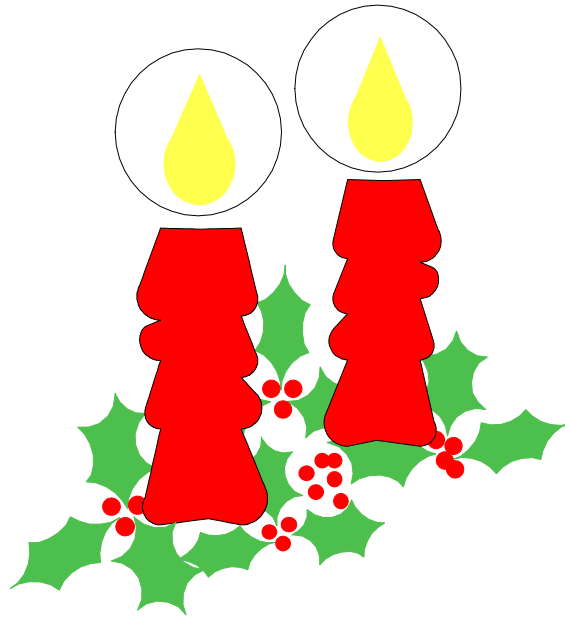


# **What Kind of “Holiday Memories” Does Yahweh Have?**



## What Kind of “Holiday Memories” Does Yahweh Have?

Every year at Christmas time articles appear in various newspapers across the country about the origins of Christmas. They aren't meant to shock or discourage anyone from its celebration. To the contrary, the public finds the pagan origins quaintly interesting. The articles usually close with a local clergyman advocating less commercialism and stressing the need to put “Christ back into Christmas.”

**Millions of people know that holidays like Christmas and Easter have pagan origins**, but it doesn't really matter to them because they don't “celebrate it that way.” As long as they are mainly celebrating the birth and resurrection of Yeshua (Jesus) with only a little bit of Santa Claus or the Easter bunny “for the kids sake” then surely God understands.

These holidays are filled with years of sights, smells and sounds of good feelings going back to one's childhood. The good times at Grandma's house, the taste of eggnog and the lilt of carols all engender deep emotional feelings.

### Been There, Felt That

While the Bible doesn't show the apostles celebrating *any* of these days, the holidays are authenticated and validated for most by the experience and our intuition. In other words, there's so much joy, love of family and ‘praise to the Lord’ that God obviously approves these traditions to honour Him. Like the song says, “It can't be wrong when it *feels* so right...” Who cares about Nimrod, Ishtar, sun worshippers or Saturnalia when you've got Bing Crosby, Mom, apple pie and warm fuzzies? The reasoning is that God must feel good about Christmas and Easter because *we* feel good about them. We have fond memories, so God must have fond memories. ***Or does He?***

The pagan origin of these days bears little significance to most people because there is *no memory* of paganism. Who or what is a Nimrod, and who cares? *Pagan* is a meaningless word, and nothing seems pagan today. Whatever can be remotely called pagan is usually referred to as a quaint native custom,

and people like to take pictures of it while they're on vacation.

Our memories of December 25th may invoke thoughts of Grandma, the smell of evergreen and sounds of sleigh bells all over a backdrop of a 19th-century Charles Dickens or Currier & Ives setting. What about the thousands of years *prior* to the 19th century? **What are Yahweh's memories?**

God *does* have a memory, and it goes far beyond our own, for He **"inhabits eternity"** (Isa. 57:15). We need to expand our universe into *His*. For example, if I were to tell my 9-year-old daughter that we're going to choose December 7th (the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour) to honour the Japanese, she might think that is wonderful. Should she announce this to her grandfather who fought in the Pacific during WWII, she would probably come back to me and ask what "a day of infamy" meant. Her universe would expand a little bit into Grandpa's, and in deference to Grandpa's feelings we would choose a different day to honor the Japanese. The same might be said for a little Japanese girl from Hiroshima wanting to honor Americans on August 6th.

To young children, WWII is like ancient history. Early events of this century are beyond the scope of their universe and memory. Events of that era are only read about or known in old black-and-white silent newsreels in which the people "walked kinda fast."

### **The Real Face of Civil War**

Many of us a few years ago were very moved by the public-television special by Ken Burns on the American Civil War. It wasn't anything like the textbook memorization of our school days about who won the Battle of Bull Run. Instead, we saw faces of real people who looked like us and had feelings like we do. Through the narration of actual letters from the front, we wanted to know if the soldier ever made it back to his "beloved Sarah."

