

PART ONE



**THE ABOMINATION OF CHRISTMAS.** Today's majority of the Christian world venerates December 25<sup>th</sup> as the day Jesus Christ was born. On the contrary, most Bible scholars of the Christian faith now reject this day as the birthday of Jesus Christ because they cannot reconcile this day with Scripture or deny its origin. Before we explain this, it is appropriate to start with the facts concerning the name Jesus on which Christmas is based. **THE NAME OF JESUS.** The name Jesus did not exist in the time of the Apostles or in the early Church. The letter J was introduced into our English alphabet in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. The name of Jesus is less than four hundred years old! The name in the Greek is "Iesous" and the closest Hebrew word to it "he-sus" which means the horse. I cannot imagine any Jew calling him this! I quote from this well-researched article "The Mistaken English Letter Called "J" and the name Jesus." "Among the many reasons that both "Jesus" and "Jehovah" are erroneous is the simple fact that they begin with the letter J, the most recent letter added to our English alphabet. The Savior's name could not begin with the letter J because it did not exist when He was born –not even a thousand years later! All good dictionaries and encyclopedias show that the letter J and its sound are of late origin. There is no letter equivalent to J in either Hebrew or Greek even today. Here are what major references tell us about the J and its development: The Encyclopedia Americana contains the following on the J: "The form of J was unknown in any alphabet until the 14th century. Either symbol (J, I) used initially generally had the consonantal sound of Y as in year. Gradually, the two symbols (J, I) were differentiated, the J usually acquiring consonantal force and thus becoming regarded as a consonant, and the I becoming a vowel. It was not until 1630 that the differentiation became general in England." The New Book of Knowledge reads: "J, the tenth letter of the English alphabet, is the youngest of the 26 letters. It is a descendant of the letter I and was not generally considered a separate letter until the 17th century. The early history of the letter J is the same as the history of the letter I. I is a descendant of the ancient Phoenician and Hebrew letter yod and the Greek letter iota" (Vol. 10, 1992 ed.). The Random House Dictionary of the English Language says about the J: "J, a letter of the alphabet which, as far as form is concerned, is only a modification of the Latin I and dates back with a separate value only to the 15th century. It was first used as a special form of initial I, the ordinary form being kept for use in other positions. As, however, in many cases initial i had the consonantal value of the English y in iugum (yoke), &c., the symbol came to be used for the value of y, a value which it still retains in German: Ja! Jung, & c. Initially it is pronounced in English as an affricate dzh. The great majority of English words beginning with j are of foreign (mostly French) origin, as 'jaundice,' 'judge'..."(p.103). Funk and Wagnall's Encyclopedia (1979 edition), volume 14, page 94 under "J," states: "J, the tenth letter and seventh consonant in the English alphabet. It is the latest addition to the English script and has been inserted in the alphabet after I, from which it was developed, just as V and W follow U, the letter from which they arose. In form, J was originally merely a variation of I; J appeared first in Roman times, when it was used sometimes to indicate the long i vowel sound, but was often used interchangeably with I. The Romans pronounced I as a vowel in some words, such as iter, and as a semi-vowel in others, for example, iuvenis, spelled presently juvenis. The only difference in spelling, however, was the occasional use of double i for the y sound, for example, in maiior, which is spelled presently major. In the Middle Ages the elongated form (j) was used as an ornamental device, most often initially and in numeral series; many old French manuscripts indicate the numeral 4 by the letter sequence iiii. The use of j as an initial led ultimately to its specialized use to indicate both the old semi-vowel sound y, found in German, and the new palatal consonant sounds (z) and (dz), found in French, Spanish, and English. Not until the middle of the 17th century did this usage become universal in English books; in the King James Bible of 1611, for example, the words Jesus and judge are invariably Iesus and Iudge. Long after the invention of printing, j thus became more than a mere calligraphic

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variation of i (which in Latin could be either vowel or semi-vowel), and, j became restricted to a consonantal function. "In English, j has the composite sound of d + zh, as in journal. In French, on the other hand, the zh sound alone is given the letter, as in jour; German has retained the original y sound of the Latin i consonant, as in jahr; and Spanish has introduced a new sound resembling a guttural ch, as in Jerez. In Middle English, before the differentiation of i and j, the combination gi was sometimes used to represent the dzh sounds, such as in Giew for Jew, and in modern times, the soft g is used for the same sound, as in general..." See also *The Mistaken English Letter Called "J" And The Name Jesus* Published by Milton Carnes on October 10, 2017, <https://kingdominfo.net/truth/?p=99>. The name of the Messiah clearly cannot be Jesus or Iesus. His Hebrew name is Yeshua, which means YHWH saves.

**THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTMAS.** For untold decades on the Julian calendar of Rome, December the 25<sup>th</sup> was known as the *"the Birth of Unconquered Sun."* It was celebrated during the feast of Saturnalia, a pagan mid-winter feast of Rome. To oversimplify the pagan beliefs of the day, it was generally believed that a woman called the Great Mother, or the Queen of Heaven, also known as Ishtar, Isis, Astarte, Ashtoreth, Venus, Diana, Semiramis, Cybelle, and Rhea was found with a consort. He was known as Baal, Molech, Milcom, and various other names, and she and he had a child (the consort sometimes reborn as her child). This child was known as Zoraster, Tammuz, Tamus, Osiris, Bacchus, Deoius, etc., and was called the Unconquered Sun-god, a title given to him after his supposed meritorious death and reincarnation. The birth of this son, this false god of paganism, was celebrated with pagan revelry on December 25<sup>th</sup> the day of the ancient winter solstice. Sir James Frazer, in his book *The Golden Bough*, p 471, says, *"the largest pagan religious cult which fostered the celebration of December 25<sup>th</sup> as a holiday...was the pagan sun-worship, Mithraism...This winter festival was called...the Nativity of the SUN."* Franz Cumont, perhaps the greatest scholar of Mithraism, wrote, quoting Minucius Felix, *"The Mithraists also observed Sun-day and kept sacred the 25th of December as the birthday of the Sun. Many scholars have pointed out how the Sun-worshipping Mithraists, the Sun-worshipping Manicheans, and the Christians were all syncretized and reconciled when Constantine led the take-over by Christianity."* When Constantine became Emperor of Rome, Christianity was then emerging as a powerful force and influence in Rome. Many Roman Senators and citizens had become Christians. Constantine himself is said to have been converted at his deathbed. To appease the Roman populous and to bridge the division that Christianity had brought to Rome and their worship of ancient gods, it was orchestrated that some of the festivals of Rome were to be merged with the new belief. Constantine then merged the 25<sup>th</sup> of December to become the birth date of Jesus Christ. He also changed the Sabbath to Sunday and disallowed the keeping of the feasts and other Jewish practices. From then on, the Church adopted December 25th as part of her religious identity. *Colliers Encyclopaedia* confirms this: *"After the triumph of Constantine, the church at Rome assigned December 25 as the date for the celebration of the feast, possibly about A.D. 320 or 353. By the end of the fourth century, the whole Christian world was celebrating Christmas on that day, with the exception of the Eastern churches, where it was celebrated on January 6. The choice of December 25 was probably influenced by the fact that on this day the Romans celebrated the Mithraic feast of the Sun-god (natalis solis invicti), and that the Saturnalia also came at this time."* The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* reports that *"The traditional customs connected with Christmas have developed from several sources as a result of the coincidence of the celebration of the birth of Christ with the pagan agricultural and solar observations at midwinter. In the Roman world, the Saturnalia (December 17) was a time of merrymaking and exchange of gifts. December 25 was also regarded as the birth date of the Iranian mystery god Mithra, the Sun of Righteousness."* Ironically, Church historians know that Christmas was never part of the Church's early festivals. Indeed, three notable encyclopedias confirm

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this fact. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol 3 p.724 says, "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. Irenaeus and Tertullian omit it from their lists of feasts." Encyclopedia Britannica, 1946 edition agrees, "...Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church..." Encyclopedia Americana, 1944 Edition, "Christmas... It was, according to many authorities, not celebrated in the first centuries of the Christian church, as the Christian usage in general was to celebrate the death of remarkable persons (eg Communion - death of Christ) rather than their birth..." "...A feast was established in memory of this event (the birth of Jesus) in the fourth century. In the fifth century the Western Church ordered it to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol (Sun), as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed." It must be noted that Christian preachers of the West and Near East did protest against the inclusion of Christmas as part of its festivals, but their voices were silenced. "How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan *Brumalia* (December 25th) following the *Saturnalia* (December 17th-24th) and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the 'new sun'...cannot be accurately determined. The pagan *Saturnalia* and *Brumalia* were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence...The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner. Christian preachers 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.