

LESSON 40
(1965, 1969)

AMBASSADOR COLLEGE
BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Vatican City

About Our Cover ...

Vatican City and St. Peter's Basilica, pictured on our cover, are the symbols to which the churches are now looking. Rome's role in developing world unity -- by encouraging religious unity under her banner -- is emphasized by this striking air view. This lesson reveals the surprising origin of this world's holidays, showing the role the Roman Church has played in perpetuating the rites and customs of the days observed by modern Christendom.

THE SURPRISING ORIGIN OF THIS WORLD'S HOLIDAYS

WHY do people all over the world observe so many different days of worship? So many different customs?

Where did this world's holidays come from? Were they established by the SUPREME AUTHORITY of God Almighty? What BIBLE AUTHORITY is there for the holidays observed by most of modern Christianity?

Very few know why they observe the days they do!

Traditional Holidays

Where did Easter -- with its hot cross buns, bunnies and Easter eggs -- originate? And Halloween -- with its ghosts, witches and trick-or-treat?

What about Christmas -- with its red-nosed reindeer, Santa Claus and gift trading?

Why do most professing Christians observe days which are NOWHERE commanded in your Bible -- days neither Jesus nor the apostles kept?

In this lesson you will learn that Jesus Christ Himself did not observe today's so-called "Christian" holidays -- that in reality they are not Christian at all!

God the Author of Time

In Genesis 1:14 God said: "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for SIGNS, AND FOR SEASONS, AND FOR DAYS, AND YEARS"

Time is based on the motion of celestial bodies. The earth rotates at a constant speed, giving us day and night. Our planet also travels at a constant speed in orbit around the sun, taking one year per revolution. And the moon revolves around the earth, giving us the lunar month.

By calculating the relationships between these celestial bodies -- by God's own "master-clock" of our solar system and the stars -- man MEASURES time.

Since Almighty God is the Creator God who created these heavenly bodies and set them -- and therefore time -- in motion,

HE ALONE has the AUTHORITY TO set aside TIME -- to proclaim certain days for worship -- to make time HOLY! Man has NOT been given authority from God to establish days of worship on his own -- HOLIDAYS of human manufacture!

 PHOTO CAPTION: NEW YEAR'S EVE -- This world's traditional holidays are popular. Thousands cheer on New Year's Eve in Times Square, New York, as light snow begins to fall.

Man Desires to Observe Days

Every tribe, every nation, every religion singles out certain times of worship. It is a manifestation of the basic "urge to religion" that the Creator God placed within human nature.

But God has not left it to human nature -- or human whim dependent upon human ideas or traditions -- to determine either the time or the manner of the worship acceptable to Him. And without God's own instruction, man could not know which days God Himself MADE HOLY.

Did you know God Almighty, in His Word, condemns humanly devised worship as VAIN? Jesus said, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

It is possible to actually WORSHIP GOD -- to venerate the NAME of Christ -- and still do it all in VAIN. Jesus said so!

He declared: "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." How? "Making the word of God of NONE EFFECT through your TRADITION, which ye have delivered" (Mark 7:7, 9, 13).

Satan's Clever Plot

Just as Satan the Devil deceived men into pagan "SUNday" observance instead of keeping God's Sabbath Day -- so Satan has instituted his own holidays. They are clever counterfeits contrived to HIDE God's Supreme Master Plan.

These holidays are made to appear as happy times, times to enjoy YOURSELF. But they serve no useful purpose. They have no great significance or meaning. Generally, they are days when most people simply take off from work, picnic, play golf, etc., while a devoted FEW attend church!

No one in the world, it seems, questions Satan's days -- they have become customary -- "traditional"! They are assumed to be "Christian."

But you can't afford to ASSUME!

Yet many, learning the truth about the origin of this world's holidays, ask: "WHAT DIFFERENCE does it make? So what if they aren't really Christian? We observe them in honor of Christ! We MADE them 'Christian' by the way we observe them."

What about it?

Does It Make Any Difference?

The Devil would like us to believe we can flout God's commands, trample His Holy Days underfoot, and worship in whatever way we choose.

Make no mistake -- GOD IS the One who decides which days are important -- which are HOLY!

If God says Easter, Christmas, Halloween, etc., are holy, then we SHOULD observe them faithfully. But the question is: What DOES GOD say about these days?

God shows in His Bible that it does make a difference! He reveals it is a matter of your eternal life or death!

Yet Satan's pagan holidays have become such a traditional part of professing Christianity that many, though acknowledging their pagan origin, STILL OBSERVE THEM!

What about you?

In this lesson you will learn how Satan plotted a counterfeit "Christianity." You will see how the rank paganism of the ancient world was re-labeled -- "baptized" -- with Christian-sounding names. And that it was all done in the name of Christ -- purporting to be the worship of Jesus.

You will learn that the very same pagan practices God condemned in Old Testament times have crept into modern "Christianity" and are being celebrated today.

You'll learn who it is that has been perpetuating the great false system behind today's religious customs -- and WHY. And you will learn HOW these pagan days were planted in the bosom of modern Christianity.

