



December 18, 2020

Mistletoe, Evergreen Trees, Holly Branches, Yule Logs and...

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from our offices here in Spanish Fort, AL.

My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

A week from today much of the Western world will once again celebrate what they think is the birthday of Christ.

What is interesting, is that I've noticed even some who claim to not observe Christmas, posting pictures standing next to Christmas trees or other aspects of the holiday on Facebook.

Yes, much of the world celebrates and observes this day, but what can we glean from History, and God's Word?

Do most realize that the date December 25 was established long ago as the birth day of the sun god?

The 1944 edition of the Encyclopedia Americana states, "In the fifth century the Western church ordered it [Christ's birth] to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed." *Sol* is the Latin name for the Sun. The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge states in its article on Christmas, "How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia (Dec. 25) following the Saturnalia (Dec. 17-24) and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the 'new sun' ... cannot be accurately determined. The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence."

It was the Roman emperors who established worship by Christians on Sunday and the celebration of Christ's birth on December 25. The first one to enforce Sunday worship was Constantine, the emperor. At the Council of Laodicea, in A.D. 363, the following decree was passed: "Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day,

resting rather on Sunday. But, if any be found to be Judaizing, let them be declared anathema from Christ." In 380, Emperor Theodosius made Sunday-keeping Catholic Christianity the official religion of the empire, outlawing all other faiths.

"the tradition of celebrating December 25 as Christ's birthday came to the Romans from Persia. Mithra, the Persian god of light and sacred contracts, was born out of a rock on December 25. Rome was famous for its flirtations with strange gods and cults, and in the third century [274 AD] the unchristian emperor Aurelian established the festival of *Dies Invicti Solis*, (the Day of the Invincible Sun), on December 25.

"Mithra was an embodiment of the sun, so this period of its rebirth was a major day in Mithraism, which had become Rome's latest official religion with the patronage of Aurelian. It is believed that the emperor Constantine adhered to Mithraism up to the time of his conversion to Christianity. He was probably instrumental in seeing that the major feast of his old religion was carried over to his new faith" (The Christmas Almanac, 1979, p.17).

Sunday observance received a historic boost when Constantine - himself an unbeliever who is said to have adopted Christianity (at least nominally) - established Sunday as the first day of the week in the Roman calendar and issued a mandatory order prohibiting work on that day, in honor of the sun god. On March 7, 321, he decreed, "On the venerable Day of the Sun, let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed." Farmers were given an exception. Before the end of the 4th century, Sunday observance prevailed over Saturday.

I am reminded of the actions of the individual associated with the fourth beast of Daniel 7. "He . . . Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law." (v.25)

This ancient worship of the sun god, known as Baal worship, appears again and again. Easton's Bible Dictionary has this to say about Baal: "The sun-god, under the general title of Baal, or "lord," was the chief object of worship of the Canaanites."

The end time church-state power is labeled "Babylon the great." (Revelation 18:2) The religious power, connected with the end time beast and associated ten nations, is described as "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (Revelation 17:5) Scriptures point to ancient Babylon as the place where many idolatrous pagan practices originated. Babylon had its origins in connection with a tyrant and dictator. There is only a brief mention of ancient Babel and its builder Nimrod, called a "*mighty one*" and a "*mighty hunter before the Lord*." (Gen 10:8-10)

Those few words are very telling. The late Alexander Hislop in his book The Two Babylons has

extensive historical references to Nimrod and his mother-wife Semiramis and their supposed child Tammuz. He traces the customs associated with their deification and how those idolatrous religious practices have persisted down through the centuries and became associated with the celebration of what became Christmas.

Although I do not suggest everything he writes in his book is completely accurate, some of what he says can be conclusively proven.

Have you ever thought about where the use of mistletoe, evergreen trees, holly branches, yule logs and gift giving at December 25 comes from? Hislop traces them back to ancient Babel and Babylon and then their emergence in the religious practices in Egypt and the Roman Empire.

Hislop explains that the imagery of a "mother and child" was used in pagan worship and appears in Babylon, India and Egypt and in other cultures, often associated with a trinity. Hislop traces this back to the wife of Nimrod, Semiramis, and a child born to her that she claimed was the reincarnation of Nimrod (with the name "Ninus" often appearing in ancient histories). "Yule" is a Chaldee word meaning infant or little child. December 25th was called by the pagan Anglo-Saxons as "Yule day" and the night that preceded it "mother night" all long before any contact with Christianity.

Hislop documents that after Nimrod's death, his mother-wife Semiramis claimed that he was still alive as a spirit being. She claimed that an evergreen sprang up overnight from a dead tree stump as a symbol of Nimrod's resurrection. She also claimed that on the anniversary of his birth, December 25, Nimrod would visit the evergreen tree and leave gifts on it.

Some apologists for the December 25 Christmas date and customs claim "they are adopting them and making them into Christian symbols and are worshipping God with them".

What does Scripture instruct us?

"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 likewise.' You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way . . ." (Deuteronomy 12:29-31).

We should reject the attempts to use customs or cultures associated with worshipping a sun god to be applied to worshipping the *Son of God*. We must hold to God's instructions in His Word, the Bible, about when and how to worship Him. It's critically important that we must then follow John 4:24 (AKJV) "*God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*"

As this world is caught up in all the “spirit of Christmas” stay encouraged, solidly anchored to God’s Word, His truth and allowing His Spirit to live and shine in us brightly!

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

-Scott Hoefker

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