**" (Emphasis added). *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*. Rev Alexander Hislop, a foremost authority on Mystery Babylon, made a similar observation. "...within the Christian Church, no such festival as Christmas was ever heard of till the third century, and...not till the fourth century was far advanced did it gain much observance. How, then, did the Romish Church fix on December 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 nominal adherents of Christianity, the same festival was adopted by the Roman Church, giving it the name of Christ." Alexander Hislop *The Two Babylons* Loizeaux Bros., Neptune, N.J, 1959, p 93. Furthermore, he writes; "Upright men strove to stem the tide, but in spite of all their efforts, the apostasy went on, till the Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan superstition. That Christmas is a Pagan festival is beyond all doubt. The time of the year and the ceremonies with which it is still celebrated, prove its origin." Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* 1959. Practically all know Sun deities were born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. In S.E Ticomb, *Aryan Sun-myths, the Origin of religions*, we find cited, quoted from primary sources, that the following Sun-deities were all born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, according to their legends: Crishna (Vishnu), Mithra (Mithras), Osiris, Horus, Hercules, Dionysus (Bacchus) Tamuz, Indra Buddha. Therein, we also read of the Scandinavian goddess Frigga in whose honor a Mother-night festival was held at the winter solstice ( $\pm$ 25 December), as well as a similar great feast of Yule, where a boar was offered at the winter solstice in honor of Frey. **THE PRACTICES OF CHRISTMAS.** Many of the practices associated with Christmas are pagan! Santa Claus, the Christmas tree, Christmas decorations, and mistletoe, to name a few, all have their origin in pagan practices associated with the worship of other gods. Many Christmas traditions emanate from these practices. What is to follow is a survey of these practices and their origins. **Birthday Celebrations.** "In the Scriptures, no one is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great banquet on his (Christ's) birthday. It is only sinners (like Pharaoh or Herod) who make great rejoicings over the day in which they were born into this world." *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 11th ed., art: "Natal Day." "The ritual of the cake, candles,

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wishes, and presents serve to give thanks to sky luminaries for allowing the birthday celebrant to reach the annual cycle of their birth. **The cake was baked for the Queen of Heaven (Hot cross buns.)** It was decorated and monogrammed with the celebrant's name. The candles symbolized the sacred fire, carefully numbered for each annual cycle completed. The prayer chant and all the ritual procedures are carefully preserved, and it is a religious occasion. Witches regard the day of one's birth, **the most significant event in a person's life.** Astrologers base everything on it. If the celebrant can blow out all the candles, then a secret wish made to a GENIE (or JUNO if the person is female) will be granted. The birthday itself was a time of great superstition to a Pagan, so they were surrounded by their friends and relatives for protection." [www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm](http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm). **Nativity Scenes.** "Nearly every form of pagan worship descended from the Babylonian mysteries, which focus attention on the "mother-goddess" and the birth of her child. This was adapted to "Mary-Jesus" worship, which then easily accommodated the multitude of pagans "converted" to Christianity inside Constantine's Roman Catholic Church. Somehow, the baby-idol "sanctifies" the scene, and it is no longer considered idolatry!" (cf. Exodus 20:4-5; 32:1-5; 9-10). [www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm](http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm). **The Christmas Tree.** "The Christmas tree, now so common among us, was equally common in Pagan Rome and Pagan Egypt. In Egypt, it 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 'Man the Branch.' And this entirely accounts for putting 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,'...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 divine gifts to men." *The Two Babylons*, p. 97. "...