LESSON 40

Deception Foretold in the Bible

Long ago, God foretold that pagan practices would creep into churches claiming to worship Him. He WARNED us to beware!

1. Did Jesus Christ warn Christians in the end times that false ministers would deceive the many? Matt. 24:11. Would these seem to be "Christian" ministers who preach ABOUT Jesus Christ, but still deceive many? Verses 4-5.

COMMENT: False ministers have cleverly adopted the name of Christ as a cloak for their false doctrines. Jesus said, "Many shall come in my name" -- purporting to be Christian -- "saying, I am Christ" -- even teaching that Jesus is the Christ -- "and shall deceive many!" (Matt. 24:5.)

2. Can one worship Christ, call himself "Christian," and still do it all in vain? Matt. 15:9. How? -- by worshipping according to the dictates and traditions of men? Same verse.

3. Very early in New Testament times, did the Apostle Paul find false teachers pretending to be Christian even pretending to be APOSTLES? II Cor. 11:13-14.

 PHOTO CAPTION: THE RELIGION OF BABEL -- REBELLION AGAINST GOD:
 TOWER OF BABEL -- Artist's conception of ancient Babylon with
 Nimrod's Tower in background. RIGHT: This tower stood as the
 symbol of human rebellion against the rule of God Almighty. The
 traditional Tower of Nimrod crumbles today -- yet his doctrine of
 rebellion lives on!

4. Did the Apostle John write that the Church of God at Ephesus had discovered some of these false ministers -- falsely calling themselves Christ's Apostles? Rev. 2:2. How were the false apostles at Ephesus discovered -- by their fruits, their deeds? Verse 6 and Matt. 7:20.

5. Does God say He hates the deeds of the Nicolaitanes? Rev. 2:6. Did the Nicolaitanes hold false doctrine? Verse 15. Exactly who were the Nicolaitanes?

COMMENT: A Nicolaitan is a follower of Nicolas! The name Nicolas is derived from the Greek words, "nikos" and "laos". "Nikos" means the "conqueror" or "destroyer," and "laos" means "people." The original Nicolas was a conqueror or destroyer of the people!

Nicolas was a Greek word for "Nimrod" -- the original arch-rebel who conquered the people and founded man-made religion within two centuries after the Flood.

While Nimrod was alive he put himself in the place of God by his dictatorial rule. And when he died, his admirers CONTINUED TO WORSHIP HIM AS A DIVINE HERO! They CALLED HIM "BAAL," a name found later throughout the Old Testament. "Baal" means "master" or "lord." It was only natural that Nimrod should claim that name. He put himself in the very place of the true Lord or Master of the entire universe.

But "Baal" was not Nimrod's only other name. He had MANY names. In Babylonia he was known as "Tammuz." In Syria and Greece, "Adonis" -- which also meant "lord." In Egypt he was the god "Osiris," and was identified in "mystery" symbolism as the bull!

Another of his names was "Santas," commonly used throughout Asia Minor. (See Langer's "An Encyclopedia of World History", p. 37.)

Now you might ask, "Is there any connection between Nimrod, who was called 'Santas' in Asia Minor, and 'Saint' Nicolas of Asia Minor -- 'Santa Claus'?" Yes, indeed there is!

"SANTA CLAUS" is but a shortened form of "Santa Nicholas" or "Saint Nicholas." The followers of "St. Nicholas" or Nimrod are termed "Nicolaitanes" in the New Testament. So those people -- who falsely called themselves "Christians" -- continued to honor NIMROD in the days of the Apostle John -- just as they do today! If you do not yet have a free copy of the booklet, "The PLAIN TRUTH About Christmas," write for it immediately and study it. You will see how Satan has deceived men into worshipping Nimrod -- all the while calling him Savior!

6. What was the basic doctrine of the Nicolaitanes originally taught by Nimrod? Gen. 10:8-10.

COMMENT: It was REBELLION against God -- against His laws. Nimrod was opposed to God. The phrase "a mighty hunter BEFORE THE LORD" in the Hebrew indicates he had set himself in opposition to -- and IN THE PLACE OF the Lord. Nimrod was the world's first despot.

Josephus, prominent Jewish historian of the first century A.D., says of him, "Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God ... he also gradually changed the government into tyranny ..." (Ant. Bk. I, Chap. IV, Part a).

7. What more did Nimrod do in rebellion against God? Gen. 11:1-9, compared with Gen. 10:10. Wasn't Nimrod's first city Babel, or Babylon? Same verses.

COMMENT: Again, notice the testimony of Josephus: "He [Nimrod] also said he would be revenged on God, if He should have a mind to drown the world again; for he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach!" Nimrod claimed to be the "savior" of mankind -- saving them from God. Such was his blasphemy!

The people he had conquered now followed him. "Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod," reports Josephus, "and to esteem it a piece of COWARDICE to submit to God."

Nimrod taught that it was wrong -- cowardice -- to submit to

God and His laws! This was the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes!

