

## The Surprising Origin of the Custom of Celebrating Birthdays!

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Where did the universal custom of celebrating the day of one's birth originate? What about birthday parties, cakes, and candles? What does the Bible say about celebrating the day of one's birth? You might be shocked at the answer!

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[http://www.triumphpro.com:80/birthdays\\_origin.htm](http://www.triumphpro.com:80/birthdays_origin.htm)

Almost everybody, today, celebrates birthdays. Around the world, friends and relatives hold birthday parties, give gifts to the one being honored, and wish "Happy birthday!" to the one whose birthday is being celebrated. But why?

Where did this universal custom originate? Do you know the answer?

Though you look in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, you will find no mention anywhere of any of the saints of God observing their birthdays. In fact, strange as it may seem to many, even the exact date of the birth of Jesus Christ is NOWHERE REVEALED in Scripture! The universal custom of observing "Christmas" as the birth of Christ, on December 25th, is acknowledged by all the historical authorities as having no basis in actual fact. Jesus Christ was born nowhere near December 25th, in the dead of winter.

If the very day of Jesus' birth is deliberately left out of the Bible, doesn't that fact tell us something? If birthdays should be celebrated, why did God leave the date of His own Son's birth out of Holy Scripture?

The plain truth is that birth day celebrations are only mentioned twice in the Scriptures -- both times in reference to customs being observed by unconverted people -- a pagan Egyptian Pharaoh, and wicked king Herod!

Notice what happened on these two instances of "birth day celebrations" recorded in the Word of God.

**Pharaoh of Egypt**

In Genesis we read: "And it came to pass the third day, which was PHARAOH'S BIRTHDAY, that he made a feast (party) unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: but he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them" (Genesis 40:20-22).

Notice! This was a birthday party, nothing less! It was being observed by a pagan Egyptian Pharaoh -- not a man of God. This is the only example of a clear cut birthday celebration in all the Old Testament -- and it was being observed by a PAGAN KING!

### ***The Origin of Birthdays***

This fact, however, should not be overly surprising. Writes Linda Rannells Lewis in *Birthdays*, "Birthdays have been celebrated for thousands of years. In early civilizations, where the development of a calendar made an organized reckoning of birth dates possible, the *horoscopes of ruling monarchs*, their successors and rivals had to be cast with care and *birthday omens* meticulously examined, for the prospects of the mighty would affect the prospects of the entire society. By the time of *Ptolemy V* this practice was well established: 'Ptolemy, the ever living, the beloved of Ptah, the son of the two Brother-Gods, was born on the fifth day of the month DIOS, and this day was, in consequence, the beginning of great prosperity and happiness of all living men and women" (p. 12).

Ptolemy V was an ancient Egyptian king. It was common in his day for kings and rulers to have their horoscopes made by astrologers and their birthdays were considered very important omens of the future.

The false science of astrology, of course, makes a great deal out of the positions of the sun, moon and stars at the moment or day of one's birth. Astrology teaches that the position of the sun, moon and stars at the moment of one's birth determines their future destiny, their character, their personality, talents, health, and so forth. They cast "horoscopes," or "birth charts," to understand the supposed significance of a person's birthday.

Astrology, as the Word of God plainly shows, is a pagan, false religious deception -- a fraud and a mythological pseudo-science.

God Almighty says to the "daughter of Babylon" (Isa. 47:1), the great pagan religious deception which has engulfed the world, "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the ASTROLOGERS, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as STUBBLE; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame..." (Isaiah 47:13-14).

Writes Lewis, in *Birthdays*, "Birthday celebrations, even at this early stage, were not strictly reserved for the great rulers. Society adapts for its communal use those practices of the elite which it admires and can afford. In the fifth century before Christ, the Greek historian Herodotus, describing the festivals of the Persians, wrote: 'IT IS THEIR CUSTOM TO HONOR THEIR BIRTHDAY ABOVE ALL OTHER DAYS: and on this day they furnish their table in a more plentiful manner than at other times. The rich then produce an ox, a horse, a camel, and an ass, roasted whole in an oven; but the poor produce smaller cattle.'

Lewis continues, "In Egypt households of the same period birthdays were celebrated similarly. A part of the family budget was set aside to buy birthday garlands and animals for sacrifice, just as we might plan to spend a certain sum for balloons, party hats, and an ice cream cake" (pages 12-13).

This author goes on, "Among prosperous Greek families a birth feast, a coming-of-age feast, and feasts after death held on the anniversary of the day of birth were observed, but otherwise there were no annual birthday ceremonials. The birthdays of the immortals were ritually acknowledged once a month, however, the third day of each month being sacred to Athena, Ares, and Saturn, for instance" (*ibid.*).