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 his 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 sprouts a young tree - a tree of an entirely different kind, that is never to be cut down by a hostile power -...and thus shadowed forth the perpetuity and everlasting nature of his power, how that after having fallen before his enemies, he has risen triumphant over them all. Therefore, the 25th of December, the day that was observed in Rome as the day when the victorious god reappeared on earth was held at the *Natalis invicti solis*, 'The birthday of the unconquered Sun.'" *The Two Babylons*, p. 98. **Yule Tide and Yule log.** "Yuletide, meaning the turning of the sun or the winter solstice, has traditionally been a time of extreme importance in Scandinavia - a time when fortunes for the coming year were determined and when the dead were thought to walk the earth. For a long time, it was considered dangerous to sleep alone on Christmas Eve. The extended family, master and servant alike, would sleep together on a freshly spread bed of straw." *The History of Christmas*. "The Yule Log tradition comes to us from Scandinavia, where the pagan sex and fertility god Jul, or Jule (pronounced 'yule'), was honored in a twelve-day celebration in December. A large, single log (generally considered to have been a phallic idol) was kept with a fire against it for twelve days, a different sacrifice to Jul being offered in the fire on each of the twelve days." *Holidays and Holy Days*, by Tom C. McKenney. "The Yule log was originally an entire tree, carefully chosen, and brought into the house with great ceremony. The butt end would be placed into the hearth while the rest of the tree stuck out into the room. The tree would be slowly fed into the fire, and the entire process was carefully timed to last the entire Yule season." *The History*

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of Christmas; <http://www.ridgenet.org/Szaflik/history.htm>. This is where the Twelve Days of Christmas originated, which are now counted as the twelve days between "Christmas" and Epiphany (January 12th). **Mistletoe.** *"Among the pre-Christian Druidic superstitions, derived from ancient Babylon, was the legend of the mistletoe. It was regarded as a divine branch which came down from heaven and grafted itself into an earthly tree. Thus the mistletoe became a token of reconciliation, the kiss being a symbol of pardon."* *The Two Babylons*, p. 9. **Hanging Stockings.** *"Stocking hanging comes from an English legend: "Father Christmas once dropped some gold coins while coming down the chimney. The coins would have fallen through the ash grate and been lost if they hadn't landed in a stocking that had been hung out to dry. Since that time, children have continued to hang out stockings in hopes of finding them filled with gifts."* *The History of Christmas.* *"According to tradition, a poor widower of Myra, Turkey, had three daughters, for whom he could not provide a dowry. On Xmas-Eve, "Saint Nicholas" threw three bags of gold down the chimney, thereby saving the daughters from having to enter into prostitution. One bag rolled into a shoe, and the others fell into some stockings that had been hung to dry by the fire. Hence, the beginning of the tradition of the 'Christmas Stocking' or 'Boot'"* [www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm](http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm). **Lighting Candles.** *"Lighted candles are foreign to the worship of God in the church of the New Testament scriptures. Yet, they too had their place in the worship of the sun god of paganism and in Christmas today."* *The Two Babylons*, p. 94 and 97. *"Candles were lit by the ancient Babylonians in honor of their god, and his altars had candles on them. And as is well known, candles are also a major part of the ritualism of Roman Catholicism, which adopted the custom from heathenism. Candles approached the Yule log in ritual importance. Like the Yule log, they had to be a gift, never a purchase, and were lighted and extinguished only by the head of the household. Such candles stood burning steadily in the middle of the table, never to be moved or snuffed, lest death follow. The Yule candle, wreathed in greenery, was to burn through Christmas night until the sun rose or the Christmas service began (Sulgrave Manor, "A Tudor Christmas," p. 9). Obviously, candles should have no part in Christian worship, for nowhere in the New Testament is their use sanctioned."* [www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm](http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm). Note: Christmas candle lighting should not be confused with Chanukah. Menora and Hanukiah lightening has been part of Yisra'el since the Temple days. Candle lighting associated with the genuine worship of YHWH is acceptable because its origin is in truth, and its purpose is to glorify YHWH. **Santa Clause.