8. Doesn't God label this false religious system by the name of its city of origin? Rev. 17:5. Her very name bears God's indictment of her sins! Has this system been perpetuated down to our day today? Review Revelation, chapter 18.

Israel Warned

Since the time of Babel -- and continuing into our modern twentieth century -- the false religion of Nimrod has dominated the world!

After God scattered the nations at Babel (Gen. 11:8) and especially after the death of Nimrod, his followers continued their rebellion in secret. They developed an intricate symbolism called the "mysteries." This pagan system hinged on the careful re-naming of all phases of their worship. In order to deceive the people, the priests of Nimrod began calling their wicked customs by names which seemed to honor God Himself!

Nimrod took the name "Lord," which translated into Hebrew became "Baal" and into Greek became "Adonis."

Nimrod's wicked mother, known to historians as Semiramis, took the name of the "Mother of God," and was worshipped as Ishtar -- the mother goddess of dawn or light (Lempriere's Classical Dictionary, article, "Adonis"). Her new name, "Ishtar," was pronounced just as we pronounce the word "Easter" in English! She was worshipped in the spring -- her feast day a site of fertility! You will want to read all about the origin of Easter in our free booklet, "Easter Is Pagan."

Notice how widespread the worship of Nimrod and Semiramis had become in the time of Moses -- and what God says about it.

1. Did God warn His people to avoid the ways of Egypt -- a land rife with pagan customs and traditions? Lev. 18:3, first part. Did He also warn them not to adopt the customs of Canaan? Same verse.

2. Why was God against the practices of the heathen? Had they defiled the very land they lived in? Lev. 18:26-30.

3. Did God therefore punish the heathen by casting them from their land? Verse 28. See also Lev. 20:23.

COMMENT: God is no respecter of persons. Whichever people practice pagan customs and defile themselves by observing pagan holidays He punishes! Notice what He told Israel in Deuteronomy 8:19-20.

4. What was the penalty for observing the customs of the heathen? Lev. 20:1-2. Isn't the penalty for sin still the same today? Rom. 6:23.

COMMENT: God says "I change NOT!" (Mal. 3:6.) He still exacts the death penalty for those who WILLFULLY continue to disobey Him and observe pagan customs after they have learned the truth.

In Old Testament Israel the civil government of the nation executed sinners. Today God Himself places the guilty person under the spiritual penalty of eternal death until he REPENTS of His past sins and begins to KEEP God's commandments.

5. Were God's people commanded to keep His statutes? Lev. 18:5.

COMMENT: Among the statutes God has given for His people are His HOLY DAYS (Lev. 23, especially verses 14, 21, 31, and 41) -- days which reveal the way to eternal life to those who KEEP THEM.

Israel Adopted Pagan Rites

1. Does God promise to bless His people abundantly if they will keep His Holy Days? Read Lev. 26:1-13, especially verses 2 and 3. But would they suffer punishments if they broke God's Commandments? Read Lev. 26:14-39.

2. Was it within the heart of Israel to always obey God? Deut. 5:29. What does Jeremiah remind us about the human heart? Jer. 17:9.

 PHOTO CAPTION: EASTER -- These children look forward to Easter with its bunny rabbits, jelly beans, and colored eggs -- not knowing the real origin and meaning of these symbols.

3. When Israel came into the land of Moab, what did they do? Num. 25:1-3. What did God instruct Moses to do with those who polluted themselves by worshipping Baal-Peor, the god of the Moabites? Verses 4-5. Who was this Baal-Peor?

COMMENT: Baal-Peor was another name for Nimrod. The compound name Baal-Peor had special significance to the Moabites who worshipped Nimrod as a child.

Today, in mid-winter, the "sacred child" is still worshipped! The familiar mother and child theme at Christmas is a cleverly disguised pagan "mystery" which dates back to Nimrod and his mother Semiramis! The "New Year's baby," once worshipped in ancient Greece as Dionysus or Adonis -- "the lord" -- is now welcomed in the churches of modern Christianity!

No wonder God Almighty was angry when Israel began to observe the wild, licentious rites of Baal among the Moabites!

4. When God's people approached the promised land, did He specifically warn them against transferring pagan customs to the worship of the true God? Deut. 12:29-31. Did God warn them not to add any pagan rites to His commands? Verse 32. Why did God HATE the hideous rites of these pagan religions? Verse 31, last part.

Israel Punished for Baalism

1. After Joshua and all his generation died (Judges 2:8-10), did Israel adopt the religious customs of Canaan? Judges 2:11-13.

COMMENT: The Baalim were the many gods named Baal that each tribe of Canaan worshipped. Just as there are many religious customs today, so in the time of the Judges everyone did what he thought was best instead of obeying God! (Judges 21:25.)

2. Who were the principal pagan gods worshipped by rebellious Israelites? Judges 2:13.

COMMENT: Baal -- Nimrod -- and his wicked mother Semiramis were both worshipped! Ashtaroth was another name for Semiramis. In Greece she was called Venus and Astarte. In Babylon she was called Ishtar (pronounced Easter).

