

# Leaving Christmas



**Raul Enyedi**

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## Why I Ceased Observing Christmas A personal testimony

Raul Enyedi

I, too, as many others Christians, have been saddened and upset by the increasing secularization of the winter holidays, which, by every year that's passing by, become more superficial, losing more and more of their traditional values. The commercial seem to swallow up these values and use them only to increase profit. I, too, as many others, once had a nostalgia and a longing for the old times when traditions were respected, when the Christmas day had such an emotional charge, more than any other day of the year. I was among the voices that cried out: *"Let's bring Christ back into Christmas!"*

I wanted Christ to be back into the center of the holiday and to receive once again the worship he received from the shepherds and the wise men. And I was even one of those who insisted that Christmas was not about Santa, but about Christ. The carols I was singing talked only about Christ. I wanted, from all my heart, a truly Christian Christmas. But I knew that in order to have that, I had to do everything according to the Scriptures and eliminate all that was contrary to it. And so it was that I began my study, to find what the Bible really does say about Christmas. Very early I found that the New Testament does not contain any commandment to observe the birth of Christ. This was a bit odd, since in the Old Testament,

when the Lord gave the Law to Israel, He gave them specific and detailed commandments to observe certain feasts or celebrations.

Not only have I found no specific commandment in the New Testament about observing the birth of Christ, but I found no exact date of his birth either. After all my inquiry, I was able to find only an approximate period, sometime late September or early October. There was no way Christ's birth could take place at the end of December, because the shepherds did not keep their flocks out on the fields during this month (see Luke 2:8), and a census would have been impossible at that time, too, for the traveling conditions in Israel were very difficult in the midst of the rainy season (Luke 2:1-3).

My next discovery troubled me even more. The Bible says nothing about the Christmas carols, the tree, the exchange of gifts, the special church programs and the preparing of rich tables in honor of the birth of the Savior. There is no commandment and no example in the Bible for anything that we do at Christmas. I asked myself, **how can I have a Christian, scriptural Christmas when nothing that I do is found in the Bible? How did we, Christians, come to observe a holiday not commanded by the Bible? Why did we choose an obviously wrong date and customs that resemble with nothing in the Scripture? And if everything that pertains to Christmas, things that I assumed to be Christian, do not come from the New Testament, where did they come from?** Oh, how great a surprise was the answer to the latter question...

All the encyclopedias I read showed me that the origin of the holiday is not biblical but pagan. And they told me all the books about myths and history of religions. The Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic sources



Celebrating Saturnalia. This mosaic from Pompeii presents a considerable number of similarities with the celebration of Christmas.

openly confessed the pagan origins of Christmas. And so I learned that the ancient pagan nations had a great festival dedicated to the birth of the sun god, which had different names, according to the different languages. The Egyptians called him Osiris, the Babylonians Tammuz, the Persians Mythra

and the Romans Saturn, and gave him the title *Sol Invictis*, the Unconquered Sun. It was the same god everywhere, only the names differed. All these pagan nations celebrated the birth of the sun god in the winter time, just after the solstice (December 21<sup>st</sup>), because that's when the day starts increasing again. The Romans celebrated the Saturnalia during this time, the holiday dedicated to Saturn. During this period, there was an excess of eating, drinking and all sorts of orgies, a merry time for pagans. And December 25<sup>th</sup> was the climax of pagan "spirituality." The Christmas carols are also directly connected to this pagan holiday. The Romans called them *calendae*. Groups of people went from house to house, wishing luck, happiness and fertility to their



Young pagans caroling during Saturnalia



Child receiving the Saturnalia gift, called *sigillaria*

hosts. The Christmas tree is also an ancient pagan symbol. And so is the Christmas exchange of gifts, which the pagan Romans called *sigillaria*, during which the children were given gifts of small figurines of clay or wax.