The emperors of Rome often went to extreme in their own birthday celebrations. When the first birthday of Drusilla, the daughter of Caligula, approached, the emperor arranged a party suitable for the infant daughter of a "god" (himself). To celebrate her birthday, two days of horse racing were held, and a ritual slaughter of 300 bears, and 500 various beasts from Libya, in the amphitheater of Taurus, was held.

### ***The Command of God***

What does Almighty God say to His people about celebrating such days in honor of one's own self, and one's own individual ego?

We have already seen the proof that these celebrations were distinctly pagan in origin. But does it make any difference whether we observe birthdays or not?

God inspired the prophet Jeremiah to write, "Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the Lord, LEARN NOT THE WAY OF THE HEATHEN, and be not dismayed at the signs of the heaven (astrology!); for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE ARE VAIN..." (Jeremiah 10:1-3).

God expressly commands His people not to follow in the ways, customs, and practices of the heathen, pagan nations around them!

Obviously, therefore, the Word of God does NOT sanction or approve of celebrating BIRTHDAYS!

God is even more explicit. Celebrating birthdays was a particularly Egyptian custom. God plainly commands His people, "After the DOING OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, wherein ye dwelt, SHALL YE NOT DO: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances" (Leviticus 18:3).

God goes on, in this same chapter, after listing more of the evil practices of the heathen, "DEFILE YE NOT YOURSELVES IN ANY OF THESE THINGS: for in all these the nations are defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself VOMITETH out her inhabitants."

"Ye shall therefore keep MY statutes and MY judgments" -- which did NOT include birthday celebrations! -- "and shall NOT COMMIT ANY OF THESE ABOMINATIONS; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (For all these ABOMINATIONS have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you" (Leviticus 18:24-28).

Does this sound strong?

Almighty God does not sanction, approve or endorse ANY of the pagan customs of the nations of the world! They are an ABOMINATION to Him!

God feels very strong about this matter. He continues, "For WHOSOEVER SHALL COMMIT ANY OF THESE ABOMINATIONS, even the souls that commit them shall be CUT OFF from among their people. Therefore shall ye keep MINE ordinance, that ye commit not *any one of these ABOMINABLE CUSTOMS*, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 18:29-30).

Those who observed the customs of the pagans, including celebrating birthdays, as the pagans did, and the Egyptians did, were to be "CUT OFF" from among God's people -- exiled from the nation, or put to death.

Most of the customs God mentioned in Leviticus 18 were abominable sexual practices common among the heathen, and common in the world around us, today. But verse 3 of this chapter, where God specifically says we are not to do "after the doings of the land of EGYPT," clearly shows that the celebrations of BIRTHDAYS, so common in Egypt, was among the prohibitions of Almighty God!

Let us fear God and KEEP His commandments!

### ***What About New Testament Times?***

Even as there is only one example of birthday celebrations in the Old Testament, so the New Testament also gives us only one such example -- that of the wicked, apostate king Herod, one of the worst butchers who ever lived.

Herod was notorious for his wickedness. He was a complete pagan at heart. Notice! He celebrated his own birthday, and see what happened!

"But when Herod's BIRTHDAY WAS KEPT, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod." The entertainment at his birthday party included a very erotic, sensual dance, very likely a strip tease dance similar to the so-called "dance of the seven veils." At any rate, Herod was transfixed by the gyrations and movements of the lithe young female dancer, his "wife's" daughter.

"Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John the Baptist's head in a charger."

"And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus" (Matthew 14:6-12).

Here again, at a pagan birthday party, somebody was killed -- this time a tremendous servant of the true God!

Should Christians celebrate birthdays? Obviously, the answer from the Word of God is a resounding NO! Birthdays are an abomination in the sight of God. They are not among the Biblical customs that should be observed among the true people of God.

If birthdays should be observed, then why is the Bible silent on the date of the birth of every single servant of God, including Abraham, Noah, Moses, Samuel, David, the apostles, and most important of all, Jesus Christ Himself?

In God's sight, the actual time and day of a person's birth are completely unimportant. In fact, in God's sight, as Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes, "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the *day of death than the day of one's birth*" (Ecclesiastes 7:1).

It is interesting how many people actually become depressed when their birthday arrives. It reminds them of how much older they are getting! The merry-making and party spirit are so fragile, false, and short-lived. It is all a facade to cover up a person's intense personal loneliness and depression. Birthdays are part of Satan the devil's attempt to destroy mankind by causing them to be self-centered, self-conscious, and filled with self-interest and self-congratulations.

It is all self, self, self!

### ***The Early Church***

The day of one's birth is totally unimportant. The early Church of God understood this fact. Lewis writes in *Birthdays*, "...when the Christian church sought to substitute the authority of a religious hierarchy for the hegemony of the individual ego, BIRTHDAYS BECOME UNWELCOME REMINDERS OF PAGAN EXCESS and the degradation assumed in Adam's heritage. Celebrating the self was bad" (p.14).