** *"Santa Claus or "Father Christmas" is a corruption of the Dutch "Sant Nikolaas." ("Saint Nicholas" was the 4th-century Catholic bishop of Myra in Asia Minor, who gave treats to children; he was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church, "regarded as a special friend and protector of children." The red suit comes from the fact that Catholic bishops and cardinals in Italy wear red.) Santa Claus was also known as "Kris Kringle," a corruption of the German "Christ Kindl"-- Christ Child. This has to be one of the most subtle of Satan's blasphemies, yet most Christians are unaware of it." "Originally, the Santa Claus concept came from the pagan Egyptian god, Bes, a rotund, gnome-like personage who was the patron of little children. Bes was said to live at the North Pole, working year-round to produce toys for children who had been good and obedient to their parents. In Dutch, he was called "Sinter Klaas." Dutch settlers brought the custom to America. In Holland and other European countries, the original Santa Claus was actually a grim personage who traversed the countryside, determined to find out who really had been "naughty or nice." Those who had been acting up were summarily switched. The association of Santa Claus with snow, reindeer, and the North Pole suggests Scandinavian or Norse traditions of the Yuletide season. (In Babylonia, also, the stag (reindeer) was a symbol of the mighty one, Nimrod. The symbolism of antlers worn on the head of a noble leader would demonstrate his prowess as a hunter, and thereby, influence people to follow him.)"* [www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/](http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/)

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bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm. **Christmas Wreaths.** "In pagan mythology, evergreen means eternal life and a never-dying existence. Made from evergreens, Christmas wreaths were most frequently round, which symbolized the sun (just as do halos in most religious art). Hence, the round Xmas wreaths stand for an eternal sun, a never-dying or self-renewing sun. In addition, the round form can also relate to the sign of the female, which stands for the regeneration of life. Because of these pagan associations, the Christian church was initially hostile towards the use of wreaths and other evergreen derivatives. But in the same way, it Christianized other pagan traditions, the church soon found a way to confer its own symbolic meanings. For example, the sharp-pointed leaves of the "male" holly came to represent Christ's crown of thorns and the red berries His blood, while the "female" ivy symbolized immortality (Sulgrave Manor, "A Tudor Christmas," p. 6). Such wreaths now not only adorn churches at Christmas time but are also appearing during the equally pagan Easter season." www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm. **Christmas Goose.** "The "Christmas goose" and "Christmas cakes" were both used in the worship of the Babylonian "messiah." The goose was considered to be sacred in many ancient lands, such as Rome, Asia Minor, India, and Chaldea. In Egypt, the goose was a symbol for a child, ready to die! In other words, a symbol of the pagan "messiah," ready to give his life (supposedly) for the world. This is obviously a satanic mockery of the truth." www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm. **Christmas Ham.** "Hogs were slaughtered, and the eating of the carcass was one of the central festivities of the Saturnalia. Each man would offer a pig as a sacrifice because superstition held that a boar had killed the sun deity Adonis. Hence, the tradition of the Christmas ham on Christmas Day and New Year's Day." www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm. **Christmas Cards.** "The first British Xmas card can be dated back to 1843. The first cards featured pictures of dead birds! Evidently, the popularity of hunting robin and wren on Christmas Day made the dead bird image an appropriate one for "holiday" cards. Often the text of the cards would also have a morbid tone. Later, the cards displayed dancing insects, playful children, pink-cheeked young women, and festively decorated Christmas trees. The first actual Xmas cards were really Valentine's Day cards (with different messages) sent in December. Mass production of Xmas cards in the United States can be traced back to 1875. Initially, the manufacturers thought of Xmas cards as a sideline to their already successful business in playing cards. But the "tradition" of sending cards soon caught on, leading to a very profitable business by itself." www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm. **Giving of Gifts.