

Is New Year's Day Pagan?

Written by Brett Gray

In our recent examination of Christmas, we saw that the holiday began as a church attempt to sanitize the devil worship of the heathens, and that nearly every modern Christmas tradition stems from the pagan celebrations of Saturnalia and Yule. The modern face of Christmas, Santa Claus, is a repackaging of false gods such as Odin, Saturn, and Kronos — nothing less than Satan the Devil in disguise.

So what about New Year's Day, eight days after Christmas? New Year's Day is just the first day of a new year, right? How could there be anything wrong with that?

You may recall that Christmas embraces the whole “Christmas season,” and that it often encompasses 12 days from December 25th to January 6th. New Year's Day is not only part of the Christmas season but, like Christmas itself, is steeped in paganism.

A common theme around New Year's Day is “Father Time” holding an hourglass, a sickle, and the baby new year, as you can see in the two illustrations on this page and the following. Father Time, as we saw last time, is the Greek god Kronos, who castrated his father and ate his own children. The Greek Kronos paralleled the Roman Saturn, the Carthaginian Baal Hammon, and the Canaanite Molech.

To the Greeks and Romans, Kronos/Father Time holding the baby new year, as if about to devour it, too, represented time devouring all things. Famed Roman writer and statesman Cicero philosophized, “The Latin designation 'Saturn' on the other hand is due to the fact that he is 'saturated' or 'satiated with years' (*anni*); the fable is that he was in the habit of devouring his sons — meaning that Time devours the ages and gorges himself insatiably with the years that are past” (*De Natura Deorum*, 2:24).



New Year's Day also continues the heathen tradition of holding festivals of light during the short days and long nights around the winter solstice. Nearly everyone's home is still lit up with Christmas lights, and the new year itself is ushered in with fireworks lighting up the night sky.

In a throwback to the drunken revelry of the ancients at their winter solstice festivals, New Year's represents the biggest drinking holiday of the whole year. In the United States, drunk driving on New Year's Eve causes far more car accidents than on perhaps any other night.

Like so many other pagan winter holidays, New Year's commonly includes gift-giving, though less so than in past centuries. In the 7th century AD, a missionary named Eligius, attempting to proselytize the early Dutch heathens, urged them to stop making figures of "little deer," leaving out food at night for the elves or spirits, exchanging New Year's gifts, and getting drunk. He added, "Nothing is ominous... about the Calends [first day] of January."¹



Many New Year's Eve traditions, in fact, originate from pagan superstitions, for heathens the world over are superstitious and fearful. As God inspired King Solomon to write in Prov. 28:1, "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." And in Jer. 10:2-3, we find, "Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile."

To the pagans, evil spirits lurk in the darkness and shadows of night, so the dark days of winter, of course, also bring danger. Thus, according to pagan tradition, many people hold a night vigil for the new year and spend time with their loved ones or kiss them. Since at least the 1700s, many churches have joined in this tradition, holding "watchnight services" on New Year's Eve until midnight or well past midnight.

Many also bang on drums and make loud noises to frighten away evil spirits. Fireworks double as light and noisemakers. Others engage in many foolish traditions to bring "good luck" for the new year, such as jumping off of chairs, hopping on one foot, dropping whipped cream on the floor, or wearing colored underwear!

Some may point out, rightly, that the Bible itself uses darkness as a type of sin, but the dark itself is not something to fear. King David wrote that God's presence is with us just as much at night as at any other time: "If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You" (Psa. 139:11-12).

¹ Ouen of Rouen, *The Life of Saint Eligius*, Book II, Section 16. Accessed 12/29/2022 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20090820234709/http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/sto09001.htm>

So what about the date? Why does the new year today start on January 1st?

It may come as a surprise to many, as it did to me also, that Great Britain and the British colonies recognized March 25th as the start of the new year until 1752. Only then was New Year's Day changed to January 1st.²

Before the change, the English-speaking peoples were closer to the truth, for God's calendar, of course, starts in the spring. In Ex. 12:2, God instructed Moses concerning the month for Passover, in the spring, "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you." The Bible reiterates this over and over, as God continually tells us that Abib or Nisan is the first month of the year.

As a side note, just as many businesses today have a fiscal year apart from the civil year, God also established a fiscal or agricultural year that began in the 7th month. He instructed His people to count the Jubilees and Sabbatical years from this date, as we read in Lev. 25:9-10: "Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants."

Much more could be written about the civil year and the fiscal year on God's calendar, but that's a topic for another time. Suffice to say, the winter new year is found nowhere in the Bible! It's an invention of the pagans.

By the time of Julius Caesar, several decades before Christ's birth, the Romans had changed their New Year's Day from March 1st to January 1st, close to the winter solstice.

Accordingly, the Julian calendar preserved January 1st as the day of the new year, a day which the Romans celebrated by giving gifts, decorating their homes with laurels, and offering sacrifices to their gods, especially Janus, the deity for which January is named.

Not only is the day not the true new year, but days also don't begin or end at midnight. God begins and ends days at sunset, not midnight. This has been covered in an earlier post. Starting and ending days at midnight is a manmade tradition, not a Godly one.

Yes folks, the New Year celebrations are pagan! God neither begins years on January 1st, nor days at midnight. The depictions of "Father Time," the lights, the drunkenness, the midnight vigils, and all the other pagan superstitions of the day mark it as an invention of paganism, not of God.

² "Calendar (New Style) Act 1750." Accessed 12/30/2022 at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/apgb/Geo2/24/23/1991-02-01?timeline=false>

Of course, we live in an ungodly world and have little choice but to use the Roman calendar, with the pagan names of the months, in everyday life. But that's certainly no cause for celebration! We do not have to celebrate the heathen holidays, nor should we.

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