

Finding the Roots of Christmas

by Bill and Karen Bishop

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Like so many others, we too had enjoyed the Santa aspect of the holiday season, which engendered the giving and receiving of gifts, and even fostered a more intense generosity toward those in need. That sense of well-being and magnanimous spirit, combined with the shopping, specialty baking, parties, and festivities of various natures always made Christmas the highlight of the year!

Our research about December 25 though, revealed more than we bargained for. It was hard for us to receive, and it is likewise hard for us to relate to you. It hurts our hearts to ruffle feathers among our brothers and sisters in Christ. We do not relish the thought of bringing discomfort to anyone, but we know how important it was to us to get to the truth of the matter, and we feel that others might want to come to terms with it as well. You see, we desire to serve our Master and Redeemer whole-heartedly, and to do that means that we must learn to see things from His perspective rather than to embrace the ways of the world - so we continued to dig. The results were unsettling. I would suggest that you continue to read at this point with a strong heart and an earnest desire to seek truth, as the information which follows will be troubling to many who celebrate this day. By all means we ask, as always, that you pray for affirmation as you proceed. We believe if you do, you will be shown the spiritual dangers of continuing to honor this day as it has been celebrated for many years.

Santa is a very popular figure on the Christmas scene today, but just who is this jolly old man we call Santa? What is the history behind this Christmas character? It grieves me to relate the findings of our study on this greatly loved figure, but we feel that it will help to shed light on the true nature of this day.

To be honest, because Santa and his elves are mythological in nature, their roots are likewise mythological. Myths evolve and change, and there are multiple versions. The interesting factor in our digging, however, was the common ground. Almost none of these rooted mythological versions were of good report. The roots of these myths run deep – much deeper than the fourth century famed benevolent Turkish Catholic figure Saint Nicholas. The roots are so deep in fact that they stem at least as far back as a mythological figure named Odin. Alexander Hislop (author of [The Two Babylons](#)) from the 1800's, even associated Odin with Adon of Babylon, then

back to Nimrod of Genesis (of whom the Bible has little good to say). Not only is the actual man named Saint Nicholas a much later player in the Christmas scene, but there is never any attempt to explain how such things as the North Pole and fir trees play a role in the life of this Turkish saint. Furthermore, the worldly festivities of Christmas, (though not yet practiced under this name) predated the birth of Y'shua by some 1000 years.

Using a cross-section of mythological references, we will try to piece together how Odin led to our present-day Santa. Odin was the Nordic god of thunder. His name means "the inspired one". He was memorialized as an old man with a long white beard who carried a crosier, or a staff with a hook at the end. He had a mystical tree – the fir tree. He was also perceived to be the god of wisdom, occult knowledge, magic, war, intoxicating drink, ecstasy, and death. He was a hooded and cloaked figure who hailed from the north and was said to travel the sky on an eight-legged white horse named Sleipnir to decide who was good and would prosper, and who was bad and would die. It is said Odin captured a devil and made him his personal servant, a part goat and part man figure called Knecht Ruprecht. Children would leave food for Sleipnir in stockings hung by the chimney, and if they had been good Odin would replace this food with candy for the children. However, if the children had been bad, Knecht Ruprecht would beat them with the rod he carried, or abduct the worst children in his bag and carry them away. (Many countries today still have parades and festivities which involve men dressed to look like the grotesque character of Knecht Ruprecht, and children and women are often beaten at these times.)

Early in the fourth century, the Roman Emperor Constantine thought to combine these mythological festivities and the birth of the Mithra figure with the birth of Y'shua in a manner that would encourage non-Christians to embrace the faith. By so doing, paganism polluted the Christian faith in profound fashion. The holy days that were established by God Himself were changed to our pagan-based holidays. Constantine had watered down the tenets of the faith, and almost totally destroyed the heritage of the Biblical festivals as revealed in God's Word for the benefit of mankind. He had justified the lecherous revelry of these festivities with his Christian veneer, proclaiming that we should celebrate the birth of Y'shua on December 25, the birthday of Mithra. This dating of the birth of Y'shua has even been found on a Roman calendar of 336 AD.