Origen of Alexandria, in 245 A.D., wrote in a dissertation on Leviticus:

"... none of the saints can be found who ever held a feast or a banquet upon his birthday, or rejoiced on the day when his son or daughter was born. But sinners rejoice and make merry on such days. For we find in the Old Testament that Pharaoh, king of Egypt, celebrated his birthday with a feast, and that Herod, in the New Testament did the same. But the saints not only neglect to mark the day of their birth with festivity, but also, filled with the Holy Spirit, they curse this day, after the example of Job and Jeremiah and David.

For the true Christian, this life is a life of struggle and overcoming. The flesh is weak and prone to sin and lust. The carnal human mind is enmity against God (Romans 8:7). We must learn to throttle, subjugate, and subdue the pulls of the flesh, by the power of God's Spirit (Romans 7:1-25; 8:1-14).

Therefore, we do not celebrate the day we put on this fleshly tabernacle, but rather the day when we will put it off, and be clothed upon with a NEW BODY, pure and perfect, from heaven (Romans 8:22-23). In the meantime "we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (verse 23).

### ***The Christian Attitude***

For the true Christian, this life is a life of trials and tests. As David wrote, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psalms 34:19).

The apostle Paul wrote, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

"For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (II Cor.4:8-11).

For Christians, this present mortal life is not an end in itself. Our hope is for the coming of Christ, and the resurrection!

Because we suffer greatly and often, in the flesh, we do not glory in the flesh, or in the day of our fleshly birth. It is of no consequence. But we look to the future, not to the past, and to the Kingdom of God!

As Paul wrote, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen (the physical around us), but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:16-18).

This present physical life, therefore, is nothing to rejoice about, or to focus our hopes and aspirations on. It is nothing to celebrate!

Paul wrote, in the very next chapter of II Corinthians, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For in this we GROAN, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is FROM HEAVEN. . . For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being BURDENED: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of LIFE" (II Cor. 5:1-4).

As Paul wrote in I Corinthians, "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (I Cor. 15:13-14).

Paul felt so strongly about this fact, that he declared, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men MOST MISERABLE" (verse 19). But our hope is not for this life! Paul went on, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (v. 20).

This entire chapter shows us that the true hope of the Christian is the resurrection of the dead, when we shall all "be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be CHANGED. For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:51-52).

That is the day we will celebrate -- not our physical birthdays, when we were literally born into a lifetime of struggle, trials, suffering, death, misery, and privation, persecution, strife, and pain. Not at all! We look forward to and celebrate the second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead saints which will occur at His coming!

As Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but LOSS for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but DUNG, that I may win Christ...That I may know him, and the POWER of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings,

being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:8, 10-11).

This was Paul's one ambition, one driving desire, in life. He declared, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, *FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND* (such as birthdays!), and *REACHING FORTH* unto those things which are *before*, *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:13-14).

This present life is as nothing. It is full of pain and suffering. If we follow Christ, then we will suffer as He suffered, leaving us an example (I Peter 4:13; 2:21). But the end result -- the eternal reward ahead of us -- makes it all worthwhile!

During this life we experience the "fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. 3:11). We are one with Him in suffering, that we might become one with Him in glory and eternal life!

Paul wrote, "Who shall *CHANGE OUR VILE BODY*, that it might be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:21).

How much greater this is, than celebrating our birthdays of this fragile, temporary, transitory, weak, clay, human existence!

### ***Avoid Pagan Birthdays***

The *World Book -- Childcraft International* says regarding "Holidays and Birthdays," "For thousands of years people all over the world have thought of a birthday as a very special day. Long ago, people believed that on a birthday a person could be helped by good spirits, or hurt by evil spirits. So, when a person had a birthday, friends and relatives gathered to protect him or her. And that's how birthday parties began."

"The idea of putting candles on birthday cakes goes back to ancient Greece. The Greeks worshipped many gods and goddesses. Among them was one called Artemis."

"Artemis was the goddess of the moon. The Greeks celebrated her birthday once each month by bringing special cakes to her temple. The cakes were round like a full moon. And, because the moon glows with light, the cakes were decorated with lighted candles."

This authority goes on: "More and more, though, people the world over attach a certain magic to their actual date of birth...We may wear a ring with our birthstone in it for good luck. And when we blow out the candles on our birthday cake, we are careful to keep what we wished a secret. If we tell, of course, our wish won't come true."

"In other words, *WE FOLLOW MANY OF THE OLD BIRTHDAY BELIEFS*. We pay attention to the meanings of old-time birth symbols. And *WE CARRY ON THE OLD CELEBRATIONS*. We don't necessarily take them seriously. We do these things mainly for fun. But it is also possible that there is something deep inside us that wants to believe."

Why do people say, "Happy birthday!" to each other? Says this authority, "For the good wishes of our friends and relatives are supposed to protect us from evil spirits."