** "The tradition of exchanging gifts has nothing to do with a re-enactment of the Magi giving gifts to Jesus but has many superstitious, pagan origins instead. One prominent tradition was the Roman custom of exchanging food, trinkets, candles, or statues of gods during the mid-winter Kalends (the first day of the month in the ancient Roman calendar). This custom was transferred to December 25th by the Roman Church in keeping with the Saturnalian festival and in celebration of the benevolent St. Nicholas." www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/xmas/celeb.htm. "This custom of exchanging gifts at Christmas originates with the Roman festival of Saturnalia where it was customary to exchange presents. It was usually the masters of the slaves and the wealthy giving priority to give to the slaves and the poor in a reversal of roles. Gifts were also exchanged among family and friends. This custom was also observed in one way or another throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Africa to give a gift as an expression of gratitude and love. The Christians could not stop this customary practice, so adopted it along with the other observances of the seasons. The giving of gifts was then said to be symbolic of the Magi, who gave gifts to Jesus." www.information-entertainment.com/Holidays/xmassymbol.htm. Note: This type of gift-giving should not be confused with Chanukah. Gift-giving associated with the genuine worship of YHWH is acceptable because its

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origin is in truth, and its purpose is to glorify YHWH. **Wassailing and Carolling.** *"Its origins can be traced back to Babylon and Rome. In Roman times, Caligula was well known for the extended five-day celebration of Saturnalia (to honor the god Saturn) with drunkenness among masters and slaves who would enjoy a brief period of equality. In Babylon, the masters would tend to the needs of the slaves, but they still had their own drunkenness in their duties. Throughout the Northern European areas, this drunkenness was brought with them from house to house as a community affair. With such drunkenness was also a lot of singing, the origin of caroling. Along with caroling, some would get gifts of buns, cakes, or almost anything available to eat."* [www.information-entertainment.com/Holidays/xmassymbol.htm](http://www.information-entertainment.com/Holidays/xmassymbol.htm). **CHANUKAH.** I have good news. Many Christians are unaware of the fact that YHWH has provided them with a scriptural alternative to Christmas. Many more are surprised that this holiday predates Christmas, and there is evidence to suggest that Yeshua celebrated this holiday. Many also have confused this holiday with Christmas because it occurs in the same month of December and has similar decorations, lights, and activities. This holiday in Israel is considered to be the most popular holiday in the Jewish calendar! This holiday is the feast of Chanukah or Hanukkah. In many parts of the world, Chanukah is a relatively unknown feast or holiday. However, this is not the case in America and many parts of Europe. This is a well-known feast or holiday celebrated by millions of people, including non-Jews and some Churches. Because Chanukah is celebrated in the same month as Christmas (December), which corresponds to the Hebrew month of Kislev, there is some confusion over the difference between these two days. This is further confused by the fact that gifts are exchanged on these days, and lights are the central attraction of both of these festivals. **THE ORIGINS OF CHANUKAH.** Chanukah means dedication, consecration, or inauguration. It is an eight-day festival that commemorates Judah's victory over the Syrian tyrant Antiochus, which usually starts around early December. To understand the origins of Chanukah, we need to learn a little history lesson about the period just before the birth of our Messiah, Yeshua. We also need to be mindful that this period of history is clearly prophesized and meticulously recorded in Daniel Chapter Eleven, which is additional confirmation of why Chanukah should be celebrated. Alexander the Great had conquered Yisra'el and most of the Near East. When he died in 323 BCE, his empire was divided among his four generals, two of whom established their own sovereign kingdoms in Egypt and Syria. Yisra'el being located between these two countries was valuable to both. As a result, Yisra'el became a battlefield, sometimes ruled by one and sometimes by the other for 150 years. In 175 BCE, when Israel was under Syrian control, Antiochus Epiphanes IV became King of Syria. In an effort to strengthen his hold on Yisra'el, he declared that all his subjects must worship the same Greek gods and follow the same Greek customs and speak Greek. Altars to the Greek gods were built in all the cities of Judea, and pagan sacrifices were offered on them. The Jews were not permitted under the Greek law to study Torah, observe the Shabbat, practice circumcision, speak Hebrew, or do anything Hebrew, as this was punishable by death. It was the forced conversion of the Jewish people to Greek culture (called Hellenization), and many Jews were assimilated into the Greek culture. However, there were many Jews who opposed Hellenization because they feared that the influence of Greek culture would destroy Judaism. This movement was called *Hasidim*. This movement grew in strength when, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, Antiochus placed a statue of Zeus above the high Altar of sacrifice in the Temple and sacrificed a pig on it. He then made it compulsory for Priests to offer pigs on the Altar. The Hasidim began their opposition with a simple refusal to obey the laws of Antiochus. As a result, they suffered harshly, and many were killed. They had no choice but to rebel. Beginning in the small town of Modiin, not far from Yerushalem, a Hasmonean priest named Mattathias and his five sons launched a revolt. This revolt developed into a guerrilla war led by one of Mattathias sons Judah Maccabee. Maccabee

