylonians called their father-god Baal, and his wife Beltis, or the mother of gods, but the Mediterranean Latin was *Mea Domina*, the feminine form of mother ruler. The modern Italian (Roman Catholic) name Madonna is but a corruption of *Mea Domina*, or the mother ruler, and it is she who is really worshipped by the Roman Catholic Priests.<sup>85</sup>

She is also the goddess who caused Paul, Gaius, and Aristarchus so much trouble at Ephesus, as recorded in Acts 19. Her name there was Diana — while in Greece it was Juno, Hera, and Athena, varying from city to city<sup>86</sup> — and the merchants who made money selling statues and objects for her veneration attempted to drive Paul from the city when they realized his teachings would destroy their business, just as the truth about Christmas and about the Madonna and Child would destroy the business of so many shoddy merchants today! If it had not been for the intervention of the town clerk, these mother-god worshippers might have killed Paul (Acts 19:22-41).

### Three Wise Men.

In modern Christmas stories we are often told of the three wise men who came to the babe in the manger bearing gifts. This is in spite of the simple



***The wise men (magi) who came to Palestine searching for the infant Jesus arrived when He was probably about two years old, not when he was just born as depicted in nativity scenes, they came to the house where he lived and not to a stable, and there were likely several more than just three in the party.***

truth that the Bible does not tell of such an event attending Jesus' birth.

Not only is the number of wise men not stated in the Bible, but the Bible says they came to Jesus in a house! When they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother and fell down and worshipped him (Matthew 2:11).

That their arrival was upwards of two years after the birth of Jesus is evident from King Herod's actions after he had questioned them as to what time the star appeared (Matthew 2:7). He desired the death of the Christ child, and sent soldiers to slay all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men (Matthew 2:16). Herod must have been convinced Jesus was possibly already two years old when the wise men arrived, or the killing of two-year-olds would make no sense.

Also, in the more detailed story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2 there is mention of the angel, the heavenly host, the shepherds, the eighth day circumcision of the child (Matthew 2:21), and of Simeon (verses 25 to 35) and Anna (verses 36 to 38), but not a word of any wise men. Was it because they were not present at His birth, but came months or possibly years later?

With so plain an account, why do preachers still accept three wise men at the stable? Is it because the birth of the Babylonian Messiah, the false Christ, was attended by the priests of Baal, while the birth of the

true Messiah was waited upon by no religious persons? Truly, the manger scene as depicted at Christmas time can have no other origin but in Nimrod's time.<sup>87</sup>

### **Exchanging Gifts**

The exchanging of gifts has already been discussed in this paper. There is no instruction in the Bible for the mutual exchange of gifts among believers, for any reason, yet all of the pagan mid-winter festivals include gift exchanging. It seems significant that the only mention of such a time in Scripture is in the apocalyptic story of the two witnesses of God

being killed. Their deaths bring such joy to the followers of the Beast system that we read, "And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another" (Revelation 11:10). Isn't it strange that the actions of the ungodly at the death of God's prophets is identical to the actions of Christmas celebrants?

### **Lights and Candles**

Since candles put out light and heat, they were tied to the return of the sun from its southern-most decline after the winter solstice. In that sense, candles in ancient times became tied to the feast of the Saturnalia.

Candles and candlesticks are mentioned a number of times in Scripture in relation to God, but there is also the candle of the wicked which is to be put out (Job 21:17; Proverbs 24:20). In Jeremiah God promises to take from Babylon the light of the candle (Jeremiah 25:10), and in Revelation 18:23, as the destruction of Babylon the Great is completed, we read, "And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in you." The burning of candles in a worship service is a pagan ritual, that has been borrowed by the Roman Catholics and others from ancient traditions practiced long ago.<sup>88</sup>

Alexander Hislop in *The Two Babylons* adds considerable understanding to the origin of lights and candles as they relate to Christmas celebrations. "An-



other peculiarity of the Papal worship is the use of lamps and wax-candles. If the Madonna and child are set up in a niche, they must have a lamp to burn before them; if mass is to be celebrated, though in broad daylight, there must be wax-candles lighted on the altar; if a grand procession is to be formed, it cannot be thorough and complete without lighted tapers to grace the goodly show. The use of these lamps and tapers comes from the same source as all the rest of the Papal superstition. That which caused the 'Heart,' when it became an emblem of the incarnate Son, to be represented as a heart on fire, required also that burning lamps and lighted candles should form part of the worship of that Son; for so, according to the established rites of Zoroaster, was the sun-god worshipped. When every Egyptian on the same night was required to light a lamp before his house in the open air, this was an act of homage to the sun, that had veiled its glory by enshrouding itself in a human form. When the Yezidis of Koordistan, at this day, once a year celebrate their festival of 'burning lamps,' that, too, is to the honour of Shiekh Shems, or the Sun. Now, what on these high occasions was done on a grand scale was also done on a smaller scale, in the individual acts of worship to their god, by the lighting of lamps and tapers before the favourite divinity. In Babylon, this practice had been exceedingly prevalent, as we learn from the Apocryphal writer of the Book of Baruch. 'They (the Babylonians),' says he, 'light up lamps to their gods, and that in greater numbers, too, than they do for themselves, although the gods cannot see one of them, and are senseless as the beams of their houses.'<sup>89</sup>

"In Pagan Rome, the same practice was observed. Thus we find Licinius, the Pagan Emperor, before joining battle with Constantine, his rival, calling a council of his friends in a thick wood, and there offering sacrifices to his gods, 'lighting up wax-tapers' before them, and at the same time, in his speech, giving his gods a hint, that if they did not give him the victory against Constantine, his enemy and theirs, he would be under the necessity of abandoning their worship, and lighting up no more 'wax-tapers to their honour.' In the Pagan processions, also, at Rome, the wax-candles largely figured. 'At these solemnities,' says Dr. Middleton, referring to Apuleius as his authority, 'at these solemnities, the chief magistrate



***Christmas candles and lights tantalize the eyes and give an aura of beauty and peace to a home, but their symbolism when tied to this December 25 celebration has its roots in paganism.***

used frequently to assist, in robes of ceremony, attended by the priests in surplices, with wax-candles in their hands, carrying upon a pageant or thensa, the images of their gods, dressed out in their best clothes; these were usually followed by the principal youth of the place, in white linen vestments or surplices, singing hymns in honour of the gods whose festivals they were celebrating, accompanied by crowds of all sorts that were initiated in the same religion, all with flambeaux or wax-candles in their hands.' Now, so thoroughly and exclusively Pagan was this custom of lighting up lamps and candles in daylight, that we find Christian writers, such as Lactantius, in the fourth century, exposing the absurdity of the practice, and deriding the Romans 'for lighting up candles to God, as if He lived in the dark.' Had such a custom at that time gained the least footing among Christians, Lactantius could never have ridiculed it as he does, as a practice peculiar to Paganism. But what was unknown to the Christian Church in the beginning of the fourth century, soon thereafter began to creep in, and now forms one of the most marked peculiarities of that community that boasts that it is the 'Mother and mistress of all Churches...'<sup>90</sup>

"In this very character was Nimrod worshipped when he was deified. As the Sun-god he was regarded not only as the illuminator of the material world, but as the enlightener of the souls of men, for he was recognised as the revealer of 'goodness and truth.'<sup>91</sup>

## Mistletoe

Mistletoe, whose botanical name is *Viscum album*, is a parasitic plant that grows on the branches of trees and shrubs, taking its nourishment from the transporting tissues of the tree. It is an evergreen featuring small, yellowish flowers and white berries. Druid priests held the plant sacred and used it in their winter celebrations 200 years before the birth of Christ. The plant was revered since it remained green year long — even through cold, harsh winters — despite the fact that it is not rooted in soil. It was seen as a symbol of fertility and used as a medicinal cure for various ills.<sup>92</sup>

