

A night scene with a bright star shining down on a tent. The star is a brilliant white-yellow point with a long, vertical beam of light extending downwards. The background is a dark blue night sky filled with numerous small, distant stars. In the foreground, the silhouettes of a tent and other structures are visible against the dark ground.

CAN CHRISTMAS LEAD YOU TO CHRIST?

A Look to the Past: Some Traditions

The Physics of Santa, by Linda Harden

Some believe Jesus is fiction too

American Atheistic Association

Billboard depicts Neptune, Jesus, Santa, and Satan: "1.6 Million Ohioans know myths when they see them. What do you see?"

Christmas is a time atheists feel lonely

Christmas has become so commercialized; is it okay for Christians to engage in it?

The wise men

Three: based on the song "We Three Kings," John Henry Hopkins, 1857

The Dating of Christmas

Most believe not December 25: shepherds don't keep their flocks at that time of year

Earliest guess was from late second century by Clement of Alexandria: May 20

The wise men

April 18, April 19, March 28 other guesses

December 25; third century by Hippolytus of Rome; coincided with Roman celebration

The Origins of Pagan Celebrations

Babylon: Nimrod (see Genesis 10:8-12)

Babel became Babylon

According to myth: Nimrod married Semiramis, the "Queen of Heaven." After Nimrod's death, Semiramis became pregnant by a miraculous flash of light, child Tammuz (a reincarnation of Nimrod) was born on December 25. Ziggurats built around Babylon in his honor.

The Origins of Pagan Celebrations

Spring celebration: Ishtar celebrated the pregnancy of Semiramis; celebrated with bunnies and eggs symbolizing fertility: Ishtar
eggs

Winter celebration: Yule logs; the dead log burned and in its place came a beautiful tree.

(Jeremiah 10:1-4)

The tree was crafted into an image

The Origins of Pagan Celebrations

Sun worship

Saturnalia; December 17-24 celebrated the
unconquered sun

Brumalia: celebrated the invincible sun

A Look to the Present: Some Solutions

Let's Do What Jesus Did

John 10:22-30

Feast of Dedication: Hanukah, Festival of
Lights;

Used the festival of lights to point to Himself as
the light of the world

Origin of Christmas tree

Martin Luther thought to be first to combine them and add candles; as the candles on the tree eradicate darkness in a room, so Jesus eradicates darkness in our lives.

Celebration on December 25: Even though we don't know the exact date of His birth, we can celebrate His coming to earth

Romans 14:4-6

Let's Do What Santa Did

Fourth Century Bishop of Myra in Lycia,
Anatolia (modern-day Turkey)

Present at the Council of Nicaea; 325 AD

Distributed toys fuel and food to the poor

Upon his death, the Feast of St. Nicholas was
started; give gifts to one another

Let's Do What Santa Did

Red and white clothing and cap from his miter
and cape

Wrapping paper: explain God wrapped in
human form, given as a gift to the world

Look to the Future: Some Innovations

Some Great Ideas

Ornaments that mark spiritual milestones

Date saved-baptized

Baby dedication

Adopt someone in need

The Bottom Line

Do you want to be known for what you are against or do you want to be known for what you are for? There's a lot of people who are known for what they're against, "I'm against that. I'm against that." Nobody wants to hang-out with anybody like that.

The Bottom Line

When you're known for what you are for, I'm for Jesus and I want to make Jesus known to you and tell you the rest of the story.

It could be a very compelling thing.