We barely touched the Civil War soldiers' experience from afar. God saw them all in living color. He heard the cannon's roar at Pickett's charge and the clash of steel on steel. He also knows the weight and texture of a Roman soldier's cloak. He knows what the Apostle Paul's favorite food was, and He knows the ambient temperature inside a prison on the Isle of Patmos. History

(“His story”) is all very real to God, and to Him, to whom a thousand years is like a day (II Pet. 3:8), these events all happened only yesterday.

*What if most of God’s memory about December 25th or certain other holidays included the sounds of chanting before idols, human orgies and later the sight of Christians being persecuted?* The wicked men who first selected these days to honor their gods or themselves and the Roman Christians who later accepted the same days for worshipping God were all real people. Their world was just as real to them as ours is to us. They had names, and so did those who died because they rejected the pagan world. Men may forget massacres and martyrdoms after a few generations, but God remembers. He still hears their voices under the altar crying out for justice (Rev. 6:9, 10).

So in the panorama of human history what might be God’s memory of “the holidays?” Again, since pagan festivals like the Saturnalia mean nothing to most people today, and historical names like Nimrod or Tammuz have no significance, I would like to tell a story. It’s about something that never happened, and it employs a time-culture switch with the ancient world only to drive home a point.

### **Once Upon A Time**

The year is 1937 in Nazi Germany, and the churches are in trouble. The Lutheran Church is losing young members of the Luther League who want to join the more flamboyant Hitler Youth. The Adventists are failing in business because they are seen to outwardly resemble the Jews in their Sabbath observance. Not all the churches are faltering, however, since some church leaders are advocating a few changes.

Some of the ministers reason that, to win the young people back to Christ, the church needs to make a few minor modifications. For example, Hitler’s birthday falls on April 20, and there are celebrations throughout Germany on that day. Since nobody knows when Yeshua (Jesus) was born, they select April 20 as the day to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Also, by adding a few short nooks to the cross, it can now look strikingly like a swastika, only they will call it the cross of Christ.

The number of members coming back to church increases greatly with each change they make. Their families now march around the cross of Christ with their right arms fully extended to glorify the Lord. Sure, they look a lot like any other Nazi family down the street, but the church was now growing again. Celebrating the resurrection of the Lord will also happen to fall on the anniversary of the rise of the Third Reich. Needless to say, the churches which adapted to the new Germany thrive, while those that refuse to compromise are severely persecuted and scattered.

After the war, all of the customs and trappings of those days continue. Hundreds of years later people still celebrate the birth of Jesus on April 20. They set up the cross of Christ in their living room while the families extend their right hands to salute it.

It is a wonderful time. The children make little cookie people, the one's with the six-pointed star of Bethlehem on their chests, and bake them in their ovens. There is some mythology about the man with a funny moustache who knows if you've been naughty or nice, but mainly it is a religious holiday. Sometimes a lot of families get together and build a big bonfire. An honored family member carries the cross of Christ with all of its banners attached to the pole. Everyone marches around the bonfire to the tune of "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken" while their right arms are fully extended to salute the cross and praise the Lord Jesus.

One day, a man comes to church and tries to tell them about the origin of their holidays. They don't seem shocked at all. To them terms like "Nazi," "holocaust" and "Hitler" are meaningless. It doesn't matter what happened centuries before anyway, because they are worshipping the Lord. Their memories of past April 20s are filled with love and joy. Songs of gladness are sung as they bake the little cookie people in the ovens. *Life is good, and God must be pleased.*

Then the man posed a question to them: "What are God's holiday memories?"

## **Closer to Home**

Would any Christian today doubt the need to tell the characters in the preceding story about the origins of *their* Christmas? How would *God feel* about choosing, of all days, the birth of Adolph Hitler to represent the birth of His son? How would *God feel* about the day symbolizing the resurrection of the Third Reich to represent Jesus' resurrection?

How about the cross that he bled on, symbolized in a swastika or people giving it the Nazi salute? What about the little cookie people with the six-pointed star of Bethlehem on their chests that were baked in the ovens? Wouldn't people want to know how *that* custom got started?

Surprisingly, those in this story would probably give the same responses as to why it is okay to celebrate their April 20 Christmas as those do today who want to keep their December 25 Christmas: "We've always had Christmas on that date, and, besides, it doesn't really matter what day you choose." "It's good for the children." "We try to keep the commercialism down and emphasize the birth of Jesus." "God understands our hearts, and we get so much out of these days." "We just put a *little* cross of Christ in our home, nothing fancy or elaborate." "Mom would really be disappointed if we didn't appreciate all the work she put into this day."

## **Something Wrong with You**

Try as you might to convince them otherwise, these hypothetical people would inhabit their own little universe. Every reason people give today to rationalize the celebration of December 25 would be thrown right back at you.