Other ancient cultures also attributed mystical powers to the plant. Celts believed mistletoe had magical healing powers and used it as an antidote for poison, infertility, evil spirits. Among Romans, the plant was viewed as a symbol of peace and friend-



***The parasitic mistletoe plant (top) and colorful holly (bottom) are marvelous creations of God and have their place in the ecosphere, but their use in Christmas festivities is tied to paganism.***

ship. According to legend, enemies who met under mistletoe would lay down their weapons and embrace.<sup>93</sup>

The custom of kissing under the mistletoe may have sprung from Norse mythology and the story of Frigg, Norse goddess of love and fertility, patron of marriage, and the wife of Odin. When Frigg's son Baldr dreamed of his impending death, she exacted an oath from all things in creation to do no harm to her beloved son, but Frigg failed to ask this promise of the young mistletoe plant, and Baldr is killed by an enemy's arrow made of mistletoe.<sup>94</sup>

In one version of the legend, to ease her grief Frigg proclaimed mistletoe to be the symbol of love so it would cause no more harm. In a happier telling of the story, Frigg wept over the body of her son Baldr, and as her tears dropped upon the mistletoe arrow, they are transformed into small, white berries. Baldr was miraculously brought back to life and Frigg vowed that anyone standing beneath the mistletoe will come to no harm, but instead receive a token of love ... a kiss.<sup>95</sup>

Alexander Hislop adds particular credence to the pagan nature of the use of mistletoe during the Christmas season. He states, "... let the reader look at the singular practice still kept up in the South on Christmas-eve, of kissing under the mistletoe bough. That mistletoe bough in the Druidic superstition, which, as we have seen, was derived from Babylon, was a representation of the Messiah, 'The man the branch.' The mistletoe was regarded as a divine branch — a branch that came from heaven, and grew upon a tree that sprung out of the earth."<sup>96</sup>

"In the Scandinavian story of Balder, the mistletoe branch is distinguished from the lamented god. The Druidic and Scandinavian myths somewhat differed; but yet, even in the Scandinavian story, it is evident that some marvelous power was attributed to the mistletoe branch; for it was able to do what nothing else in the compass of creation could accomplish; it slew the divinity on whom the Anglo-Saxons regarded 'the empire' of their 'heaven' as 'depending.' Now, all that is necessary to unravel this apparent inconsistency, is just to understand 'the branch' that had such power, as a symbolical expression for the true Messiah. The Bacchus of the Greeks came evi-



dently to be recognised as the ‘seed of the serpent’; for he is said to have been brought forth by his mother in consequence of intercourse with Jupiter, when that god had appeared in the form of a serpent. If the character of Balder was the same, the story of his death just amounted to this, that the ‘seed of the serpent’ had been slain by the ‘seed of the woman.’ This story, of course, must have originated with his enemies. But the idolators took up what they could not altogether deny, evidently with the view of explaining it away.<sup>97</sup>

“Thus by the engrafting of the celestial branch into the earthly tree, heaven and earth, that sin had severed, were joined together, and thus the mistletoe bough became the token of Divine reconciliation to man, the kiss being the well-known token of pardon and reconciliation. Whence could such an idea have come? May it not have come from the eighty-fifth Psalm, ver. 10,11, ‘Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth [in consequence of the coming of the promised Saviour], and righteousness shall look down from heaven’”<sup>98</sup>

In more modern times, a popular Christmas tradition became kissing under the mistletoe. A sprig of the plant would be hung, and those who would stand beneath it invited a kiss. Mistletoe was the magical ingredient in the kissing ball or kissing bough in Victorian England. Made of a round frame trimmed with ribbons and ornaments and often holding a tiny nativity, mistletoe was affixed to the bottom, and the ball was the hung from rafters or the ceiling. Guests at holiday parties, weddings, and other festive occasions then played kissing games beneath the ball, and a kiss beneath the decoration was said to bring good luck and lasting friendship.<sup>99</sup>

Washington Irving (1783 to 1859), the noted American author, noted another tradition in kissing beneath the mistletoe at Christmas time. "The mistletoe is still hung up in farm-houses and kitchens at Christmas; and the young men have the privilege of kissing the girls under it, plucking each time a berry from the bush. When the berries are all plucked, the privilege ceases."<sup>100</sup>

### **Holly and Ivy**

Holly (*Ilex* spp.) and ivy (*Hedera helix* spp.)

have been used as winter holiday decorations since ancient times. Early Europeans used holly as ornamentation during their winter solstice celebrations. The winter solstice, which occurs in late December in the northern hemisphere, was the longest night of the year and signified the gradual lengthening of days and coming spring, a cause for celebration. In Norse mythology, holly was associated with Thor, god of thunder, and holly plants grown by the home were thought to prevent lightning strikes. Ancient Romans used holly as decor during Saturnalia, a festival dedicated to Saturn, god of agriculture and husbandry. Additionally, holly trees and shrubs and the ornamental vine ivy were each believed to have magical properties. In many ancient cultures, the howling, icy winds in the dark nights of winter were believed to be ghosts and demons. Decorating with holly and ivy was thought to ward off these evil spirits.<sup>101</sup>

The use of ivy during winter also goes back thousands of years. The fact that ivy, like some hollies, stayed green throughout the year led some to believe it had magical properties and led to its use as home decor in the winter months. It too symbolized eternal life, rebirth and the spring season. In some cultures, ivy was a symbol of marriage and friendship, perhaps due to its tendency to cling. In ancient Rome, ivy was associated with Bacchus (known as Dionysus in Greek mythology), the god of wine and revelry. Accordingly, it was sometimes used as a trimming in ancient festivals.<sup>102</sup>

Over time, many customs from pagan celebrations were incorporated into religious holidays. For a period, ivy was banished as a decor by Christians due to its ability to grow in shade, which led to its association with secrecy and debauchery. Nevertheless, the custom of decorating with holly and ivy during Christian holidays such as Christmas was eventually accepted. Religious meaning was later attributed to the physical properties of holly; its sharp leaves were said to symbolize Christ's crown of thorns and its red berries the blood he shed.<sup>103</sup>

### **Yule Log**

The yule log was one of the most widespread Christmas traditions in early modern Europe, with the first recording of its appearance dating to 1184. The tradition's roots are debated — some saying it is



an "enfeebled version of the ancient Celtic human sacrifices" and others saying it's simply related to a feudal obligation of acquiring firewood. Nevertheless, the log was a huge block, lasting for the Twelve Days of Christmas, and it was not burned completely its first year: part of it was saved to light the following year's yule log. While the mostly burned wood waited for its duty to light a new yule log, it was kept around the house to ward off a range of misfortunes, including toothaches, mildew, lightning, house fires, hail, and chilblains. The log had other magical properties, particularly in parts of Northern Spain and Southern France. There, the yule log had "a remarkable feature of the log's powers is its ability to defecate gifts."<sup>104</sup>

Even though some scholars claim that the custom of burning the yule log originated in the 17th century, it is also admitted that the custom may have much earlier origins, extending from customs observed in Germanic paganism. As early as 1725, Henry Bourne sought an origin for the Yule log in Anglo-Saxon paganism.<sup>105</sup>

Going back to the time shortly after the Great Flood, Alexander Hislop in *The Two Babylons* stated, "The mother of Adonis [Semiramis], the Sun-God [Nimrod reincarnated] 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 a tree, the son must have been recognised 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. As Zero-Ashta, 'The seed of the woman,' which name also signified Ignigena, or 'born of the fire,' he has to enter the fire on 'Mother-night,' that he may be born the next day out of it, as the 'Branch of God,' or the Tree that brings all divine gifts to men."<sup>106</sup>



***The yule log typifies the dead Nimrod, who was burned and then sprang back to life as a newly sprouted evergreen tree (Christmas tree) the following morning.***

