

‘So, you think you know Christmas?’

A Christmas Quiz

Prepared & presented by Thomas J. Short to the Elkhart East Christian Church on 11 December 2011.

1. Using the term “Xmas” takes “Christ” out of Christmas.
 True False
2. The shepherds of Bethlehem followed the star to the manger.
 True False
3. December 25th was a pagan holiday called Saturnalia, held in honor of the winter re-“birth” of the Roman Sun-god, but was changed by Emperor Constantine into the birthday of Jesus.
 True False
4. Jeremiah 10:3-4 prophetically condemns Christmas trees:
"For the customs of the peoples are delusion; because it is wood cut from the forest, the work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. They decorate it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers so that it will not totter."
 True False
5. The practice of putting up Christmas trees comes to us from the ancient Druids.
 True False
6. The Magi followed the star from Mesopotamia to the manger.
 True False
7. Santa Claus has nothing to do with the real Christmas story.
 True False
8. Christmas was fully embraced by the Protestant revolution.
 True False
9. George Washington totally ignored Christmas.
 True False
10. Jesus of Nazareth’s name tells the story of his mission..
 True False

ANSWERS TO THE CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1. FALSE.

That's not the English letter X in "Xmas", but rather the Greek letter X (CHI, pronounced like "Key"). It is the first letter in the Greek title translated into English as "Christ" and was the commonly used & understood abbreviation for "Christ" right up until the last century.

2. FALSE.

There was no star the night of Jesus' birth. Luke 2 says that the shepherds were able to find Jesus by looking for a newborn baby in a manger.

3. FALSE.

First of all, the Roman celebration of Saturnalia was celebrated 17-23 December, NEVER the 25th.

Second, the 25th of Pachon (the 9th month of the ancient Coptic calendar) had already been identified by Egyptian Christians as the probable date of his birth. In the year Jesus was probably born, that date would have fallen around the second half of May. Clement of Alexandria cites this fact around AD 200, roughly a century before Emperor Constantine granted Christianity a legal status in the Roman Empire.

The Egyptian date was probably first confused with 9th month of the spring-time Jewish calendar, making the date the same as Hanukkah (9*25). From there it could have been quite easily shifted over to the matching month of the Roman calendar – December.

4. FALSE.

The context of the Jeremiah passage is clearly about the construction of idols.

5. FALSE.

Druids were all about oak trees, not evergreens. The Christmas tree actually had its origins with German Protestants during the early 1500's. The tree was brought indoors & decorated with candles and edible treats for the children to enjoy in connection with Christmas celebrations. It was an object lesson of how the birth of Jesus & His subsequent atonement brought joyful life into a sin-dead world – just like an evergreen is alive in the midst of winter. The first verses of the German carol, "O Tannebaum," which specifically mentions the Christmas tree, were written around 1550.

6. FALSE.

According to Matthew 2, after seeing the star in Mesopotamia, the Magi went to Jerusalem, where they assumed the King of the Jews would be born. They were, no doubt, responding to the prophecies of Daniel 9:24ff, which indicated the approximate timing for the Messiah's arrival & of Numbers 24:17, which indicated that the king's advent would be signaled by a star. It was at Jerusalem that they learned (from the priests' citation of Micah 5:2) that he would be born in Bethlehem. They subsequently followed the star to the very house – not the manger - where Jesus was located.

7. FALSE.

The true story of Santa Claus began in the late 200's/early 300's in SW Turkey with a young, wealthy orphan boy named Nicolas. He was a Christian with a kind heart, who gave anonymous gifts to poor people. He eventually became a minister & then a leader of ministers. After his death, people emulated his anonymous giving (especially to kids) & attributed the giving of the gifts to "Saint Nicolas," which was slurred into English as "Santa Claus." Beginning in the late 1700's/early 1800's, the Christian roots of "Santa Claus" began to be erased.

8. FALSE.

The Puritans of England didn't particularly like Christmas. They considered it a Roman Catholic festival & questioned it as the authentic date of Jesus' birth. They also objected to the drunken practice of Christmas wassailing. During Oliver Cromwell's time of Lord Protector of England (1653-1660) Christmas was actually outlawed. The Puritans of New England had a similar attitude toward Christmas.

"For preventing disorders, arising in several places within this jurisdiction by reason of some still observing such festivals as were superstitiously kept in other communities, to the great dishonor of God and offense of others: it is therefore ordered by this court and the authority thereof that whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas or the like, either by forbearing of labor, feasting, or any other way, upon any such account as aforesaid, every such person so offending shall pay for every such offence five shilling as a fine to the county." *From the records of the General Court, Massachusetts Bay Colony May 11, 1659*

"The generality of Christmas-keepers observe that festival after such a manner as is highly dishonourable to the name of Christ. How few are there comparatively that spend those holidays (as they are called) after an holy manner. But they are consumed in Compotations, in Interludes, in playing at Cards, in Revellings, in excess of Wine, in mad Mirth ..." *Reverend Increase Mather, 1687*

9. FALSE.

George Washington was not a Puritan. Like most of the Protestants of the English colonies, he celebrated Christmas with evergreen wreath making on Christmas Eve; this wreath was then hung amidst general merriment on Christmas day; there followed traditional observances throughout the "Twelve Nights/Days of Christmas," right up to the Feast of Epiphany – the traditional date for the arrival of the Magi – on 6 January. If anything, George Washington went overboard with Christmas. He married his wife Martha on the Feast of Epiphany in 1759; and even though it was traditional back then to give simple presents to children during the Christmas season, his 1759 Christmas list of gifts for his 5-year old step-son & 3-year old step-daughter was quite extravagant.

A bird on a Bellows	A Grocers Shop	A Man Smoakg (sic)	A Neat Book fash Tea Chest
A Cuckoo	An Aviary	A Tunbridge Tea Sett (sic)	A box best Household Stuff
A turnabout Parrot	A Prussian Dragoon	3 Neat Tunbridge Toys	A straw Patch box w. a Glass
			A neat dress'd Wax Baby

10. TRUE.

Both Mary (Luke 1:31) & Joseph (Matthew 1:21) were told to name him "Jesus" – Yeshua (commonly spelled "Joshua"), which in Hebrew means, "Yah's Salvation" – since He would save us from our sins.

Matthew, in 2:23, also makes a big deal out of the fact that Jesus grew up in "Nazareth" ("Branches") & was therefore called a "Nazarene" ("Branch"). This is play on words since the Hebrew word NZR ("branch") is used in Isaiah 11 in predicating that a new king would arise like a "branch" out of the cut off stump of David's kingdom. Jesus is that Messianic "Branch" from the Galilean town of "Branches."