How did we Christians come to observe a holiday not commanded by the Bible: a holiday pagan to its very core? History tells us that Christians decided to celebrate Christmas after they began to

depart from the Scriptures and started giving their own laws and rules. After the time of Constantine the Great, ruler of the Roman Empire from AD 306 to 337, when Christianity became the official religion of the Empire, making a lethal compromise with the State, multitudes of pagans were “Christened,” while still devoted to their own gods. Not being able to separate them from their idols, the Church decided to keep the pagan date and customs, but give them Christian names. John Chrysostom (AD 347-407), among many others, associated the pagan holiday with the name of Christ. Says he: *“But they call it the ‘Birthday of the Unconquered. Who indeed is so unconquered as Our Lord...? Or, if they say that it is the birthday of the Sun, He is the Sun of Justice.”* Such was the way in which the Christianized pagans

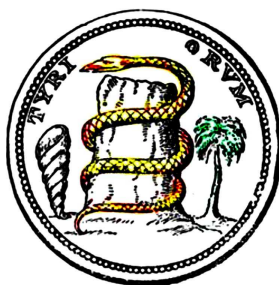


Pagan Sun worshippers

were kept satisfied. For it did not matter to them by what name their god was called, as long as they could keep their pagan worship customs. They did not worship Jesus Christ, but they worshiped the sun god, whom they could also call Jesus Christ.

Upon finding these troubling things, I started asking others why we keep this holiday, why at a pagan date with pagan customs, hoping to find some light in their answers. When I asked: “Why do we observe Christmas?,” I received many answers, some even childish. I will only mention the answers that made me think and ponder.

*1. It is a good thing to set a day or two apart to remember that Jesus was born to bring salvation to mankind.* I was not satisfied by this answer, because I asked myself: who decides what is good for me as a Christian? God or men? I believe that God, my Father, knows better than anyone what is good and what is bad for me. He is a good Father, and wants the best for me. And he told me in the Scriptures what is good. Now, if the Bible does not tell me that we need to have a holiday honoring the birth of the Lord, this means that I do not need such a holiday for my spiritual welfare. I ask all those who tell me that it is good to have such a holiday: Do you think that God hid or refused to reveal something good for us? If Christmas is something good, and God did not tell us about it, it means that He hid something good for us. This monstrous idea is nothing but the same seed of doubt planted by



Aesculapius, the serpent, brings to life the invincible young tree (Tammuz), by twisting itself around the dead tree trunk (Nimrod)

Satan in Eve's heart, suggesting to her that God does not want our good completely, but keeps something good from us. If Christmas would be good or necessary, our Lord and His apostles would definitely have taught us to observe it. Apostle Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus: "*I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you... For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*" (Acts 20:20, 27). But Paul does not teach anything about Christmas. Why is that? Because Christmas is not profitable to us. To deny this is to deny the apostle's sincerity, and even worse, God's sincerity.

2. "*We need a special day to remember Christ's birth. It does not matter what day, and December 25<sup>th</sup> is just as good as any other day.*" I can't help but wonder then, if we are so honest in our desire to pay our homage to the birth of our Savior, why didn't we choose a date that is closer to the time when He was born (end of September, beginning of October)? Why was December 25<sup>th</sup> chosen, from all the days of the year, knowing that it is the most pagan of all? Is it just a coincidence? I don't think so!

3. "*What is not explicitly and implicitly forbidden in the Scriptures, is allowed. The Bible neither approves nor disapproves of such a holiday, therefore it is up to us.*" Could we possibly understand the silence of the Scripture as being permissive in such a case? Or rather its silence is the strongest argument against observing the holiday? Let us remember that all the Christmas customs that we have today also existed in the time of Christ and the apostles: Not with the Christians, however, but with the pagans!!! The date, the celebration of the birth, the carols, the tree, the gifts, the rich tables and many other details related to

the feast existed in the time our Lord walked on this earth. Did He identify Himself with any of these? Did He commission His apostles to go to the pagans and teach them that He is the Unconquered Sun celebrated by them: that the Christmas tree represents Him? The answer is an obvious and absolute NO! All the analogies between Christ and this holiday were made much later, by “Christians” who thought that they can change and improve the Bible and who were looking for excuses for their desertion from the boundaries of the Scripture!

The feast of the Nativity cannot be dissociated from its pagan origin. The Christian’s stubborn persistence in celebrating Christ’s birth on December 25<sup>th</sup>, with carols, Christmas tree, gifts, a special service at the church and a festive table at home – just as the pagans celebrated their god – prove that we identified ourselves with the paganism and borrowed from it in our worship to the true God. And in this respect, the Scripture is not silent at all, but repeatedly condemns the association of true with false worship, and teaches a complete separation from idols and their worship. The identification with paganism, the borrowing of pagan gods or pagan models of worship is expressly condemned in the Bible, both in the Old and in the New Testament.