"But why, it may be asked, does he enter the fire under the symbol of a Log? To understand this, it must be remembered that the divine child born at the winter solstice was born as a new incarnation of the great god (after that god had been cut in pieces), on purpose to revenge his death upon his murderers. Now the great god, cut off in the midst of his power and glory, was symbolized as a huge tree, stripped of all its branches, and cut down almost to the ground. But the great serpent, the symbol of the life restoring Aesculapius, twists itself around the dead stock, and lo, at its side up sprouts a young tree — a tree of an entirely different kind, that is destined never to be cut down by hostile power — even the palm-tree, the well-known symbol of victory. The Christmas tree, as has been stated, was generally at Rome a different tree, even the fir; but the very same idea as was implied in the palm-tree was implied in the Christmas-fir; for that covertly symbolized the new-born God as Baalberith, 'Lord of the Covenant,' and thus shadowed forth the perpetuity and everlasting nature of his power, not that after having fallen before his enemies, he had risen triumphant over them all."<sup>107</sup>

"Therefore, the 25th of December, the day that was observed at Rome as the day when the victorious god reappeared on earth, was held at the Natalis invicti solis, 'The birth-day of the unconquered Sun.' 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."<sup>108</sup>

### **The Nativity Scene**

Depictions of Mary, Joseph, Jesus in a manger, three wise men, three shepherds, donkeys, camels, and other accoutrements are part and parcel with modern Christmas decorations, as they have been for

centuries. Saint Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first live nativity scene in 1223 in order to cultivate the worship of Christ. He himself had recently been inspired by his visit to the Holy Land, where he had been shown Jesus's traditional birthplace. The scene's popularity inspired communities throughout Catholic countries to stage similar pantomimes.<sup>109</sup>

A nativity scene attempts to depict the accounts of the birth of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Luke's narrative describes an angel announcing the birth of Jesus to shepherds who then visit the humble site where Jesus is found lying in a manger, (Luke 2:8-20), while Matthew's narrative tells of wise men or magi who follow a star to the house where Jesus dwelt, and indicates that the Magi found Jesus some time later, possibly up to two years after his birth (Matthew 2:1-23). Matthew's account does not mention angels and shepherds, while Luke's narrative is silent on the Magi and the star.

The scene's popularity inspired much imitation in Catholic countries, and in the Early modern period sculpted cribs, often exported from Italy, were set up in Catholic churches and homes. These elaborate scenes reached their artistic apogee in the Papal state, in Emilia, in the Kingdom of Naples and in Genoa. By the end of the 19th century nativity scenes became popular beyond Catholic settings, and many versions in various sizes and made of various materials, such as terracotta, paper, wood, wax, and ivory, were marketed, often with a backdrop setting of a stable.<sup>110</sup>

### Christmas Carols

Carols were first sung in Europe thousands of years ago, but these were not Christmas carols. They were pagan songs, sung at the winter solstice celebrations as people danced around stone circles. The winter solstice is the shortest day of the year, and at this time the Saturnalia occurred, usually taking place around December 22. The word carol actually means dance or a song of praise and joy. Carols used to be written and sung during all four seasons, but only the tradition of singing them at Christmas has really survived.<sup>111</sup>

Early Christians took over the pagan solstice cel-



***Nativity scenes of various sorts have existed for centuries, supposedly picturing the newborn Christ child, Mary, Joseph, and often the magi, who did not show up until about two years later. They go back much further than Christ's birth, however, even to ancient Egypt 5,000 years ago as has recently been discovered. See Appendix III for details of this discovery.***

ebrations for Christmas, syncretizing the practice, and gave people “Christian” songs to sing instead of pagan ones. In 129 A.D., a Roman Bishop said that a song called “Angel's Hymn” should be sung at a Christmas service in Rome. Another famous early Christmas Hymn was written in 760, by Comas of Jerusalem, for the Greek Orthodox Church. Soon after this many composers all over Europe started to write Christmas carols. However, not many people liked them as they were all written and sung in Latin, a language that the normal people couldn't understand.<sup>112</sup>

When St. Francis of Assisi started his “Nativity Plays” in Italy in 1223, there was a revival in Christmas fervor. The people in the plays sang songs or “canticles” that told the story during the plays. Sometimes the choruses of these new carols were in Latin, but normally they were all in a language that the people watching the play could understand and join in. The new carols spread to France, Spain, Germany and other European countries.<sup>113</sup>

The earliest carol for which we have a record was written in 1410, of which only a very small fragment exists. The carol was about Mary and Jesus meeting different people in Bethlehem. Most carols from this time and the Elizabethan period are false stories, very loosely based on the “Christmas story”

and were seen as entertaining rather than religious songs. They were usually sung in homes rather than in churches. Traveling singers or minstrels started singing these carols, and the words were changed for the local people wherever they were traveling.<sup>114</sup>

When the Puritans came to power in England during the 1640s, the celebration of Christmas and singing carols was stopped. However, the carols survived as people still sang them in secret. Carols remained mainly unsung until Victorian times, when two men called William Sandys and Davis Gilbert collected a lot of old Christmas music from villages in England. Also at this time, many orchestras and choirs were set up in the cities of England and people wanted Christmas songs to sing, so carols once again became popular. Many new carols, such as “Good King Wenceslas,” were also written in the Victorian period.<sup>115</sup>

### **Avoid Celebrating Christmas.**

Ample evidence has been shown throughout this paper that shows what Christmas really is: where it originated, who the personalities were behind it, and what is behind the many customs surrounding this celebration ... which is nothing more than a syncretized, watered-down version of the ancient Roman Saturnalia. Yet some people, perhaps most Americans, believe that the time we call Christmas is Christian, in other words part of the dogma that belongs to Jesus Christ our Savior, since His name is even in it.

They believe that even if you can trace Christmas to a pagan holiday it still can be made over into a festival honoring our Savior. This leads to a critical question: Is it possible to take a pagan festival and appropriate to it a Christian meaning? Is that in line with Christ’s teachings? Read these words.

Deuteronomy 12:29-32. “When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do like-

wise.’ You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

Jeremiah 10:1-5. “Hear the word which the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord; ‘Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple, they are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor can they do any good.’”

Jeremiah 10 is not speaking expressly of preparing a Christmas tree — this sculpted tree was probably more like a totem pole — but the principle applies to all of the major holidays in the country ... Thanksgiving Day excepted because it celebrates the wonderful character trait of thankfulness, and likely had its roots in the Feast of Tabernacles. We are not to practice anything that the heathen promote. That is abominable to our great Creator!

In review, let us examine these three points.

**1. The observance of Christmas is not commanded in Scripture.** Rather, the Sabbath and Holy Days are commanded (Leviticus 23:1-36). Jesus did not keep Christmas, nor any holiday like it, nor did He command that any commemoration of His birthday be kept. Birthdays are probably mentioned only twice in the Bible, in Job 1:4-5 in relation to Job’s sons “feasting”, for which Job sacrificed in case they had sinned, and in Matthew 14:6-11, when Herod had John the Baptist beheaded. Birthday observance is of pagan origin, avoided by the patriarchs and ecclesia. Rather, Scripture tells us, “The day of death



is better than the day of birth” (Ecclesiastes 7:1). As Christians we are to obey Him and the Father, not make up our own laws and ordinances, for as Christ told the scribes and Pharisees, “But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

Not only did Christ fail to keep Christmas, in honor of His own birth (though most people today claim to honor that birth), but neither did the early Church. Even as late as early America, many of the early settlers outlawed observance of this day because of its pagan origins.