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means hammer and became the name by which this period is known in history. Two books in the Catholic Bible called Maccabees One and Two record the history of this period. Judah Maccabees led a small army of Jews in the guerrilla campaign for several years in the surrounding hills and defeated the mighty Syrian Greek army, recapturing Jerusalem. It was indeed a miraculous victory! Maccabees cleansed the Temple and removed the statutes of Zeus, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Kislev (which is in December around the time of the winter solstice, the darkest day of the year) in the year 165 BCE, they rededicated the Temple. When Maccabees gained control of the Temple, they found only one undefiled cruse of oil with which they could light the temple menorah. According to the tradition, a one-day supply of oil lasted a full eight days, thus keeping the menorah lit while allowing them time to consecrate more oil (Shemoth (Exodus) 31:11). Consequently, this is also called the festival of lights or dedication, and this special occasion is now celebrated with a specially created eight or nine-branched candelabra, called a *hanukiah* (plural *Hanukkiot*). These lamps are lit by the ninth light called the *Shammas*, which means helper servant. These lamps are lit consecutively, one per day, until the last night of the eighth day, when all eight have been lit together with the *Shammas*. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia - in Israel today, "*Chanukah has become a symbol of national liberation and the triumphant Jewish spirit.*" Why then is Chanukah particularly important to us who do not reside in Israel? **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANUKAH.** **First**, it is believed that our Messiah, Yeshua, was conceived by Ruach HaKodesh during Chanukah. Biblical Astronomer Bob Wadsworth believes Yeshua was conceived in 4 B.C. during the winter solstice. If we count forward nine months from this time (Chanukah), we come to the time of Tabernacles (the Feast of Sukkot), to the time when Scripture tells us that the Son of YHWH came to Tabernacle or dwell, among men. We know from Scripture that Yeshua was born during the time of Tabernacles because of certain events that are described in the Scripture. Three principal facts confirm this. First, the timing of the duties of the priest Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, confirms that Yeshua was conceived shortly after the term he served as a priest in the Temple - the date of his duties is known to Hebrew scholars (Luka (Luke) 1:26). Second, the Scripture confirms that there was no room anywhere in Yisra'el for Mary and Joseph to stay because of this feast (Luka (Luke) 2:7). And finally, the Scripture confirms that a great star was seen in the heavens (Mattityahu (Matthew) 2:1-2). Astronomers have determined that the conjunction of three stars occurred during this period in the years 5 B.C to 7 B.C. Chanukah, then, is a time of salvation! **Second**, Yeshua is called "the Dayspring from on high" and the Morning Star that arises in our hearts (Luka (Luke) 1:78; Kephah Bet (Second Peter) 1:19 RSTNE). These verses define Yeshua in terms of a rising of lights. During the winter solstice, the longest of dark nights, one star in the heavens broke through the darkness and illuminated all of Yerushalem. We read of it in Mattityahu (Matthew) 2:2. Chanukah is thus associated with lights because it is a symbol of great deliverance. In Jewish households, each night, special prayers are said while the candles are lit, and some tradition recites Tehillim (Psalm) 30. These prayers speak of the restoration of the light of the World, Yeshua, our spoken and written Torah. Chanukah, then is a time of great deliverance! **Third**, during this period, YHWH gave us the gift of His Son. Yeshua called Himself the gift of YHWH, and Paul refers to Yeshua as the gift of YHWH (Yochanan (John) 4:10; Romiyah (Romans) 6:23). Chanukah is traditionally a time of gift-giving. Various customs emerged during this time that different Jewish communities practiced. In some families, the tradition is to give one gift each night to their children, and in some, a different theme is taught on giving with an emphasis on helping others, namely the poor. It is common practice for a collection to be gathered during this celebration for charity. We know that the poor are very close to the heart of our Messiah, and He often spoke about helping the poor (Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:3, 11:5, 19:21, 26:11). Chanukah then is a time of gift-giving! **Fourth**, during this period, Yeshua



