

Lesson Nine

Some Things Not Revealed In The Bible:

There are, also, some things which are **not** revealed in the Bible concerning Him. One of these is the date of His birth. The Bible teaches us in <**2 Peter 1:3**> that God has "*given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the 'knowledge of Him' that hath called us to glory and virtue*": ("**Knowledge of Him**" comes by "**reading**" that which the Bible writers wrote <**Ephesians 3:3-4**>.) The Holy Spirit also tells us in <**Deuteronomy 29:29**> that "*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever... ..*"

Some Christmas Mythology:

- **Santa Claus**: From "**Sinter Klaas**", a Dutch pronunciation of "Saint Nicholas."
- **Saint Nicholas**: Bishop of Myra, in Asia Minor, in the 4th century.
 1. He was famous for his generosity.
 2. He became a patron saint for children.
- **Santa coming down the chimney**: From a Norse legend that the goddess Hertha appeared in the fireplace and brought good luck to the home.
- **Santa's fir trimmed suit and sleigh pulled by reindeer**: Created by Clement C. Moore, in 1822, author of "**'Twas The Night Before Christmas.**"
- **Mistletoe**: Scandinavia — considered a plant of peace. If enemies met under it, they declared a truce for the day.
- **Christmas Cards**: Created in 1843 by John Calcott Horsley.

I. ORIGINS OF CHRISTMAS:

No one knows exactly when men first started celebrating the birth of Christ. However, most scholars believe that the Christmas tradition originated in the 4th century as a so called Christian **substitute for pagan celebrations** of the winter solstice.

Before the introduction of Christmas, each year beginning on December 17, Romans honored Saturn, the ancient god of agriculture, in a festival called " **Saturnalia** ". This festival lasted for seven days and included the winter solstice, which usually occurred around December 25, on the ancient Julian calendar. During Saturnalia the Romans **feasted, postponed all business and warfare, exchanged gifts, and temporarily freed their slaves** . Many Romans also celebrated the lengthening of daylight following the winter solstice by participating in rituals to **glorify** Mithra, the ancient Persian god of light (**see: Mithraism**).

As mentioned above, although the Gospels describe Jesus' birth in detail, they **never mention the date** , so historians do not know on what date he was born. **The Roman Catholic church chose December 25** as the day for the Feast of the Nativity, in order to **give Christian meaning to existing pagan rituals** . For example, the Catholic Church replaced festivities honoring the birth of the Mithra, the god of light, with festivities to commemorate the birth of Jesus, whom the Bible calls the light of the world. **The Catholic Church hoped to draw pagans into its religion by allowing them to continue their revelry while simultaneously honoring the so called birthday of Jesus** .

Over the next 1000 years, the observance of Christmas followed the expansion of Christianity into the rest of Europe and into Egypt. Along the way, Christian beliefs combined with existing pagan feasts and winter rituals to create many long-standing traditions of Christmas celebrations. For example, ancient Europeans believed that the mistletoe plant held magic powers to bestow life and fertility, to bring about peace, and to protect against disease. Northern Europeans associated the plant with the Norse goddess of love, **Freya** , and **developed the custom into their Christmas celebrations, and kissing under a mistletoe** branch eventually became a part of secular Christmas tradition.

II. MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS:

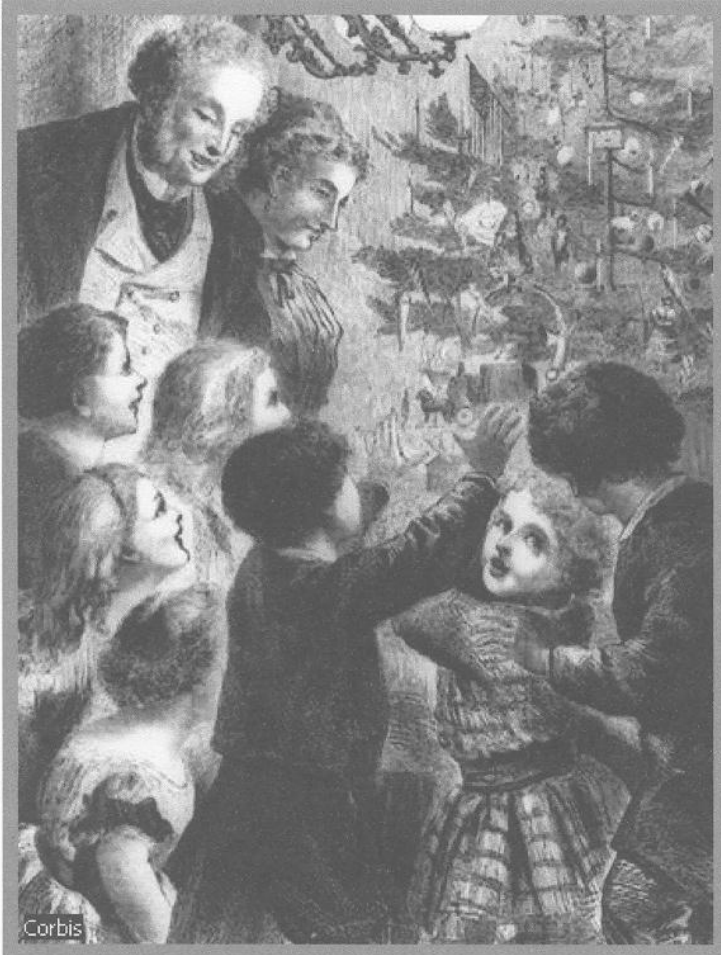
- More About Santa Claus:

1. The legend of Santa Claus had origins in Europe and was brought by Dutch settlers to New York in the early 18th century. Traditionally, Santa Claus was depicted as a tall, dignified, religious figure riding a white horse through the air. Known as Saint Nicholas in Germany, he was usually accompanied by Black Peter, an elf who punished disobedient children. In North America he eventually developed into a fat, jolly old gentleman who had neither the religious attributes of Saint Nicholas nor the strict disciplinarian character of Black Peter.
2. Santa's transformation began in 1823, when a New York newspaper published the poem "A Visit from Saint Nicholas," which Clement Clark Moore had written to amuse his daughter. The poem introduced many Americans to the story of a kindly saint who flew over housetops in a reindeer drawn sleigh. Portraits and drawings of Santa Claus by American illustrator Thomas Nast further strengthened the legend during the second half of the 19th century. Living at the North Pole and assisted by elves, the modern Santa produced and delivered toys to all good-children.

- Christmas Cards:

1. The practice of exchanging Christmas cards also became a widespread custom in the 19th century. Europeans had distributed wood prints of religious themes for Christmas during the Middle Ages (5th century to 15th century). In **1843** English illustrator **John Calcott Horsley** created the first modern Christmas card. The card depicted a family celebration and its caption read, "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You." In the United States, German-born printer Louis Prang made advances in color lithography that enabled him to mass-produce a colorful Christmas card in 1875. The card sold extremely well, and soon the custom of exchanging Christmas cards spread throughout the country.

The Christmas Tree:



While Santa Claus became increasingly familiar to Americans, the German Christmas tree also acquired popularity in North America. As early as the 17th century, Germans had transformed this pagan symbol of fertility into a Christian symbol of rebirth. According to legend, the Christmas tree tradition began with the founder of German Protestantism, Martin Luther. While walking through the forest on Christmas Eve, Luther was so moved by the beauty of the starlit fir trees that he brought one indoors and decorated it with candles to remind his children of God's creation. In 1841, Prince

Albert of Germany gave his wife, Queen Victoria of England, a gift of a Christmas tree. This was reputedly the first Christmas tree in England, but the custom spread quickly. German immigrants took the Christmas tree to other parts of Europe and to the United States and Canada, where it soon became a popular tradition. Blown-glass ornaments, tin angels, paper chains, candles, cornucopias filled with sugarplums, and other decorations made the simple evergreen tree into a beautiful parlor centerpiece at Christmastime.

HOWEVER, in *Jeremiah 10:1-8* the Holy Bible teaches that such trees were worshiped as gods by the heathens. The trees were “ cut out of the forest with an axe, they decked it with silver and gold and fastened it with nails and with hammers that it moved not .. be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good”