**2. Christmas originated in paganism.** We have in this paper uncovered secular history because the background for this celebration cannot be found in God’s word. This day is termed the “Mass of Christ,” a thoroughly Roman Catholic observance that Protestants did not put away when they came out of Catholicism. The Catholics borrowed this day at the winter solstice, as the sun swung to its lowest point in the southern skies, from heathen religions and customs that existed well-entrenched throughout the lands they conquered. Anxious to bring everyone within the empire to greater unity through a common religious system, the Catholic fathers together with public leaders like Constantine syncretized pagan beliefs with Christian truth, thus translating the “sun god” into the “Son of God”, and Semiramis and Nimrod of ancient Babylon into the Madonna [Mary] and the Christ Child.

Ancient history teaches us that December 24 is the birthday of Nimrod, the arch-enemy of God (Genesis 10:8-10). From that world-ruling empire, the deification of Nimrod, his mother-wife, and the trappings surrounding them have passed down in various forms to many, if not most, nations throughout the world. These trappings include the Christmas tree and its star and ornaments, gift giving, the yule log, mistletoe, wreaths, and even Santa Claus and the reindeer, sleigh, and elves ... these later individuals being not-so-subtle representations of Satan, the demons, and UFOs.

We as Christians are to “Learn not the way of the heathen ...” (Jeremiah 10:2). Is it possible to change a day, originally celebrated for pagan purposes, into a holy day that mimics so-called Godly character? We have no evidence whatsoever in Scrip-

ture that such a change is permitted no matter how hard one might try to amalgamate unadulterated Christianity into pagan festivals. Light and darkness have no communion (II Corinthians 6:14), but true to Christ’s saying, “Men loved darkness rather than light ...” (John 3:19) throughout history, for Satan and his followers transform themselves into “angels of light” (II Corinthians 11:14). Men separated from their Creator seem bent on choosing the ways of evil.

**3. Jesus was not born at Christmas time.** Rather, He was born either in the spring or fall of the year, for “... there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night” (Luke 2:8) on the eve of His birth. On December 24 the flocks of sheep and goats are moved to enclosures and protected areas due to the harshness of the Palestine winter. Therefore, it is an impossibility that Christmas, the supposed birthday of Christ, is being observed at the proper time ... even if God permitted its observance.

The evidence presented in this paper shows that, since His ministry began in the spring when He was about thirty years old (Luke 3:23), his birth would have been in the spring 30 years earlier. His birth date can be shown to have occurred the spring of 4 B.C., near the time of a particular lunar eclipse at the time of King Herod’s death, as stated by Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews*. The date of this eclipse is given, showing it to be a few weeks before the Passover of that year, near the first day of the sacred year (Nisan 1). Thirty years from 4 B.C. brings one to the spring of 27 A.D., which fits into the time of Christ’s baptism and temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 3:21-22; 4:1-13). Other proofs are discussed in this paper as well, and are worth reviewing.

Christians must avoid observing pagan festivals, even if they are shrouded in the trappings of Christianity. Rather, we have the wonderful days God has given for us to observe in honor of Him. Let us praise Him for not leaving us without His word to guide us through this world, which Satan has deceived in most every way (Revelation 12:9)!

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## Appendix I

### THE ANTIQUITIES OF THE JEWS By Flavius Josephus, translated by William Whiston

#### BOOK XVII. Containing The Interval Of Fourteen Years — From The Death Of Alexander And Aristobulus To The Banishment Of Archelaus.

##### *CHAPTER 6. Concerning The Disease That Herod Fell Into And The Sedition Which The Jews Raised Thereupon; With The Punishment Of The Seditious.*

1. Now Herod's ambassadors made haste to Rome; but sent, as instructed beforehand, what answers they were to make to the questions put to them. They also carried the epistles with them. But Herod now fell into a distemper, and made his will, and bequeathed his kingdom to [Antipas], his youngest son; and this out of that hatred to Archelaus and Philip, which the calumnies of Antipater had raised against them. He also bequeathed a thousand talents to Cæsar, and five hundred to Julia, Cæsar's wife, to Cæsar's children, and friends and freed-men. He also distributed among his sons and their sons his money, his revenues, and his lands. He also made Salome his sister very rich, because she had continued faithful to him in all his circumstances, and was never so rash as to do him any harm; and as he despaired of recovering, for he was about the seventieth year of his age, he grew fierce, and indulged the bitterest anger upon all occasions; the cause whereof was this, that he thought himself despised, and that the nation was pleased with his misfortunes; besides which, he resented a sedition which some of the lower sort of men excited against him, the occasion of which was as follows.

2. There was one Judas, the son of Saripheus, and Matthias, the son of Margalothus, two of the most

eloquent men among the Jews, and the most celebrated interpreters of the Jewish laws, and men well beloved by the people, because of their education of their youth; for all those that were studious of virtue frequented their lectures every day. These men, when they found that the king's distemper was incurable, excited the young men that they would pull down all those works which the king had erected contrary to the law of their fathers, and thereby obtain the rewards which the law will confer on them for such actions of piety; for that it was truly on account of Herod's rashness in making such things as the law had forbidden, that his other misfortunes, and this distemper also, which was so unusual among mankind, and with which he was now afflicted, came upon him; for Herod had caused such things to be made which were contrary to the law, of which he was accused by Judas and Matthias; for the king had erected over the great gate of the temple a large golden eagle, of great value, and had dedicated it to the temple. Now the law forbids those that propose to live according to it, to erect images or representations of any living creature. So these wise men persuaded [their scholars] to pull down the golden eagle; alleging, that although they should incur any danger, which might bring them to their deaths, the virtue of the action now proposed to them would appear much more advantageous to them than the pleasures of life; since they would die for the preservation and observation of the law of their fathers; since they would also acquire an everlasting fame and commendation; since they would be both commended by the present generation, and leave an example of life that would never be forgotten to posterity; since that common calamity of dying cannot be avoided by our living so as to escape any such dangers; that therefore it is a right thing for those who are in love with a virtuous conduct, to wait for that fatal hour by such behavior as may carry them out of the world with praise and honor; and that this will alleviate death to a great degree, thus to come at it by the performance of brave actions, which bring us into danger of it; and at the same time to leave that reputation behind them to their children, and to all their relations, whether they be men or women, which will be of great advantage to them afterward.

3. And with such discourses as this did these men ex-

cite the young men to this action; and a report being come to them that the king was dead, this was an addition to the wise men's persuasions; so, in the very middle of the day, they got upon the place, they pulled down the eagle, and cut it into pieces with axes, while a great number of the people were in the temple. And now the king's captain, upon hearing what the undertaking was, and supposing it was a thing of a higher nature than it proved to be, came up thither, having a great band of soldiers with him, such as was sufficient to put a stop to the multitude of those who pulled down what was dedicated to God; so he fell upon them unexpectedly, and as they were upon this bold attempt, in a foolish presumption rather than a cautious circumspection, as is usual with the multitude, and while they were in disorder, and incautious of what was for their advantage; so he caught no fewer than forty of the young men, who had the courage to stay behind when the rest ran away, together with the authors of this bold attempt, Judas and Matthias, who thought it an ignominious thing to retire upon his approach, and led them to the king. And when they were come to the king, and he asked them if they had been so bold as to pull down what he had dedicated to God, "Yes, [said they,] what was contrived we contrived, and what hath been performed we performed it, and that with such a virtuous courage as becomes men; for we have given our assistance to those things which were dedicated to the majesty of God, and we have provided for what we have learned by hearing the law; and it ought not to be wondered at, if we esteem those laws which Moses had suggested to him, and were taught him by God, and which he wrote and left behind him, more worthy of observation than thy commands. Accordingly we will undergo death, and all sorts of punishments which thou canst inflict upon us, with pleasure, since we are conscious to ourselves that we shall die, not for any unrighteous actions, but for our love to religion." And thus they all said, and their courage was still equal to their profession, and equal to that with which they readily set about this undertaking. And when the king had ordered them to be bound, he sent them to Jericho, and called together the principal men among the Jews; and when they were come, he made them assemble in the theater, and because he could not himself stand, he lay upon a couch, and enumerated the many labors that he had

long endured on their account, and his building of the temple, and what a vast charge that was to him; while the Asamoneans, during the hundred and twenty-five years of their government, had not been able to perform any so great a work for the honor of God as that was; that he had also adorned it with very valuable donations, on which account he hoped that he had left himself a memorial, and procured himself a reputation after his death. He then cried out, that these men had not abstained from affronting him, even in his lifetime, but that in the very day time, and in the sight of the multitude, they had abused him to that degree, as to fall upon what he had dedicated, and in that way of abuse had pulled it down to the ground. They pretended, indeed, that they did it to affront him; but if any one consider the thing truly, they will find that they were guilty of sacrilege against God therein.