3. Did God bring punishment upon those who corrupted themselves in pagan worship as He had warned? Verses 14-15.

4. When they were punished did they repent of their idolatry? Verses 16-19.

COMMENT: The book of Judges is a chronicle of the repeated rebellions of ancient Israel after they entered the land of Canaan. Each time they forgot God's Law, lost sight of His Holy Days and began to worship heathen gods on pagan holidays. When they did, God chastened them by allowing them to be conquered by the Canaanites.

Kings Continued Pagan Worship

After the reign of Saul, God established the dynasty of David -- a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22). But soon after David was dead, his son Solomon forsook God's Law, and introduced pagan religions into Israel! Notice the events that led up to the division of his kingdom.

1. After the temple was finished, did God renew His covenant with Solomon? Read I Kings 9:1-9. Were the conditions of the covenant the same as before -- had God changed? Verses 4-5. Did God warn Solomon not to worship other gods -- not to pollute the land with paganism? Verses 6-7.

2. What punishment did God promise to send if Solomon adopted pagan ways? Verses 8-9.

3. Did Solomon introduce pagan worship into Israel in spite of God's warning? Read I Kings 11:1-8. Did Solomon worship Semiramis -- Easter? Verse 5. Did he also worship Nimrod -- the first despot? Verses 5 and 7.

COMMENT: Nimrod was called Milcom and Molech by the Ammonites, and Chemosh by the Moabites. The word "molech" is derived from the Hebrew word "melek," which meant "king." The heathen nations worshipped Nimrod as the "king of kings" because he was the world's first tyrant!

Ashtaroth or Semiramis was worshipped as the "queen of heaven" and as the "mother of god" (Nimrod) by the ancient pagan world.

Today a "queen of heaven" and "mother of god" is worshipped by modern Christianity. Is there any connection? Some assume she is Jesus Christ's own mother Mary, who some teach has ascended bodily into heaven. Prayers are repeated to HER! But the Bible shows Christ's mother is yet in her grave awaiting the resurrection -- just as King David is yet in his grave! (Acts 2:29, 34.) It nowhere teaches that Mary was taken up into heaven!

How clear that the ancient PAGAN "mother and child" concept has been perpetuated in the guise of "Christianity"!

4. How did God look upon Solomon's idolatry? Verses 6, 9-10. Did God warn Solomon that punishment for his sins would surely come? Verse 11. Who would reign in Solomon's place? Verses 12:13. Read also verses 26-40.

5. Was Jeroboam also offered God's blessing for obedience, and warned not to copy the customs of paganism? Verse 38. How many of the tribes of Israel would Jeroboam rule? Verse 35.

INSET ARTICLE:

"Christmas" BEFORE CHRIST!
"lo Saturnalia!" -- "Merry Christmas."

Christmas customs were celebrated in Rome long before the birth of Jesus Christ! They were called the "Saturnalia."

Toward the end of December the Romans set aside several days to celebrate the winter solstice -- when the sun reached the lowest point in the heavens, and the days were shortest. The high point of this solar festival was the Saturnalia.

Notice how the customs of Saturnalia are similar to those identified with Christmas today:

"In private the day [Saturnalia] began with the sacrifice of a young pig ... all ranks devoted themselves to feasting and

mirth, presents were interchanged among friends, and crowds thronged the streets, shouting 'lo Saturnalia!' ("Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities", 3rd edition, Vol. II, Art. "Oscilla.")

The offering was made beneath a decorated tree -- Virgil, the Roman poet, mentions a pine or evergreen.

Figurines and masks -- called "oscilla" -- were hung on the tree, as are Christmas decorations today. History admits "... there can be no doubt that we have in these 'oscilla' a relic of human sacrifice" Of all the pagan holidays, Saturnalia was the one on which a HUMAN SACRIFICE was required annually.

In the days of Imperial Rome, multitudes adopted the name of Christ and applied it to existing pagan customs. Today families decorate their "Christmas" trees with masks and figurines -- unwittingly perpetuating a memorial of the custom of Roman human sacrifice.

The practice of commemorating the winter solstice was not limited to ancient Rome. Nearly every pagan nation has observed a counterpart to modern "Christmas" customs!

Strange, isn't it, that these ancient pagan customs -- which God hates and condemns -- are carried on TODAY by the vast majority of professing "Christians"?

If you would like to know more about the pagan origin and 4,000-year history of Christmas, write for your copy of the FREE booklet, "The Plain Truth About Christmas!"

 PHOTO CAPTION: Children are confused by many impersonators of "Santa." To maintain deception, parents call them "Santa's helpers." Below, customary Yule Log dates back to rites of sun worship. As the sun's warmth waned during the long German winter, the Yule Log was lit to encourage and revive the dying sun god.

END OF INSET ARTICLE

6. When Solomon died and his son Rehoboam took the throne in Judah, did God take 10 tribes of Israel from him and give them to Jeroboam, the servant, as He had promised? Read the entire 12th chapter of I Kings.