The Christmas festivities brought into the church actually involved two celebrations:

The first was for about a week, December 17-24. It was a celebration of Saturn, the god of excess, and was known as Saturnalia. In the Middle Ages

it became known as Christ mass, later blurred together to make Christmas. During this time the courts were closed, and there was no punishment for misconduct, deviant behavior, or even criminal acts. Rampant debauchery reigned unchecked and unchallenged. Great orgies occurred in the streets as well as rioting, murders, and horrid rituals in honor of Saturn, the god of excess. In keeping with the season, mistletoe was hung. It was thought to render women helpless to sexual advances, and their resistance was to be forbidden. Holly was thought to ward off evil, and it was often fashioned into a wreath to accentuate its supposed power. A massive yule log was burned for 12 days to honor the Norse fertility god Jul. In attempts to contact other spirits, a sacrifice (sometimes human) was burned and offered each day at this yule log. The evergreen tree, which represented sex and fertility, was decorated with gold and silver balls depicting male genitalia. It was often topped with an eight-pointed star to depict the rays of the sun god. These trees were said to be embodied with spirits, and people took the trees into their homes to welcome these spirits into their places of dwelling. The decorated fir trees were worshiped in song, and the children bowed down before them to receive gifts.

The second celebration actually concluded the Saturn festivities with the giving of gifts on December 25 in honor of the Persian god of light. The lewd and lascivious indulgence of Christmas celebration finally became so depraved and excessive that the festivities were outlawed and fines were imposed if anyone celebrated it in any way.

In the 1500's the myth of Odin remained alive, though Odin became the Dutch Sinterklaas. Sinterklaas also traveled through the sky by night onto rooftops on his white horse. He dressed in a red cloak, carried a crosier, and was accompanied by his Black Jacks or Krampus Demons (again being part goat and part man). He would visit on his birthday (in December) and leave gifts for the good children. If, however, the children had been bad, his Krampus Demons would beat them, and some versions even indicate that the Krampus Demons would eat them!

Dutchmen who settled here in America brought the myth of Sinterklaas to life in our country, and our English rendering of the name became Santa Claus. Due to the debauchery of the festivities, it was also illegal for a while here in this country to celebrate Christmas. However, the lust for the indulgences of the season finally won out, and the celebration was re-instituted. In 1828 New York had to begin a police force to regain control at this time of year. The wicked nature of the festivities had carried through to our country and our day.

In 1930 the marketing techniques of a Chicago based department store and a popular soft drink in our country were helpful in changing the image of Santa Claus to the rotund jolly image we see today. Complete with this change of image was the transformation of the demonic helpers into cute and joyful little elves who make toys instead of beating bad children. The white horse with eight legs became eight reindeer that flew through the sky, with Rudolph being added later to make nine (another marketing campaign).

Yes, the old myth of Odin and the devil was watered down over the years into something much more palatable. However, the roots remain. One of the definitions for "devil" in The Oxford English Dictionary (along with Beelzebub, Lucifer, and Satan) is Old Nick. Is it mere coincidence that this is another name for Santa, and that the letters in the name Santa can be transposed to spell Satan? In Shakespearean plays, it was the calling card of the devil or the evil character of the play to announce himself as he came onto the stage by saying: "ho, ho, ho".

Please keep in mind that all of these details are only a brief overview of the many cultural diversities and traditions through the years. There is ever so much more as you begin to research the roots of our seasonal festivities. It seems to us that Santa may actually be a parody - the adversary's way of poking fun at Y'shua. Let's look briefly at the song Santa Claus is coming to town. "He sees you when you're sleepin', he knows when you're awake, he knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake. ... Santa Claus is comin' to town." We understand the near return of Y'shua who will bring with Him righteous judgment, and we want to be doing what is right when He comes. There is too much similarity to ignore. We also see the tongue in cheek ridicule of that concept. Then, ironically (when money is no object) every child (whether they have been bad or good) gets gifts today, so maybe there will be no negative judgment when Y'shua returns either. ??