4. But the people, on account of Herod's barbarous temper, and for fear he should be so cruel and to inflict punishment on them, said what was done was done without their approbation, and that it seemed to them that the actors might well be punished for what they had done. But as for Herod, he dealt more mildly with others [of the assembly] but he deprived Matthias of the high priesthood, as in part an occasion of this action, and made Joazar, who was Matthias's wife's brother, high priest in his stead. Now it happened, that during the time of the high priesthood of this Matthias, there was another person made high priest for a single day, that very day which the Jews observed as a fast. The occasion was this: This Matthias the high priest, on the night before that day when the fast was to be celebrated, seemed, in a dream, 7 to have conversation with his wife; and because he could not officiate himself on that account, Joseph, the son of Ellemus, his kinsman, assisted him in that sacred office. But Herod deprived this Matthias of the high priesthood, and burnt the other Matthias, who had raised the sedition, with his companions, alive. And that very night there was an eclipse of the moon. 8

5. But now Herod's distemper greatly increased upon him after a severe manner, and this by God's judgment upon him for his sins; for a fire glowed in him slowly, which did not so much appear to the touch

outwardly, as it augmented his pains inwardly; for it brought upon him a vehement appetite to eating, which he could not avoid to supply with one sort of food or other. His entrails were also ex-ulcerated, and the chief violence of his pain lay on his colon; an aqueous and transparent liquor also had settled itself about his feet, and a like matter afflicted him at the bottom of his belly. Nay, further, his privy-member was putrefied, and produced worms; and when he sat upright, he had a difficulty of breathing, which was very loathsome, on account of the stench of his breath, and the quickness of its returns; he had also convulsions in all parts of his body, which increased his strength to an insufferable degree. It was said by those who pretended to divine, and who were endued with wisdom to foretell such things, that God inflicted this punishment on the king on account of his great impiety; yet was he still in hopes of recovering, though his afflictions seemed greater than any one could bear. He also sent for physicians, and did not refuse to follow what they prescribed for his assistance, and went beyond the river Jordan, and bathed himself in the warm baths that were at Callirrhoe, which, besides their other general virtues, were also fit to drink; which water runs into the lake called Asphaltiris. And when the physicians once thought fit to have him bathed in a vessel full of oil, it was supposed that he was just dying; but upon the lamentable cries of his domestics, he revived; and having no longer the least hopes of recovering, he gave order that every soldier should be paid fifty drachmae; and he also gave a great deal to their commanders, and to his friends, and came again to Jericho, where he grew so choleric, that it brought him to do all things like a madman; and though he were near his death, he contrived the following wicked designs. He commanded that all the principal men of the entire Jewish nation, wheresoever they lived, should be called to him. Accordingly, they were a great number that came, because the whole nation was called, and all men heard of this call, and death was the penalty of such as should despise the epistles that were sent to call them. And now the king was in a wild rage against them all, the innocent as well as those that had afforded ground for accusations; and when they were come, he ordered them to be all shut up in the hippodrome, 9 and sent for his sister Salome, and her husband Alexas, and spake thus to them: "I shall die

in a little time, so great are my pains; which death ought to be cheerfully borne, and to be welcomed by all men; but what principally troubles me is this, that I shall die without being lamented, and without such mourning as men usually expect at a king's death." For that he was not unacquainted with the temper of the Jews, that his death would be a thing very desirable, and exceedingly acceptable to them, because during his lifetime they were ready to revolt from him, and to abuse the donations he had dedicated to God that it therefore was their business to resolve to afford him some alleviation of his great sorrows on this occasion; for that if they do not refuse him their consent in what he desires, he shall have a great mourning at his funeral, and such as never had any king before him; for then the whole nation would mourn from their very soul, which otherwise would be done in sport and mockery only. He desired therefore, that as soon as they see he hath given up the ghost, they shall place soldiers round the hippodrome, while they do not know that he is dead; and that they shall not declare his death to the multitude till this is done, but that they shall give orders to have those that are in custody shot with their darts; and that this slaughter of them all will cause that he shall not miss to rejoice on a double account; that as he is dying, they will make him secure that his will shall be executed in what he charges them to do; and that he shall have the honor of a memorable mourning at his funeral. So he deplored his condition, with tears in his eyes, and obtested them by the kindness due from them, as of his kindred, and by the faith they owed to God, and begged of them that they would not hinder him of this honorable mourning at his funeral. So they promised him not to transgress his commands.

6. Now any one may easily discover the temper of this man's mind, which not only took pleasure in doing what he had done formerly against his relations, out of the love of life, but by those commands of his which savored of no humanity; since he took care, when he was departing out of this life, that the whole nation should be put into mourning, and indeed made desolate of their dearest kindred, when he gave order that one out of every family should be slain, although they had done nothing that was unjust, or that was against him, nor were they accused



of any other crimes; while it is usual for those who have any regard to virtue to lay aside their hatred at such a time, even with respect to those they justly esteemed their enemies.

***CHAPTER 7. Herod Has Thoughts Of Killing Himself With His Own Hand; And A Little Afterwards He Orders Antipater To Be Slain.***

1. As he was giving these commands to his relations, there came letters from his ambassadors, who had been sent to Rome unto Cæsar, which, when they were read, their purport was this: That Acme was slain by Cæsar, out of his indignation at what hand, she had in Antipater's wicked practices; and that as to Antipater himself, Cæsar left it to Herod to act as became a father and a king, and either to banish him, or to take away his life, which he pleased. When Herod heard this, he was somewhat better, out of the pleasure he had from the contents of the letters, and was elevated at the death of Acme, and at the power that was given him over his son; but as his pains were become very great, he was now ready to faint for want of somewhat to eat; so he called for an apple and a knife; for it was his custom formerly to pare the apple himself, and soon afterwards to cut it, and eat it. When he had got the knife, he looked about, and had a mind to stab himself with it; and he had done it, had not his first cousin, Achiabus, prevented him, and held his hand, and cried out loudly. Whereupon a woeful lamentation echoed through the palace, and a great tumult was made, as if the king were dead. Upon which Antipater, who verily believed his father was deceased, grew bold in his discourse, as hoping to be immediately and entirely released from his bonds, and to take the kingdom into his hands without any more ado; so he discoursed with the jailer about letting him go, and in that case promised him great things, both now and hereafter, as if that were the only thing now in question. But the jailer did not only refuse to do what Antipater would have him, but informed the king of his intentions, and how many solicitations he had from him [of that nature]. Hereupon Herod, who had formerly no affection nor good-will towards his son to restrain him, when he heard what the jailer said, he cried out, and beat his head, although he was at death's door, and raised himself upon his elbow, and sent for some

of his guards, and commanded them to kill Antipater without tiny further delay, and to do it presently, and to bury him in an ignoble manner at Hyrcania.