COMMENT: The nation of Israel was divided for adopting pagan worship! Adopting the customs of the heathen makes a difference indeed! Jeroboam ruled the northern 10 tribes -- known as the House of Israel, and Rehoboam ruled only the remaining tribes of Judah, most of Levi, and Benjamin -- called the House of Judah.

Israel Institutes Pagan Holidays

Now that the 10 tribes of Israel had separated from Judah, they began to develop their own form of paganism. It was a blending of God's worship with the poison of pagan error.

1. Did Jeroboam think that in order to maintain control of the 10 tribes of Israel he must stop their worship on God's Holy Days? I Kings 12:26-27. Did he tell them it was too much trouble to go all the way to where God had placed his name, just to keep the Holy Days? Verse 28.

2. Which of God's Holy Days did Jeroboam counterfeit and corrupt with pagan customs? Verses 32-33.

COMMENT: The Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day were held in the seventh month (Lev. 23:33-39). That corresponds

to about the time between the middle of September and the middle of October.

3. When was Jeroboam's idolatrous feast held? I Kings 12:32. This eighth month corresponds to about the time between the middle of October and the middle of November.

COMMENT: The Latin word for eighth is "octo." The eighth month is called October. What worldly holiday occurs around this time today? HALLOWEEN IS celebrated at the very end of October and the beginning of November! It pictures a macabre scene of disinterment of the dead as ghosts and goblins.

Halloween is COMPLETELY PAGAN! It is nowhere commanded in God's Word. So why observe it? You will want to learn all about Halloween from our free article, "Halloween, Where Did It Come From?"

 PHOTO CAPTION: HALLOWEEN -- Children dressed up like demons and goblins, and accompanied by mothers, go from house to house on Halloween demanding treats. Halloween is also a night of destruction. Tens of thousands of dollars worth of damage is done each year by young pranksters on this "hallowed" night of religious observance.

God Versus Baal

After the division of the kingdom, the northern 10-tribe House of Israel went deeper and deeper into Baal worship. Read about it in I Kings 16:28-33.

1. How did Ahab introduce Baal worship into Samaria, the capital city of Israel? I Kings 16:31-33. Did Ahab follow the ways of Jeroboam? Verse 31. What was God's reaction to Ahab's sin? Verse 33.

2. Did God send Elijah to Ahab? I Kings 18:1-2.

3. Did Jezebel, Ahab's wife, murder God's prophets in Israel? Verse 4.

4. What did Elijah tell Ahab? Verses 17-18. Did Elijah challenge Ahab and his false ministers to a test? Verse 19.

5. What did Elijah say when the people gathered to witness the test of Baal at Mount Carmel? Verses 21-24. Did the people of Israel any longer even know which "god" IS God? Verse 21.

COMMENT: The people did not feel it was necessary to prove anything for themselves. They just sat on the sidelines and watched the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. They had probably convinced themselves it didn't make any difference which customs they observed. But by not choosing to follow God, they were automatically REBELLING against Him!

6. In the contest which followed, how did the prophets of Baal call upon their false god? Verses 25-29. Did they whip themselves into an emotional frenzy? Verse 26. Did they torture themselves with cruel penance, assuming they could force Baal to hear them? Verse 28. But could Baal answer them? Verses 26, 29.

7. While the priests of Baal were involved in their superstitious rigamarole of pagan religion, what did Elijah do? Verse 27.

COMMENT: Elijah taunted them by asking why Baal didn't answer. Was Baal out walking? Was he away from Carmel on a trip? Was Baal sleeping? Elijah used biting sarcasm.

Today God has promised to send His prophets in the spirit and power of Elijah (Mal. 4:5-6). Is it wrong for God's true

ministers to use some fitting sarcasm to show how foolish the pagan customs of the false ministers of this world are? Certainly not! One of the reasons God sends His ministers is to expose the evil of false religion in this world, so that people will know the difference and choose the good. Sometimes a barbed statement makes the point much better than it could otherwise be made.

8. Did Elijah pray fervently that God would hear him and consume his offering? I Kings 18:36.

9. Did God answer when Elijah prayed? I Kings 18:37-38. Were the people convinced? Verse 39. What did they then do with the false ministers of Baal? Verse 40.

COMMENT: Israel had a CHOICE. Elijah told them to either follow God all the way, or follow Baal. The SAME CHOICE must be made today!

What about you? Are you, in effect, worshipping Nimrod -- or Baal -- by observing his pagan holidays which God condemns? Or do YOU CHOOSE TO serve God wholeheartedly, and keep the days HE made HOLY?

10. But did Ahab and Jezebel repent? I Kings 19:1-2. What did God say of Ahab? I Kings 21:25-26.

11. Did Ahab's son, Ahaziah, continue to worship Baal when he took the throne? I Kings 22:51-53. Did he follow the sins of Jeroboam? Verse 52.