## PART NINE



commanded His followers to make their light shine before men. *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do they obtain a lamp, to put it under a measure, but on a lampstand, to give light to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before the sons of men, in order that they may see your good works: to honor your Father which is in heaven"* Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:14-16. Associated with the lighting of the candles of the *hanukkiyah* (the Chanukah menorah) is the concept of *sumat ha'nes* (making the miracle known). The *hanukkiyah* is placed in the window where the family gathers so that everyone can publicly witness the miracle. In many places where there are Jewish homes or communities, the *hanukkiyah* or pictures of the *hanukkiyah* are seen in the window during this celebration. Chanukah, then is a time of witnessing! **Fifth**, during this period, YHWH multiplied the oil so that the *hanukkiyah* would burn for eight days. The *hanukkiyah* oil speaks of the oil of joy that Yeshua brought into the world. Isaiah, the prophet, identified the Messiah as one who would bring *"the oil of joy."* to Yisra'el. *"To appoint unto them that mourn in Tziyon, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the mantle of praise for the spirit of heaviness: that they might be called terebinths of righteousness, the planting of YHWH, wherein He might glory"* Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 61:3. In different Jewish communities and households, special foods were prepared and eaten during this time that has become a tradition in Israel. These foods are prepared with oil or cooked in oil. Two of the most popular are *latkes* (potato pancakes) and *sufganiyot* jelly-filled doughnuts. Chanukah, then, is a time of great joy! **Sixth**, there are eight lamps on the *hanukkiyah*, representing the eight days of the miracle of Chanukah. An additional lamp called the *Shammas* was used to light the eight lamps. Eight in the Scripture is a symbol of a new beginning or resurrection. In Yochanan (John) 20:26, Yeshua appeared to His disciples on the eighth day. In Luka (Luke) 9:28-35, Yeshua was transfigured after eight days. In Maaseh Shlichim (Acts) 9:33, Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years, was healed in the eighth year. During Chanukah, many Jews play a game called *Dreidel* (spinning top). A dreidel is a four-sided top with four Hebrew letters standing for the words "a great miracle happened here." They toss this top to win or lose chocolate-covered coins. This, to me, speaks of the miraculous aspect of this feast. Chanukah, then, is a time of great miracles! **Seventh**, on an elementary level, the word Chanukah means "inauguration." Indeed, Chanukah celebrates the inauguration of a newly built altar in the Temple in Yerushalem. After the Maccabees defeated the Greek invaders and drove them from Judea, they found that much of the Temple, including the Altar, had been defiled and used for idolatry. The Maccabees buried the stones of the Altar and built a new one. Thus, Chanukah celebrates the rededication of the Temple and the Altar. The word can be traced to *chanukat hamizbeach*, Bamidbar (Numbers) 7:84 "the dedication of the altar," a term used in reference to the inauguration of the Tabernacle in the desert (Machzor Vitri, 239; Shiblei Haleket 174). Chanukah, therefore, is a time to construct and dedicate your prayer altar to YHWH, or if you have an existing prayer altar, rededicate it to YHWH. **CONCLUSION.** The purpose of Christmas was to accommodate the ancient pagan gods of Rome and their pagan worship practices to appease the empire. It is an abomination, and a sincere believer in Yeshua and in the Elohim of Yisra'el must shun what is conspicuously evil. Pagan beliefs and practices have no place in the life of a follower of YHWH. We are warned in the Book Gilyahna (Revelations) 18:4 to come out of her my people; *"And I heard another voice from the shamayim, saying, Come out of her, My people-Ami, that you be not partakers of her sins, so that you receive not of her plagues."* The issue for us who want to obey YHWH: why celebrate what is evil at its roots and core when we can observe what is factual, scriptural, and meaningful- Chanukah? Sometimes, well-meaning Christians say, "Let's put Christ back into Christmas." This sounds very good on the surface, but how can you put Yeshua haMoshiach back into something when He was never there in the first place? My children wake up and arise!