***CHAPTER 8. Concerning Herod's Death, And Testament, And Burial.***

1. And now Herod altered his testament upon the alteration of his mind; for he appointed Antipas, to whom he had before left the kingdom, to be tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and granted the kingdom to Archelaus. He also gave Gaulonitis, and Trachonitis, and Paneas to Philip, who was his son, but own brother to Archelaus 10 by the name of a tetrarchy; and bequeathed Jarnnia, and Ashdod, and Phasaelis to Salome his sister, with five hundred thousand [drachmae] of silver that was coined. He also made provision for all the rest of his kindred, by giving them sums of money and annual revenues, and so left them all in a wealthy condition. He bequeathed also to Cæsar ten millions [of drachmae] of coined money, besides both vessels of gold and silver, and garments exceeding costly, to Julia, Cæsar's wife; and to certain others, five millions. When he had done these things, he died, the fifth day after he had caused Antipater to be slain; having reigned, since he had procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven. 11 A man he was of great barbarity towards all men equally, and a slave to his passion; but above the consideration of what was right; yet was he favored by fortune as much as any man ever was, for from a private man he became a king; and though he were encompassed with ten thousand dangers, he got clear of them all, and continued his life till a very old age. But then, as to the affairs of his family and children, in which indeed, according to his own opinion, he was also very fortunate, because he was able to conquer his enemies, yet, in my opinion, he was herein very unfortunate.

2. But then Salome and Alexas, before the king's death was made known, dismissed those that were shut up in the hippodrome, and told them that the king ordered them to go away to their own lands, and take care of their own affairs, which was esteemed by the nation a great benefit. And now the king's death was made public, when Salome and Alexas

gathered the soldiery together in the amphitheater at Jericho; and the first thing they did was, they read Herod's letter, written to the soldiery, thanking them for their fidelity and good-will to him, and exhorting them to afford his son Archelaus, whom he had appointed for their king, like fidelity and good-will. After which Ptolemy, who had the king's seal intrusted to him, read the king's testament, which was to be of force no otherwise than as it should stand when Cæsar had inspected it; so there was presently an acclamation made to Archelaus, as king; and the soldiers came by bands, and their commanders with them, and promised the same good-will to him, and readiness to serve him, which they had exhibited to Herod; and they prayed God to be assistant to him.

3. After this was over, they prepared for his funeral, it being Archelaus's care that the procession to his father's sepulcher should be very sumptuous. Accordingly, he brought out all his ornaments to adorn the pomp of the funeral. The body was carried upon a golden bier, embroidered with very precious stones of great variety, and it was covered over with purple, as well as the body itself; he had a diadem upon his head, and above it a crown of gold: he also had a scepter in his right hand. About the bier were his sons and his numerous relations; next to these was the soldiery, distinguished according to their several countries and denominations; and they were put into the following order: First of all went his guards, then the band of Thracians, and after them the Germans; and next the band of Galatians, every one in their habiliments of war; and behind these marched the whole army in the same manner as they used to go out to war, and as they used to be put in array by their muster-masters and centurions; these were followed by five hundred of his domestics carrying spices. So they went eight furlongs 12 to Herodium; for there by his own command he was to be buried. And thus did Herod end his life.

4. Now Archelaus paid him so much respect, as to continue his mourning till the seventh day; for so many days are appointed for it by the law of our fathers. And when he had given a treat to the multitude, and left off his motoring, he went up into the temple; he had also acclamations and praises given him, which way soever he went, every one striving with

the rest who should appear to use the loudest acclamations. So he ascended a high elevation made for him, and took his seat, in a throne made of gold, and spake kindly to the multitude, and declared with what joy he received their acclamations, and the marks of the good-will they showed to him; and returned them thanks that they did not remember the injuries his father had done them to his disadvantage; and promised them he would endeavor not to be behindhand with them in rewarding their alacrity in his service, after a suitable manner; but that he should abstain at present from the name of king, and that he should have the honor of that dignity, if Cæsar should confirm and settle that testament which his father had made; and that it was on this account, that when the army would have put the diadem on him at Jericho, he would not accept of that honor, which is usually so much desired, because it was not yet evident that he who was to be principally concerned in bestowing it would give it him; although, by his acceptance of the government, he should not want the ability of rewarding their kindness to him and that it should be his endeavor, as to all things wherein they were concerned, to prove in every respect better than his father. Whereupon the multitude, as it is usual with them, supposed that the first days of those that enter upon such governments declare the intentions of those that accept them; and so by how much Archelaus spake the more gently and civilly to them, by so much did they more highly commend him, and made application to him for the grant of what they desired. Some made a clamor that he would ease them of some of their annual payments; but others desired him to release those that were put into prison by Herod, who were many, and had been put there at several times; others of them required that he would take away those taxes which had been severely laid upon what was publicly sold and bought. So Archelaus contradicted them in nothing, since he pretended to do all things so as to get the good-will of the multitude to him, as looking upon that good-will to be a great step towards his preservation of the government. Hereupon he went and offered sacrifice to God, and then betook himself to feast with his friends.

***CHAPTER 9. How The People Raised A Sedition Against Archelaus, And How He Sailed To Rome.***

1. At this time also it was that some of the Jews got together out of a desire of innovation. They lamented Matthias, and those that were slain with him by Herod, who had not any respect paid them by a funeral mourning, out of the fear men were in of that man; they were those who had been condemned for pulling down the golden eagle. The people made a great clamor and lamentation hereupon, and cast out some reproaches against the king also, as if that tended to alleviate the miseries of the deceased. The people assembled together, and desired of Archelaus, that, in way of revenge on their account, he would inflict punishment on those who had been honored by Herod; and that, in the first and principal place, he would deprive that high priest whom Herod had made, and would choose one more agreeable to the law, and of greater purity, to officiate as high priest. This was granted by Archelaus, although he was mightily offended at their importunity, because he proposed to himself to go to Rome immediately to look after Cæsar's determination about him. However, he sent the general of his forces to use persuasions, and to tell them that the death which was inflicted on their friends was according to the law; and to represent to them that their petitions about these things were carried to a great height of injury to him; that the time was not now proper for such petitions, but required their unanimity until such time as he should be established in the government by the consent of Cæsar, and should then be come back to them; for that he would then consult with them in common concerning the purport of their petitions; but that they ought at present to be quiet, lest they should seem seditious persons.

2. So when the king had suggested these things, and instructed his general in what he was to say, he sent him away to the people; but they made a clamor, and would not give him leave to speak, and put him in danger of his life, and as many more as were desirous to venture upon saying openly any thing which might reduce them to a sober mind, and prevent their going on in their present courses, because they had more concern to have all their own wills performed than to yield obedience to their governors; thinking it to be a thing insufferable, that, while Herod was alive, they should lose those that were most dear to them,

and that when he was dead, they could not get the actors to be punished. So they went on with their designs after a violent manner, and thought all to be lawful and right which tended to please them, and being unskillful in foreseeing what dangers they incurred; and when they had suspicion of such a thing, yet did the present pleasure they took in the punishment of those they deemed their enemies outweigh all such considerations; and although Archelaus sent many to speak to them, yet they treated them not as messengers sent by him, but as persons that came of their own accord to mitigate their anger, and would not let one of them speak. The sedition also was made by such as were in a great passion; and it was evident that they were proceeding further in seditious practices, by the multitude running so fast upon them.