What about birthday thumps, bumps, pinches, and the like?

"In many parts of the world, it is a tradition to give the birthday child pinches, smacks, spanks, thumps, bumps, or punches. Even though they may hurt a little, they are said to be very lucky..."

"The reason for birthday spanks is to spank away any evil spirits and send them scurrying far into the distance. Punches, thumps, and pinches, the harder the better, are supposed to do the very same thing. . . "

"Party snappers, horns, bursting balloons, firecrackers, and other noisemakers are just one more way of trying to scare off any bad-luck spirits that may be hovering about."

What about traditional birthday games, such as "Pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey"?

"The games we play at birthday parties are often a symbol of trying to know the unknown. In this case, of course, the unknown is the future, or the new year of life that lies ahead for the birthday child."

"One of the oldest birthday games is Pin-the-Tail-on-the-Donkey. A large picture of a donkey without a tail is pinned to the wall. Each child at the party is given a donkey's tail made out of paper and a pin to stick through it. Then, one by one, the children are blindfolded. They are spun around a few times and pointed in the general direction of the donkey. The child who pins the tail the closest to where it should be on the donkey wins the prize."

"There are other versions of this game, such as Pin-the-Nose-on-the-Clown or Pin-the-Ear-on-the-Bunny. But the idea of trying to guess correctly, while blindfolded, is the same."

All these customs and traditions connected with the observance of birthdays have to do with guessing the future, good wishes for the future, good luck charms against evil spirits, and the like. All the birthday rituals, games, and ceremonies are a form of well-wishing toward the birthday child, which are supposed to work their magic in the year ahead.

But, as we have seen, the custom is totally PAGAN! God condemns it in His Word as "vain" (Jeremiah 10:3), a custom we are commanded not to "learn" (Jeremiah 10:2). The ceremonies have to do with warding off evil spirits and protecting the birthday child -- nothing but useless pagan SUPERSTITION!

Should a Christian have anything to do with ceremonies that trace back to pagan times, and pagan rituals? Should a true Christian indulge himself or his or her children in pagan birthday parties, just because they *seem* so attractive, fun, and "innocent"?

The Word of God thunders, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial (the Devil)? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with IDOLS? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

"Wherefore COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, and BE YE SEPARATE, saith the Lord, and *touch not the UNCLEAN THING*; and I will receive you, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

Let's face it. In God's sight, birthday parties and celebrations are "unclean" things -- abhorrent pagan practices of peoples who know not the true God, or His purpose in our lives. We should, as Christians, have nothing whatsoever to do with them!

May God help you to grasp, understand, and to OBEY His truth!

Every compromise with paganism leads to sin. Every time we reject the Word of God, we cut ourselves off from Him and His promises.

Let us not reject this precious knowledge from God. God warns, "My people are DESTROYED for lack of knowledge. Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I also will reject thee...seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

"As they increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity."

"And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will PUNISH them for their ways, and reward them their doings" (Hosea 4:6-9).

God considers observing pagan practices and celebrations as nothing less than spiritual whoredom and adultery!

God Almighty declares, "For they shall eat, and not have enough: They shall commit WHOREDOM, and shall not increase: because they have LEFT OFF TO TAKE HEED OF THE LORD."

"Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart. My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredom hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God" (verses 10-12).

The "sacrifices," and "incense," gifts, and feastings, at birthday parties, is nothing more than ancient paganism dressed up in modern garb and the spirit of whoredom, leading people away from the ways and laws of the true God and His Word.

This whole matter involves the SPIRIT OF WHOREDOM -- going the way of the heathen, pagan nations, and their rites and rituals, as opposed to the ways of God as they are clearly set forth in the Scriptures. Birthday celebrations are clearly pagan in origin, tone, attitude toward the individual, in their emphasis on the "self," and all the various superstitions that are connected with them.

God wants us to worship HIM "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

God commands, through Elijah His prophet: "HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Whom will you follow?

Whom will you serve?

Whose customs and traditions and celebrations will you observe and keep?

God says, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward (bribes): He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widows, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment..."

"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name" (Deuteronomy 10:16-20)."

God says, "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land..."

"But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish..."

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore CHOOSE LIFE, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest CLEAVE UNTO HIM: for *he is thy life*, and the length of thy days" (Deuteronomy 30:15-20).

The choice is crystal clear. And the right choice is obvious. What choice are you going to make?

This is not just a simple, little, unimportant, trivial matter in the sight of God. It is a matter of your whole destiny, life, and fate.

Birthday celebrations are not just "kid's stuff," something we can excuse as innocent and unimportant -- just "fun and games." The whole matter of birthdays is much more devious and sinister than that. Truly, Satan has *deceived the whole world*, especially in the observance of birthdays (Revelation 12:9).

What are you going to do about it?