Why the Fall of Israel

Israel's idolatry continued for many years. Each succeeding king perpetuated pagan holidays for the people to observe in honor of pagan gods. Finally Israel's sins completely cut them off from God's protection, and they were carried away captive into Assyria. Read about it in II Kings 17.

1. Did Israel continue to sin against God? II Kings 17:7. Did their idolatry increase even after the time of Jeroboam? Verse 8 -- note the word "kings" is plural. See also verse 16.

2. Did Israel worship paganism openly -- or did they try to keep it secret? Verse 9. Did they carry on customs like the heathen? Verses 10-12.

3. Did God diligently send His ministers to show the people their sins, and plead with them to repent and keep His commandments and statutes? Verse 13. Remember that God's Holy Days are statutes. Did Israel repent? Verses 14-17.

4. Which tribe was left in the land? -- the House of Judah only? Verse 18. Was Judah faithful, or did the Jews also follow the pagan ways Israel had introduced? Verse 19.

5. Some of Judah's kings uprooted the worship of Baal -- Nimrod -- and restored God's law. Among them was Josiah. Had Josiah been prophesied by name to restore the true worship of God? I Kings 13:2-3. Compare with II Kings 22:1-2.

6. What did Josiah do? Read thoroughly the 23rd chapter of II Kings. Compare it with II Chronicles 34-35.

 PHOTO CAPTION: Hotcross buns are mentioned in Jeremiah 7:18. The word "cakes" is translated from the Hebrew word "kavan" and should be rendered "buns"!

COMMENT: When the pagan holidays Israel and Judah had observed were done away, Josiah re-instituted the keeping of God's Holy Days, according to God's Law.

God's Prophets Expose Paganism

1. Was Josiah able to stamp out pagan rites completely during his reign? II Chron. 34:33. Did the people also serve God during Josiah's lifetime? Same verse. Nevertheless, did God's wrath remain against Judah because of the sins of Manasseh? II Kings 23:26-27.

2. Did Josiah's sons obey God as he had done, or did they do evil? Read II Kings 23:30-37. Note verses 32 and 37. What did God say through Jeremiah about the pagan religion of the cities of Judah? Jer. 1:15-16.

3. Did He say they offered incense to Baal? Jer. 7:9-10. What was the excuse the people offered for their paganism? Verse 10.

COMMENT: The people thought they were "delivered" or permitted to worship in whatever way they pleased. They thought they were, in today's terminology, "under grace"!

4. Did the people of Judah worship the "queen of heaven" -- Semiramis? Jer. 7:17-18.

COMMENT: Even today modern Christianity continues the worship of Easter, and little "cakes," called "hot cross buns," are baked for the false "queen of heaven." The fertility symbols of this ancient pagan goddess are perpetuated today as lies told to modern children. Rabbits, known as a symbol of reproduction in all pagan religions, are said to "deliver" Easter eggs to modern boys and girls. These customs come directly from ancient paganism -- the worship of Nimrod and his mother -- to our world today. Now they are encouraged by professing "Christian" churches!

5. Did these Jews look upon this pagan feast as a happy occasion when the whole family could participate? Verse 18. But what did God say about it? Verses 19-20.

6. Did God, through Jeremiah, warn His people not to adopt the customs of the heathen? Jer. 10:1-2. Does God condone the custom of preparing "Christmas trees"? Verses 3-4. What does He say concerning the false ministers who teach these pagan customs? Verse 21.

7. God also used Isaiah to speak to His people. What did God think of Israel's pagan feasts and sacrifices? Isa. 1:13-14. Would God hear their prayers while they were worshipping on days of their own invention? Verse 15. What did He command them? Verses 16-17.

COMMENT: God refers to the pagan feasts the people invented as "your appointed feasts." In contrast He calls the Holy Days He commanded, "My Holy Days" (Isa. 58:13, Lev. 23:2).

8. Notice what Hosea says concerning Israel's feasts of Baal. Did Israel use the bountiful crops God had given her for the worship of Baal? Hos. 2:8. Did God say He would stop the revelry of Israel's pagan feast days? Verse 11. Which days were these -- God's Holy Days, or the counterfeit feast days of Nimrod? Verse 13.

COMMENT: The Revised Standard Version translates the beginning of verse 13, "And I will punish her for the FEAST DAYS of the Baals"

9. Does the prophecy of Hosea 2:16-23 apply to OUR day?

COMMENT: This prophecy is for our day and the near future -- the time God will intervene in world affairs, remove pagan names from people's lips, and bring true peace and righteousness!

The expression "in that day" (Verses 16, 18, 21) always refers to OUR day and the INTERVENTION of God in world affairs --

when Christ will return to this earth and set up God's Kingdom.

10. God inspired Ezekiel to direct prophecies specifically to the ten tribes of Israel after they were ALREADY in captivity in the land of Assyria. He foretold still another future captivity -- a captivity to come in our day! Why must God's people today suffer captivity? Do they still serve pagan gods on pagan holidays? Ezek. 8:14-18. Do people still hold sunrise services, and weep for Tammuz? Verses 14, 16.