3. Now, upon the approach of that feast of unleavened bread, which the law of their fathers had appointed for the Jews at this time, which feast is called the Passover 13 and is a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt, when they offer sacrifices with great alacrity; and when they are required to slay more sacrifices in number than at any other festival; and when an innumerable multitude came thither out of the country, nay, from beyond its limits also, in order to worship God, the seditious lamented Judas and Matthias, those teachers of the laws, and kept together in the temple, and had plenty of food, because these seditious persons were not ashamed to beg it. And as Archelaus was afraid lest some terrible thing should spring up by means of these men's madness, he sent a regiment of armed men, and with them a captain of a thousand, to suppress the violent efforts of the seditious before the whole multitude should be infected with the like madness; and gave them this charge, that if they found any much more openly seditious than others, and more busy in tumultuous practices, they should bring them to him. But those that were seditious on account of those teachers of the law, irritated the people by the noise and clamors they used to encourage the people in their designs; so they made an assault upon the soldiers, and came up to them, and stoned the greatest part of them, although some of them ran away wounded, and their captain among them; and when they had thus done, they returned to the sacrifices which were already in



their hands. Now Archelaus thought there was no way to preserve the entire government but by cutting off those who made this attempt upon it; so he sent out the whole army upon them, and sent the horsemen to prevent those that had their tents without the temple from assisting those that were within the temple, and to kill such as ran away from the footmen when they thought themselves out of danger; which horsemen slew three thousand men, while the rest went to the neighboring mountains. Then did Archelaus order proclamation to be made to them all, that they should retire to their own homes; so they went away, and left the festival, out of fear of somewhat worse which would follow, although they had been so bold by reason of their want of instruction. So Archelaus went down to the sea with his mother, and took with him Nicolaus and Ptolemy, and many others of his friends, and left Philip his brother as governor of all things belonging both to his own family and to the public. There went out also with him Salome, Herod's sister who took with her, her children, and many of her kindred were with her; which kindred of hers went, as they pretended, to assist Archelaus in gaining the kingdom, but in reality to oppose him, and chiefly to make loud complaints of what he had done in the temple. But Sabinus, Cæsar's steward for Syrian affairs, as he was making haste into Judea to preserve Herod's effects, met with Archelaus at Cæsarea; but Varus [president of Syria] came at that time, and restrained him from meddling with them, for he was there as sent for by Archceaus, by the means of Ptolemy. And Sabinus, out of regard to Varus, did neither seize upon any of the castles that were among the Jews, nor did he seal up the treasures in them, but permitted Archelaus to have them, until Cæsar should declare his resolution about them; so that, upon this his promise, he tarried still at Cæsarea. But after Archelaus was sailed for Rome, and Varus was removed to Antioch, Sabinus went to Jerusalem, and seized on the king's palace. He also sent for the keepers of the garrisons, and for all those that had the charge of Herod's effects, and declared publicly that he should require them to give an account of what they had; and he disposed of the castles in the manner he pleased; but those who kept them did not neglect what Archelaus had given them in command, but continued to keep all things in the manner that had been enjoined them; and their pretense was, that they

kept them all for Cæsar.

4. At the same time also did Antipas, another of Herod's sons, sail to Rome, in order to gain the government; being buoyed up by Salome with promises that he should take that government; and that he was a much honester and fitter man than Archelaus for that authority, since Herod had, in his former testament, deemed him the worthiest to be made king, which ought to be esteemed more valid than his latter testament. Antipas also brought with him his mother, and Ptolemy the brother of Nicolaus, one that had been Herod's most honored friend, and was now zealous for Antipas; but it was Ireneus the orator, and one who, on account of his reputation for sagacity, was intrusted with the affairs of the kingdom, who most of all encouraged him to attempt to gain the kingdom; by whose means it was, that when some advised him to yield to Archelaus, as to his elder brother, and who had been declared king by their father's last will, he would not submit so to do. And when he was come to Rome, all his relations revolted to him; not out of their good-will to him, but out of their hatred to Archelaus; though indeed they were most of all desirous of gaining their liberty, and to be put under a Roman governor; but if there were too great an opposition made to that, they thought Antipas preferable to Archelaus, and so joined with him, in order to procure the kingdom for him. Sabinus also, by letters, accused Archelaus to Cæsar.

5. Now when Archelaus had sent in his papers to Cæsar, wherein he pleaded his right to the kingdom, and his father's testament, with the accounts of Herod's money, and with Ptolemy, who brought Herod's seal, he so expected the event; but when Cæsar had read these papers, and Varus's and Sabinus's letters, with the accounts of the money, and what were the annual incomes of the kingdom, and understood that Antipas had also sent letters to lay claim to the kingdom, he summoned his friends together, to know their opinions, and with them Caius, the son of Agrippa, and of Julia his daughter, whom he had adopted, and took him, and made him sit first of all, and desired such as pleased to speak their minds about the affairs now before them. Now Antipater, Salome's son, a very subtle orator, and a bitter enemy to Archelaus, spake first to this purpose: That

it was ridiculous in Archelaus to plead now to have the kingdom given him, since he had, in reality, taken already the power over it to himself, before Cæsar had granted it to him; and appealed to those bold actions of his, in destroying so many at the Jewish festival; and if the men had acted unjustly, it was but fit the punishing of them should have been reserved to those that were out of the country, but had the power to punish them, and not been executed by a man that, if he pretended to be a king, he did an injury to Cæsar, by usurping that authority before it was determined for him by Cæsar; but if he owned himself to be a private person, his case was much worse, since he who was putting in for the kingdom could by no means expect to have that power granted him, of which he had already deprived Cæsar [by taking it to himself]. He also touched sharply upon him, and appealed to his changing the commanders in the army, and his sitting in the royal throne beforehand, and his determination of law-suits; all done as if he were no other than a king. He appealed also to his concessions to those that petitioned him on a public account, and indeed doing such things, than which he could devise no greater if he had been already settled in the kingdom by Cæsar. He also ascribed to him the releasing of the prisoners that were in the hippodrome, and many other things, that either had been certainly done by him, or were believed to be done, and easily might be believed to have been done, because they were of such a nature as to be usually done by young men, and by such as, out of a desire of ruling, seize upon the government too soon. He also charged him with his neglect of the funeral mourning for his father, and with having merry meetings the very night in which he died; and that it was thence the multitude took the handle of raising a tumult: and if Archelaus could thus requite his dead father, who had bestowed such benefits upon him, and bequeathed such great things to him, by pretending to shed tears for him in the day time, like an actor on the stage, but every night making mirth for having gotten the government, he would appear to be the same Archelaus with regard to Cæsar, if he granted him the kingdom, which he hath been to his father; since he had then dancing and singing, as though an enemy of his were fallen, and not as though a man were carried to his funeral, that was so nearly related, and had been so great a benefactor to him. But he

said that the greatest crime of all was this, that he came now before Cæsar to obtain the government by his grant, while he had before acted in all things as he could have acted if Cæsar himself, who ruled all, had fixed him firmly in the government. And what he most aggravated in his pleading was the slaughter of those about the temple, and the impiety of it, as done at the festival; and how they were slain like sacrifices themselves, some of whom were foreigners, and others of their own country, till the temple was full of dead bodies: and all this was done, not by an alien, but by one who pretended to the lawful title of a king, that he might complete the wicked tyranny which his nature prompted him to, and which is hated by all men. On which account his father never so much as dreamed of making him his successor in the kingdom, when he was of a sound mind, because he knew his disposition; and in his former and more authentic testament, he appointed his antagonist Antipas to succeed; but that Archelaus was called by his father to that dignity when he was in a dying condition, both of body and mind; while Antipas was called when he was ripest in his judgment, and of such strength of body as made him capable of managing his own affairs: and if his father had the like notion of him formerly that he hath now showed, yet hath he given a sufficient specimen what a king he is likely to be, when he hath [in effect] deprived Cæsar of that power of disposing of the kingdom, which he justly hath, and hath not abstained from making a terrible slaughter of his fellow citizens in the temple, while he was but a private person.