To those in the story, April 20 is absolutely wonderful. Christmas to them is almost magical in its beauty. To them the spirit of Christmas equates with the spirit of giving. To be against their Christmas is to be against giving, so there must be something wrong with you. You must not even care about the needy! How can you be labelled a 'Christian' if you don't observe Christmas?

So powerful would be the allure of the April 20<sup>th</sup> Christmas that even

millions of atheists would put up the lights to join the party or put “Heather” in the play. Try as you might, you could not convince them that all the Nazi origins of the day should keep them from celebrating now.

The only way people will see through all the tinsel of this economic piece of Babylon that literally drives the Western economies is to have their hearts turned toward God. Those who are Christ’s will seek to look at things from *His* perspective and not their own. It doesn’t matter that it looks good, smells good, tastes good, and sounds good or that most of the world is celebrating it. It doesn’t matter what Christmas means to me or my kids or my mom or my boss; for what it means to *Almighty Yahweh* is the most important opinion of all. His thoughts, memories and feelings don’t revolve around *mine*.

In a Christian’s life, Jesus is real and has a daily impact on the decisions that are made. To most in this world Jesus is pictured either ‘away in a manger,’ ‘dead on a cross’ or dwelling “two stars to the right and straight on ‘til morning” in a heavenly never-never land. To most He is a God of convenience but not someone you actually serve or seek advice from. “He must like this holiday because I do, and my minister gives his approval. Surely, all of these churches couldn’t be wrong?”

This holiday’s broad appeal to this world should be a warning flag to a Christian. Yeshua (Jesus) said, “**Enter ye in at the strait gate: for *wide* is the gate, and *broad* is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and *many* there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it**” (Matt. 7:13-14). After warning about false prophets, Jesus also went on to say in verse 21: “**Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the will* of my Father which is in heaven.**”

### **Church Blending with Paganism**

To the apostles, the will of God did not include Christmas or *anything* like it. This all came much later when the apostate church grew by blending in with the pagan Roman world. By placing the Lord’s name on pagan practices, they deceived people into thinking they could keep their old ways and call it the Lord’s will. The ostensible church succeeded in deceiving virtually the whole

world at that time into taking the broad way of doing things that are contrary to God's will (Rev. 12:9).

The will of God has to be the central point in how we worship Him. Jesus spoke about members of the religious community in His day who were in their own little universe and said they were worshipping Him, but all *in vain*, because of their man-made traditions (Mark 7:7-8). In John 4:23-24 Jesus said that **“the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and *truth*; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and *truth*”** (verses 23, 24).

Both those in the above story and those in the mainstream of Christianity today don't understand that Christmas is a lie or that Christ was never in it. The mind of Christ won't mix righteousness with unrighteousness or light with darkness (II Cor. 6:14-16). **“Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you”** (verse 17).

God's people, who are being drawn by His spirit in this age, are to come *out* of Babylon. You can't take the customs and traditions of a day dedicated to a pagan deity, sprinkle some holy water on it and now say it's dedicated to Jesus, or then centuries later say its origin doesn't really matter.

### **Less Abominable with Time?**

Would that terrible act be an abomination only to the actual perpetrators, but in each succeeding generation become less & less terrible until God finally *likes* it? If 100 years from now the great-grand children of a Satanist learn that the portrait of Jesus above the mantle was really a portrait of Charles Manson, should they just shrug it off because they don't think of it that way, or it's good for the children, or Mom loved the painting?

**Yahweh Almighty has a memory!** Those who are His, who have dedicated their lives to serving Him, want to honor and worship Him in truth. According to His Word, *how* we choose to do so is important to Him. God tells us *not* to learn the ways of the heathen: “Thus saith Yahweh, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are

dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain (empty): for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, so that it move not. (Jer.10:2-4).

He also says that we should not inquire about how pagan nations serve their gods. “**You shall *not* worship the Lord your God in *that* way**” (Deut. 12:31).

The truth is that Yahweh has given His people HIS holidays (Holy Days) that teach wonderful truths about His plan of salvation for mankind. He calls them “MY FEASTS” in Leviticus chapter 23. The Israelites, Yeshua, Jews and Gentiles alike in the early church, all observed His Holy Days.

If you want to learn more about the true history of Christmas, that Yahweh has not forgotten, read our article entitled, “Should Christians Celebrate Christmas.” If you want to learn more about Yahweh’s Holy Days, you are welcome to visit our website at [www.waoy.org](http://www.waoy.org) and read the many articles on all of Yahweh’s feast days.

The broad, easy path that this world loves is paved with good intentions but it leads to destruction. The decisions we make in life as Christians **are not** to be based upon just how we feel or how Mom feels, but how Yahweh feels! That’s what you do to truly honour the one you love above all others.

May Yahweh Almighty bless you as you search for His wonderful truth!

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