COMMENT: Tammuz was one of Nimrod's many names. One of the festivals celebrated in Greece, where Nimrod was called Adonis, was a memorial of his fabled resurrection. Notice the testimony of Lempriere's Classical Dictionary under the article "Adonia": "Adonis was the same deity with the Syrian Tammuz, whose festival was celebrated even by the Jews, when they degenerated into idolatry (Ezek. 8:14)."

The ancient weeping for Tammuz or Nimrod is carried over today in the world's "Lenten season." Write for our free article on "Lent."

The ancient sunrise services -- when men faced the east (where the sun is when rising) and worshipped Nimrod -- are carried over today in the world's EASTER sunrise services!

11. Who does God hold responsible to teach His people the truth? Mal. 2:7. Aren't today's ministers failing to teach the law of God's Sabbath and His Holy Days? What do they teach instead -- that it is not necessary to keep God's law today? Verse 8.

12. Did Daniel prophesy of a power that would speak against God -- persecute His faithful servants -- and attempt to change times and laws? Dan. 7:25.

Christ Foretold Pagan Worship

1. Did Jesus Christ speak of false ministers deceiving many in the time of the end? Matt. 24:11. Would they be able to perform signs and wonders? Same verse.

2. Would these false ministers outwardly appear in the guise of "Christianity," but all the while actually be wolves seeking to devour God's people? Matt. 7:15.

3. Did Jesus say some would call Him "Lord," yet not enter God's Kingdom? Verse 21. Do some actually preach in Christ's name, yet work iniquity? Verses 22-23.

COMMENT: The word iniquity means "lawlessness." This doctrine of lawlessness is the same as that which Nimrod preached -- REBELLION against God's government.

4. Did God warn His people not to pollute His name by applying it to pagan worship? Ezek. 20:39, last part.

5. Who is it that has perpetuated the lies of paganism -- calling them by the name, "Christianity?" Jer 14:14. Does God promise these lying ministers will be rewarded with captivity, famine and death? Verse 15.

Paul Fights Paganism

1. The Apostle Paul constantly had to battle the inroads of false teachers who sought to unsettle the Church of God. What was he forced to say to the Thessalonians? II Thes. 2:1-2. Were some sending epistles -- letters -- that were forged with Paul's own name? Verse 2.

PHOTO CAPTION: Christmas trees are used in celebrating the birth of Christ. Yet history shows their use predates the birth of Christ by 2000 years!

2. Was a mystery system of lawlessness already at work in the time of Paul? Verse 7. Would this same system continue down to the coming of Christ? Verse 8. By whose power did this mystery system work? Verse 9.

3. Did Paul warn the Galatians about false ministers preaching a false gospel? Gal. 1:6-9. Were the Galatians in danger of slipping back into the pagan rites they had observed as unconverted Gentiles? Gal. 4:8-11. Were these same pagan days condemned by God in the Old Testament? Lev. 19:26 and Deut. 18:10-14.

COMMENT: Paul was writing to GENTILES who wanted to return to observing "days" -- Gentile days -- Easter, Christmas, Sunday, etc.

The Catholic Church "father," Chrysostom, admits that these superstitious TIMES which Paul forbids were practiced by "Christians" in his day, but WITHOUT THE IDOL'S as in days of old. He says, "Many were superstitiously addicted to the observance of TIMES, and made divination and conjectures upon them ... In celebration of these TIMES they set up lamps in the marketplace, and CROWN THEIR DOORS WITH GARLANDS." (Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, pp. 1123, 1124.)

PHOTO CAPTION: This black statue -- claimed to be Peter, the Apostle -- sits in St. Peter's Basilica, its toe nearly worn away by the lips of worshippers. In reality it is an ancient pagan statue. Personal examination reveals that the symbolic keys (Matt. 16:19) have been added at a later date.

Besides TIMES, the Greeks observed special days in honor of the dead. "The rites took place on the ... unlucky DAYS accompanied by complete idleness and cessation of business" (Webster's Rest Days, p. 79).

During the MONTHS of the year, festivals were held in honor of the Greek gods, Apollo [April, October], Zeus [February, June], Artemas [April], Bacchus [January]. (Encyclopedia Americana, article "Festival.")

Also certain YEARS were set aside quadrennially and biennially during which were national idolatrous feasts and the celebration of the Olympic and Pythian games.

4. Did Paul say these pagan days and seasons they had observed before they knew God had put them in "bondage"? Gal. 4:8-10.

5. Did Paul warn the Church of God in Colossae about false teachers? Col. 2:4, 8. Were these false ministers teaching the ways -- the rudiments and traditions -- of the world? Verse 8. Were they teaching the worship of angels? Verse 18. Did they advocate ordinances of asceticism? Verses 20-22.

6. Aren't all these false teachings to perish since they are only the commandments of men? Verse 22.

7. Were the false ministers of Colossae criticizing God's people for keeping His Holy Days? Verse 16. But didn't Paul say NO MAN should judge true Christians for keeping God's days, including the weekly Sabbath? Same verse.

