

The Truth About NEW YEAR'S!

How did the celebration of New Year's Eve begin? Why is the beginning of a year placed in the middle of a dead winter? And where did the many customs surrounding it originate?

by William H. Ellis

MOST people carelessly assume that celebrating New Year's Eve is a Christian custom.

But did the practice of "waiting the old year out" really come from the Bible?

Is January 1 the true beginning of a new year? Who has the *authority* to determine when a new year begins?

An Ancient Pagan Custom

New Year's is one of the oldest and most universal of all pagan *traditions!* The custom of celebrating it has remained essentially unchanged for 4,000 years!

"There is scarcely a people, ancient or modern, savage or civilized," writes Theodor H. Gaster, in his definitive book *New Year*, "which has not observed it... in one form or another. Yet no other festival has been celebrated on so many different dates or in so many seemingly different ways."

In ancient Babylon, New Year's festivals were closely bound to the pagan feast called "Christmas" today. The little-known connection of New Year's with Christmas is made clear in our free booklet, *The PLAIN TRUTH About CHRISTMAS!* If you haven't read it before, write for it immediately.

When and how did New Year's celebrations originate? Who began the custom?

Notice the proof of history.

"Mesopotamia," writes Earl W. Count, "is the very ancient Mother of Civilization. Christmas began there, *over four thousand years ago*, as the festival which renewed the world for another year. The 'twelve days' of Christmas; the bright fires and probably the Yule log; the giving of presents; the carnivals with their floats, their merrymakings and clownings, the mummers who sing and play from house to house; the feasting; the

church processions with their lights and song—all these and more began there centuries before Christ was born. And they celebrated *the arrival of a new year!*" (*4000 Years of Christmas*, pp. 20-21.)

That is how it began. The celebration of New Year's began in ancient Babylonia in Mesopotamia. It was a pagan custom of ancient sun-worship 2000 years before the birth of Jesus.

The celebration of New Year's is never once commanded in the Bible. Jesus and the apostles never observed it. Moses forbade it!

Don't say "it doesn't matter." It does matter to God whether we adopt

the customs of the heathen. Your Bible says, "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jeremiah 10:2).

A Pagan Roman Feast

The New Year's festivities that had originated in Babylon found their way to Greece and finally to Rome. The Romans called it "Saturnalia"—in honor of Saturn. Among them it was extremely popular—a time of revelings, drinking bouts, orgies—finally ending in HUMAN SACRIFICE!

"The first day of the Saturnalia shifted during the lifetime of Rome . . . it began around the middle of December . . . and continued until January first. In its midst was December



Wide World Photo

New York's famed Times Square at midnight, December 31, as thousands gather to usher in the pagan Roman New Year. The undampened spirits of the crowd bring to mind the ancient Roman Saturnalia. One lone celebrant, center, holds sign reading: "Christ for a troubled world." Probably not one in the crowd really understands how Christ will solve the troubles brought on this world by its foolish pagan traditions!

twenty-fifth, the day, as the Romans calculated, when the sun was at its lowest ebb. . . ." (E. W. Count's *4000 Years of Christmas*, page 28.)

It was Julius Caesar, Emperor of pagan Rome, who instituted the New Year's festival on January first. In 46 B. C., Caesar adopted the Julian calendar. He transferred to the first of January ALL of the licentious customs surrounding the Roman Saturnalia!

Accepted by "Church Fathers"

But how did such a thoroughly pagan day ever insinuate itself into our modern "Christian" calendar?

Read the answer from church history—about 375 A. D. This is the period Emperor Constantine imposed "Christianity" on the Roman world.

"There were many immigrants into the ranks of the Christians by this time," writes Earl W. Count. "The Church Fathers discovered to their alarm that they were also facing an invasion of pagan customs. The habit of Saturnalia was too strong to be left behind. At first the Church forbade it, but in vain" (page 31).

Rather than resist the influence of pagan customs, the Catholic Church fathers compromised!

"The Church finally succeeded in taking the merriment, the greenery, the lights, and the gifts from Saturn and giving them to the Babe of Bethlehem. . . . The pagan Romans became Christians—but the Saturnalia remained!" (E. W. Count, page 31.)

Modern Christians have gone a *step further!*

Rather than present a gift to Jesus Christ on the day they falsely assume to be His birthday, the world is busily trading presents among themselves! Christ has been not only forgotten at Christmas time, but is not so much as toasted amidst the partying of New Year's Eve!