The Orthodox and the Catholic Churches openly admit their lack of concern in the fact that the holiday and its customs are pagan in origin, because they say these were made Christian and purified by the sanctifying power of the Church. In their opinion, the Church has sanctifying power, which could be extended even upon paganism, which, once “christened,” can serve God. This claim is false, unbiblical and illogical. It is rejected by anyone who believes *Sola Scriptura* (The Scriptures as the final



authority for all we believe and practice)! No one faithful to the Scriptures can allow for the arrogance of such a claim. How can we answer then to the fact that we try to dress up a pagan holiday in Christian clothes, changing only the name of the person adored? The association with paganism in worship is not at all part of those things which the Bible neither approves nor condemns, but leave to us. The Bible says: *“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”* (2 Corinthians 6:16-17). This is totally true for Christmas!

4. *“It is good to take advantage of the fact that the lost world is thinking about Christ and His birth in this time of year and preach Christ to them.”* But what kind of Christ do these people have and desire? Isn't it strange that the world hates Christ but loves Christmas? Why is that? Because they do not worship Christ! They really worship the sun god which they have become accustomed to call Jesus Christ, and whom they called by lots of names before the fifth century. But the world is not willing to accept the true Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth! Our identification with them in this holiday does not help us to show them the true Jesus Christ, but rather it strengthens their conviction that we worship the same god as them, the one they falsely call Jesus.

5. *“We should not judge anyone that observes Christmas, because ‘One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not*

*the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it”* (Romans 14:5-6). The attempt to justify the adoption of a pagan holiday with this text is childish and it shows that people love this holiday so much that they will twist the Holy Scripture in order to excuse Christmas. The text in Romans 14 does not speak about pagan holidays, but about the Old Testament feasts, which were commanded by the Lord to Israel.

6. Finally, when those whom I have asked admitted that there is no biblical foundation for Christmas, they usually asked in return: *“But what is wrong with celebrating the birth of the Lord, because we worship the true Jesus, and it is Him we adore in our carols? Even though the customs are pagan in origin, we changed them so that now Christ is in the center of the holiday.”* I asked myself the same thing. When I ran out of arguments, this was the last question thrown in the battle, the last line of defense for Christmas. My heart was desperately trying to hold fast to the feast, while upon my mind were working the convincing arguments of Scripture, logic and common sense. And this is the conclusion I reached:

Observing this holiday is wrong and harmful because:

1. It means to go beyond the Scriptures, to deny their authority, to doubt that God revealed in it everything that is good for me. It means rejecting the *Sola Scriptura!*
2. It identifies me with the lost world and not vice versa. The nature of Christianity is such that when it is combined with paganism, the latter will never become Christian, but Christianity will always end up being pagan.

3. The true worship is “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). The false worship is in the flesh and in error. Is the Christmas worship “in truth,” when we sing and say and preach that Christ was born on December 25<sup>th</sup>, when we know He was not? We lie in everything we do or say that associates the birth of Jesus Christ, directly or indirectly, with Christmas. The Christ of the Bible was not born on December 25<sup>th</sup>! Will God accept our worship if it is not in the truth, but is founded on a pagan lie?

I eventually surrendered to these arguments: they overwhelmed me. More than 10 years have passed since I quit celebrating Christmas. Some call me fanatic and narrow minded. Others doubt that I am a good Christian or a Christian at all because I don’t observe Christmas. However, I felt like I was set free. I did not miss any spiritual blessing since I don’t believe in Christmas any more. Quite the contrary. Serving God far from paganism, in freedom and within the boundaries of the Scripture is a far better experience than trying to serve Him as men see fit.

Christmas is a pagan holiday. Everything done at Christmas time is rooted in paganism. Paganism is drastically condemned by the Bible and pagan worship is an abomination before the Lord. But men want to keep it, thinking that they can get something good for us and pleasing to God from this pagan holiday. They judge me for not observing Christmas and for testifying against it. But judge for yourself whether it is right before God to obey men rather than God!



Graphics: Aurel Miclea jr.

**Adunarea baptistă „Harul Suveran”  
str. Izvor nr. 3  
Bocșa, Caraș-Severin  
325300  
România**

**e-mail:  
raul@abaptistvoice.com**

**adunareaharulsuveran.wordpress.com  
www.abaptistvoice.com**

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