

## Christmas through the Ages

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Christmas is one of the most important holidays of the year in many parts of the world. It traditionally celebrates Jesus Christ's birth more than 2,000 years ago. But there is a stronger \_\_\_\_\_, or non-religious, tradition too. For example, family and friends often exchange Christmas cards and gifts. Christmas trees, lights, and Santa are also big parts of the holiday. In fact, through the years, many other customs and cultures have added to the list of traditions that we now \_\_\_\_\_ with the Christmas holiday. Christmas most likely \_\_\_\_\_ from two much older holidays in the Roman \_\_\_\_\_. One of the holidays was called Saturnalia, which celebrated the god Saturn. The other holiday was the Roman New Year. Many of the modern-day traditions come from these festivals, such as giving gifts, merry making, lights, \_\_\_\_\_, ivy, and charity. The first connection with Jesus, however, comes in the fourth century as a way to promote Christianity in the Roman \_\_\_\_\_. Early Christians usually celebrated the birth of Christ with another religious celebration called the Epiphany, which was much less festive. But it wasn't until the 11th century that Christmas began to grow in \_\_\_\_\_. Several kings

of England were crowned on this day, and great feasts were regularly held.

Although it was

a \_\_\_\_\_ day, people \_\_\_\_\_ drank, danced, and gambled to the point of \_\_\_\_\_.

Perhaps these were holdovers from the older traditions of Rome's Saturnalia, which focused on a

week of eating, drinking, and \_\_\_\_\_. People in the middle ages exchanged gifts too.

However, it wasn't family and friends who exchanged gifts, but instead people with legal relationships.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Christmas celebrations in America and England almost died

out. In America, some \_\_\_\_\_ groups viewed the traditions as \_\_\_\_\_.

The holiday was

made illegal in Boston, for example. In addition, many people connected Christmas with the

English, and anti-English \_\_\_\_\_ just before and in the years following the \_\_\_\_\_

War was strong. Many Americans chose not to celebrate the holiday. In England, the

holiday became just an \_\_\_\_\_ to behave immorally, which was far different from the \_\_\_\_\_

celebrations of Jesus's birth.

In the 19th century, though, Christmas \_\_\_\_\_ much of the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that we see

today. Several writers wrote stories of ideal Christmases that focused on \_\_\_\_\_, family,

and goodwill. In England, A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens played a major role in

\_\_\_\_\_ and reinventing the holiday. In the US, the writers Washington Irving and Clement

Moore Clark published stories that were quite \_\_\_\_\_ too.

Christmas today has mostly become a \_\_\_\_\_ holiday. Although many people go to church

to celebrate Jesus's \_\_\_\_\_, many more people prefer to set up a

Christmas tree, exchange  
gifts with family and friends, watch holiday programs on TV,  
and eat a roast ham or turkey dinner. In fact, what first  
comes to mind is based on traditions through the ages,  
\_\_\_\_\_ trees, presents, and such.