During the Middle Ages many of the ancient Roman customs were maintained and augmented by the incoming heathen rites of the Teutonic peoples. It was during this period that the customary yule log and mistletoe were added to the popular New Year's festivities. The yule log is a carry-over from the bonfires of sun-worship, and

mistletoe is a parasite used in Druid rites as a symbol of sex-worship!

As Teutonic customs were added, the date of New Year's celebrations was temporarily changed to March 25, to coincide with the Germanic spring rites of fertility.

Finally Pope Gregory re-instituted the ancient pagan Roman date of January first. He imposed it on the whole Western world in 1582 when his Gregorian calendar "reforms" were accepted. All Roman Catholic countries accepted this change *at once!* Sweden, Germany, Denmark and England, the strongholds of Druid customs, finally acquiesced to Rome in the 1700's!

The Modern Attitude of Compromise

Today, New Year's Eve has become a time for people to wallow in excesses of liquor! The modern attitude seems to be, "have a wild time on New Year's Eve, and turn over a new leaf on New Year's Day!"

New Year's resolutions are empty and meaningless, usually trifling matters of jest! Few people make a lasting change.

Most people seem to have convinced themselves that God is out of the picture for good. That God is not concerned with their modern revelings, drunken parties, promiscuous behavior!

What does God have to say about New Year's? Does He condone observing a pagan festival? practicing pagan customs in the name of Christ?

God Labels New Year's "PAGAN"!

God Almighty does not compromise!

Notice the Eternal's stern warning to Israel as they conquered the pagan nations of the promised land:

"Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou *inquire not after their gods*, saying 'How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.' *Thou shalt not do so unto the Eternal thy God: for every abomination to the Eternal, which He hateth*, have they done to their gods. . . ." (Deut. 12:30-31.)

What were the customs God hates and condemns in Deuteronomy? What

are those pagan rites that are an *abomination* to Him?

These very rites and customs practiced in ancient Canaan and Syria included the *New Year's festivals!* From the ancient Canaanites the Greeks learned the same rites.

Greek God of WINE!

Theodor H. Gaster writes concerning the familiar "New Year's babe":

"Actually the New Year babe is *far older* than he looks. In ancient Greece, it was customary at the great festival of Dionysus to parade a babe cradled in a winnowing basket. This was taken to symbolize the annual (or periodic) rebirth of that god as the spirit of fertility!" (New Year.)

Who was this Dionysus?

None other than Bacchus—the god of wine! In his honor the Greeks held a festival called the "Festival of the Wine-Press" at the time which corresponds to our months of January-February!

Today more alcoholic beverages are consumed during the "holiday season" than at any other time of the year! New Year's Eve is noted for its licentious, wild, and wanton partying. People are deceived by riotous pagan holiday spirits—for the most part emanating from liquor bottles—all the while calling it "Christian"!

"Father Time"

Another symbol of New Year's celebrations is equally pagan! It is the familiar figure of a white-haired man carrying a scythe. What does he represent? The ancient Greek god Cronos. It is from the name "Cronos" we derive our "chronograph" which measures time.

Among the Greek gods, Cronos originally cut a swath of *human sacrifice* with his sharpened scythe! The "silent reaper" anciently "reaped" little children in horrible episodes of mythical *cannibalism!* This Greek rite of human sacrifice was adopted by ancient Rome, where human sacrifice was practiced at least until 300 A. D.

No wonder God Almighty warns the pagan New Year's celebration is an *abomination* to Him! See Deuteronomy 12:31.



Wide World Photo

Amid falling snow, London revelers welcome the New Year with a snowball battle at Piccadilly Circus early January 1. Other celebrants stand around the statue of the Greek god of sexual love, Eros, in the background (upper left), which is boarded up for the occasion. The pagan Romans also celebrated New Year's in the dead of winter. God ordained no such thing. The beginning of spring, when new life buds forth, is the true beginning of God's sacred year.

Strange as it seems, the professing Christian world praises and practices customs and days of pagan origin—thinly cloaking them in "Christian-sounding names! You too, may have accepted these vain traditions of men, never realizing they are PAGAN TO THE CORE!

"In *vain* do they worship me," said Jesus Christ, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men!"

Jesus said it is possible to *worship God*—to venerate the *name* of Christ—and still do it *all in vain*!

"Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition," He continued, "... making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered!" (Mark 7:7, 9, 13.)

Many people will confess, when forced to, the pagan origin of these

days. But they stubbornly *refuse* to stop observing them! God is their Judge!

Don't you make this mistake!

When Does God Begin the New Year?

Remember! It is God Almighty who created the Universe. He set the heavenly bodies in their courses at Creation. It is by His "master-clock" that time is determined.

The earth's rotation regulates the length of a day—the lunar phases indicate the length of a month. And the orbit of the earth around the sun dictates the length of a year!

But *only God* has the *authority* to set the date of the beginning of the new year!

God's sacred calendar year begins in the spring—not in the middle of a

dead winter! Notice Exodus 12:1-2, "And the Eternal spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the *first month of the year to you*."

The first month of God's sacred calendar is called, in the Bible, *Abib*. It means the month of "green ears." Later, the Jews called it *Nisan*—a Babylonian word having the same meaning.

It was in the month of *Abib* or *Nisan* that Israel came out of Egyptian captivity under Moses (Ex. 34:18). The Hebrew month *Abib* overlaps the months of March-April on the pagan Roman calendar in use today.

God placed the beginning of the sacred year in the early spring to mark the beginning of the seasonal harvests. The two annual harvests in Palestine foreshadowed God's Plan for the two-fold *spiritual* harvest of souls to be born into His Kingdom.

Your Bible speaks of a great false religious system which will "think to change times and laws" (Dan. 7:25). This system has deliberately thought to change the beginning of God's calendar year in an attempt to hide God's Plan for the salvation of mankind! But man has no authority to change God's "master-clock."

Satan, however, has cleverly deceived the world into believing the new year begins on January first!

Why National Captivity?

The very same pagan practices God condemns in the Old Testament are being perpetuated in our modern world today!

The very same festivals of paganism adopted by ancient Israel have become an integral part of this modern society!

Read, in II Kings 17:15-18, the reason why God Almighty took ancient Israel into captivity: "And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them!"

What was the result of Israel fol-

lowing the customs of the heathen nations around them?

"Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight... and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight... *So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day!*" (II Kings 17:18, 20, and 23.)

Israel *never* returned as a nation to the land of Palestine!

Israel was lost! Its true identity was concealed until modern times! Now there is proof that the lost ten tribes of ancient Israel migrated to North-western Europe. The chief peoples among them have become the United States and British Commonwealth today! (If you don't already have your copy of our free booklet, *The United States and the British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, send for it immediately.)

Modern Paganism Will Be Punished!

Do you suppose God has changed His mind about compromising with paganism?

"For I am the LORD, *I change not!*" warns the Eternal in Malachi 3:6. This same reminder is repeated in Hebrews 13:8.

Speaking to the modern nations of Israel today, Almighty God says, "As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Eternal God; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols and thereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but *pollute ye my holy name no more* with your gifts and with your idols" (Ezek. 20:39).

In other words, God is saying, "Be pagan if you insist; but quit calling it Christian."

God continues to warn modern Israel against the holidays of paganism, in Hosea 2:11:

"I will also cause all her mirth to cease, *her feast days* [days the people chose], *her new moons* [marking the beginning of the pagan New Year], and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts." Notice that these were Israel's feast days—those Israel had acquired from the pagan nations around them—*not* those God had originally instituted through His Bible! "And I will

visit upon her the *days of Baalim*, wherein she burned incense to them..." (verse 13)!

The very same punishment awaits any nation today that forsakes God's law as revealed in His Holy Bible, and turns to the customs of pagan nations—observing pagan days of worship!

Does it make any difference if you continue observing pagan customs—like New Year's? *It certainly does!* God says so!

What You Should Do

God Almighty prophesies a final revival of Babylonian religion in great power just before He cuts short man's misrule of this earth. Read His warning in Revelation 18:

"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen.

... For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues!"

New Year's celebration began in Babylon 4,000 years ago. It is practiced today by almost every people on the face of the earth. Satan the Devil has indeed deceived the whole world! (Rev. 12:9.)

But God Almighty has sent His ministers to warn this world—to cry aloud, and spare not, and **SHOW HIS PEOPLE THEIR SINS** (Isa. 58:1). Punishment will not be forever withheld!

May God help you to **HEED THIS WARNING**, and *forsake the pagan practices* of this modern world!