6. So when Antipater had made this speech, and had confirmed what he had said by producing many witnesses from among Archelaus's own relations, he made an end of his pleading. Upon which Nicolaus arose up to plead for Archelaus, and said, "That what had been done at the temple was rather to be attributed to the mind of those that had been killed, than to the authority of Archelaus; for that those who were the authors of such things are not only wicked in the injuries they do of themselves, but in forcing sober persons to avenge themselves upon them. Now it is evident that what these did in way of opposition was done under pretense, indeed, against Archelaus, but in reality against Cæsar himself, for they, after an injurious manner, attacked and slew those who were

sent by Archelaus, and who came only to put a stop to their doings. They had no regard, either to God or to the festival, whom Antipater yet is not ashamed to patronize, whether it be out of his indulgence of an enmity to Archelaus, or out of his hatred of virtue and justice. For as to those who begin such tumults, and first set about such unrighteous actions, they are the men who force those that punish them to betake themselves to arms even against their will. So that Antipater in effect ascribes the rest of what was done to all those who were of counsel to the accusers; for nothing which is here accused of injustice has been done but what was derived from them as its authors; nor are those things evil in themselves, but so represented only in order to do harm to Archelaus. Such is these men's inclination to do an injury to a man that is of their kindred, their father's benefactor, and familiarity acquainted with them, and that hath ever lived in friendship with them; for that, as to this testament, it was made by the king when he was of a sound mind, and so ought to be of more authority than his former testament; and that for this reason, because Cæsar is therein left to be the judge and disposer of all therein contained; and for Cæsar, he will not, to be sure, at all imitate the unjust proceedings of those men, who, during Herod's whole life, had on all occasions been joint partakers of power with him, and yet do zealously endeavor to injure his determination, while they have not themselves had the same regard to their kinsman [which Archelaus had]. Cæsar will not therefore disannul the testament of a man whom he had entirely supported, of his friend and confederate, and that which is committed to him in trust to ratify; nor will Cæsar's virtuous and upright disposition, which is known and uncontested through all the habitable world, imitate the wickedness of these men in condemning a king as a madman, and as having lost his reason, while he hath bequeathed the succession to a good son of his, and to one who flies to Cæsar's upright determination for refuge. Nor can Herod at any time have been mistaken in his judgment about a successor, while he showed so much prudence as to submit all to Cæsar's determination."

7. Now when Nicolaus had laid these things before Cæsar, he ended his plea; whereupon Cæsar was so obliging to Archelaus, that he raised him up when he

had cast himself down at his feet, and said that he well deserved the kingdom; and he soon let them know that he was so far moved in his favor, that he would not act otherwise than his father's testament directed, and than was for the advantage of Archelaus. However, while he gave this encouragement to Archelaus to depend on him securely, he made no full determination about him; and when the assembly was broken up, he considered by himself whether he should confirm the kingdom to Archelaus, or whether he should part it among all Herod's posterity; and this because they all stood in need of much assistance to support them.

## Appendix II

### Columbia: An American Goddess

By Aksel Suvari, The Masonic Philosophical Society  
— Recapturing the Spirit of the Renaissance  
January 17, 2016

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame  
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

Emma Lazarus, 1883

If you were to ask the average American which mythical figure best represents the national character, most would reply with a household name: Uncle Sam. The genial yet intimidating patriarch has dominated artistic and poetic descriptions of the American nation-state for a hundred years. However there is another, more deeply ingrained avatar of the American populace, the omnipresent Columbia. Most famously depicted as the Statue of Liberty, upon



which is inscribed Emma Lazarus' poem reproduced above, Columbia was the mythical figure adopted by the founding generation of the early United States. After the defeat of the British in 1783, America found itself free from international harassment and a wide open frontier of unknowable bounty. What was needed was an icon, a symbol by which to galvanize and direct the consciousness of the American people. By the late 1790's, Columbia was born. Columbia quickly became the patron saint of Manifest Destiny, the doctrine of westward expansion embraced with genocidal fervor by the pioneers and politicians alike.

Columbia's figure appears on or within many state and federal buildings constructed in the 19th century, usually cast in bronze and often pointing or facing West. She adorns the Wisconsin Capitol building, sculpted by the same Daniel Chester French who constructed the greatest rendition of Columbia in history, the 65-foot-tall Statue of the Republic commissioned for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago, Illinois. She reposes atop the Texas Capitol holding the sword of Justice and raising aloft a blazing golden star. She lends her name to numerous towns across America, she is the patron of Columbia University and the seat of governmental power stands in a district built in her honor: The District of Columbia.

Columbia as a symbol is far too complex and deeply-rooted to be ascribed as a creation of political machinations. *Columbia is only the latest name given to a goddess who is older than recorded history and can be traced in her modern form to the early Egyptian dynasties. She has been known throughout history variously as Inanna and Ishtar by the Sumerians, Kali by the Hindus, Freya by the Norse and most notably as Isis by the ancient Egyptians.* She is the goddess of love, wisdom, warfare and destiny and is venerated by all cultures as the mother of civilization.

*Egyptian telling of her tale, Isis is also the goddess of magic, friend of slave and aristocrat by equal measure. It was Isis that kept the veil of night cloaked about the light of wisdom and it was her name invoked in the rites and rituals of the numerous fertility cults that sprang up along the banks of the Nile.* The pentagram, or five-pointed star, the primary symbol of magical and initiatory societies across the world, is the shape traced in the heavens

by the transit of the planet Venus throughout the year. In this Roman context the parallels between Isis and the western conception of the Virgin Goddess in her myriad forms become starkly apparent.

*She has also enjoyed considerable veneration throughout history as a figurehead of Freemasonry,* or, as Manly Palmer Hall put it, "The Virgin of The World". Numerous Masonic writers have expounded lengthy treatises on the Masonic symbolism inherent in the legend of Isis, it being so closely tied to the inner curriculum of Masonry. In the pre-Christian Mystery traditions, Wisdom was always depicted as feminine. In Greece, Wisdom was personified as Athena, Goddess of Knowledge and Crafts. The seven liberal arts are given female representations and the nine Muses invoked by countless artisans and artists are all of female form. For an organization with an historical opposition to the admittance of women, Freemasonry has an oddly persistent fascination with feminine representations of their Craft.

It is often acknowledged that many, if not most, of the founding figures of early America were Freemasons. Could it be that this small group of men, working with the vast repository of Masonic symbolism, crafted a symbol to forge a specific path forward into the future? Is it coincidence that Columbia led the waves of settlers of the New World from 'sea to shining sea', transporting the light of civilization from its birth on the Eastern horizon to its maturity in the West? Though she has been subsumed in popular understanding by the withered visage of Uncle Sam, Columbia keeps constant vigil from the forgotten and overlooked corners of American history and geography, a testament to a different time. She may remain cloaked behind the veil she draws so closely to her breast yet the light of her torch still burns for those with eyes to see.

## Appendix II

### 5,000-year-old "Nativity Scene" Reportedly Found in Egypt

December 23, 2016

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Italian researchers may have discovered the oldest nativity scene ever found, predating Christian na-

tivity art by about three millennia, according to the travel and exploration website *Seeker*.

The rock painting depicts a newborn between parents, a star in the east, and two animals. It was discovered on the ceiling of a small cavity in the Egyptian Sahara desert, *Seeker* reported. Researchers believe it dates to the Neolithic or Stone Age.

“It’s a very evocative scene which indeed resembles the Christmas nativity. But it predates it by some 3,000 years,” geologist Marco Morelli, director of the Museum of Planetary Sciences in Prato, Italy, told *Seeker*. The site reports that Morelli and his team discovered the rock art in 2005, but only now are revealing their findings under the title “Cave of the Parents.”

The rock painting, done in a reddish-brown ochre, has several notable features: a headless lion, a baboon or monkey, a star set in the east, and a baby who is slightly raised to the sky, a position that could have signified birth or pregnancy, *Seeker* reported.

The rock painting raises questions about the meaning ascribed to nativity scenes long before the birth of Christ. “No doubt it’s an intriguing drawing,” Morelli said. “We didn’t find similar scenes until the early Christian age.”