COMMENT: Colossians 2:14-16 is a clear proof that Christians today should keep God's Holy Days regardless of what men might say. Men are not our Judge. God is!

Baalism "CHRISTened" by Roman Church

Let's understand who is responsible for accepting the rites and practices, the customs and traditions, the pagan holidays and festivals of Nimrod into modern Christianity.

1. Were men creeping into the true church in the time of Jude -- men who were turning the grace of God into "lasciviousness" -- license to disobey God? Jude 4.

2. Had some in Pergamos accepted the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes? Rev. 2:15. Were the false ministers of Satan organized into a church or synagogue? Verse 9. Did some in Pergamos adopt the doctrine of Balaam? Verse 14.

 PHOTO CAPTION: ST. PETER'S BASILICA -- Headquarters of this world's religious holidays.

COMMENT: The doctrine of Balaam was a doctrine of COMPROMISE with paganism. Read about it in Numbers 25. Notice there how the Israelites compromised by attending the worship service of the Midianites who worshipped Baal-Peor.

3. Did Christians of Thyatira follow this theme of compromise and allow a "woman," whose character was like that of Jezebel, to commit sin in their midst? Rev. 2:20.

4. Who is this modern Jezebel? Isn't the great false church pictured as a woman? Rev. 17:1-2, 5. Didn't Jezebel have children -- more than one? Rev. 2:23. Compare Isa. 47:8-9 with Rev. 18:7-8. These are daughter churches who came out of Rome PROTESTING, but still have the character of their mother!

5. Was it not the Roman Catholic Church which compromised with the paganism of the old world and adopted it as "Christian?" Read the answer in the comment below.

COMMENT: Notice the testimony of Walter Johnson, British archeologist: "... by the edict of Theodosius (A.D. 392), pagan shrines were to be dedicated as Christian churches. Later, the edict of Honorius (A.D. 408) definitely forbade the demolition of heathen temples" Johnson continues, "Again, pagan festivals were converted into Christian holy days [holidays]. The yuletide merrymakings in honor of Thor -- revels which have also been connected by some writers equally with the gods Adonis, Dionysus, and Mithra -- became the festival celebration of the birth of Christ Thus, by the retention of holy oaks, of idolatrous feasts, of pagan symbols and ceremonies, of the heathen names for the days of the week, the new religion gained entrance."

Johnson concludes: "Christian and pagan ideas were blended. Following ... the only practical method -- that of peaceful permeation -- the church often retained the forms of heathen ceremonies, while actually investing these with new meanings" ("Byways In British Archaeology", by Walter Johnson, pages 25, 27).

6. Were these adopted pagan holidays and ceremonies passed on to the "protesting" daughters of the Roman Church -- the Protestant Churches? See comment for the answer.

COMMENT: Webster, in "Rest Days", p. 306 writes, "... the feast of All Souls in November is a continuation of an old

heathen feast of the dead; and that the Nativity of Christ himself was assigned to the winter solstice in December because that day was deemed the Nativity of the Sun Many of the holy days in the religious calendar of Christendom were BORROWED, as is well known, FROM THE FESTIVALS OF ancient PAGANISM."

The holidays of this world are inseparably linked to the worship of Nimrod -- and Nimrod worship to SUNDAY OBSERVANCE. And all have been inspired by Satan the Devil!

All these doctrines are espoused and promulgated by the Roman Catholic Church and her "protestant" daughter churches!

God plainly shows that anyone who accepts and observes these pagan holidays has linked himself to Satan's Babylonish system, and has accepted its "MARK"!

Punishment for Compromise!

1. What does God say will befall those who follow the way of Babylon and worship according to this ancient pagan mystery system? Rev. 18:1-8.

2. Who is her Judge? Verse 8. Will she receive double punishment for her iniquities -- the doctrines of lawlessness -- she has committed? Verses 5-6.

3. What is God's command to those who have not yet forsaken her pagan ways? Verse 4.

4. Will the apostles who fought her pernicious lies and the prophets who lamented her wicked sins, rejoice when this mother of paganism is destroyed? Verse 20.

What About You?

Will you be a partaker of God's plagues upon modern Babylon? (Rev. 18:4.) Are you still partaking of her sins -- compromising by keeping this world's holidays?

The factual material from ancient and modern history, from archaeology and from the Bible, all prove that the VERY SAME PAGAN RITES WORSHIPPED BY THIS WORLD ARE THOSE WHICH HAVE BEEN PERPETUATED SINCE THE TIME OF NIMROD!

The churches of this world shamelessly admit they have adopted pagan days -- and God Almighty CONDEMNS their rites and customs in His Holy Word.

Does it make a difference? Does it really matter what days you observe? It certainly does!

It makes ALL the difference in the world -- to GOD! And He is the one who will JUDGE us and reward us according to our "works"!

What about it? What about you? What days are you going to observe, and keep? What CHOICE will you make?

God has put the decision to you, just as He did to Israel in the days of Elijah. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him" (I Kings 18:21). The answer is up to you!