

CHRISTMAS TREES

The Christmas tree has been a part of Christmas for hundreds of years. But what is its origin? Why are they used in observance of the birth of the Messiah? Is there anything in the Bible about their use? In this brief overview we will attempt to answer these questions. For a detailed study of this subject contact the office.

What is its origin?

The earliest origin of the "Christmas tree" comes from the fable of "St. Boniface" (Bonifacius), who allegedly destroyed the great oak of Jupiter at Geismar in Hesse, Germany, and supposedly built of the wood a chapel to "St. Peter." The legend says Boniface (actually, an early English missionary named Winfrid), while traveling through northern Germany, found a group of heathens at their sacred oak preparing to sacrifice little Prince Asulf to their god, Jupiter. Allegedly, Winfrid stopped the sacrifice and cut down the tree. As the fable grew, the oak allegedly fell, not without protest, and instantly a young fir tree appeared! Winfrid told the heathens that the fir was the "tree of life" and represented Christ! The pagans were delighted to believe in this new myth, which is an almost identical replica of the ancient fable concerning the cutting down of a huge oak representing the life and death of Nimrod (Tammuz, or the sun god), and the idea that a young tree sprang out of the ancient log overnight, thus representing the rebirth or reincarnation of Nimrod as "Tammuz," or the god of the sun!

How did its use gain entrance into the Church?

The decorated Christmas tree may have originated with Martin Luther.

Legend has it that he was walking home one evening when he noticed the stars shining brilliantly through some trees. It seemed like the stars had settled on the boughs themselves. He cut down a small tree, took it home, and placed small candles in metal holders on the branches. From this meager beginning, the Christmas tree developed, complete with ornaments, garlands, colored lights etc... German Lutherans brought the tree custom to America, much to the consternation of early Puritans. Both in England and New England, the Puritans were successful in banning such remnants of the Saturnalia from public view. But eventually the Christmas tree, stocking and Santa Claus (borrowed from the Dutch) became thoroughly entrenched in the American "holiday" tradition...

What does the Bible say about tree use in worship?

It is ironic that in **Genesis** (the first book of the Bible) in chapter 3, we see that man's very first act of disobedience toward his Creator involved a tree! Its also fascinating that our SAVIOR was nailed to a cross made from a tree (**Acts 5:30**) AND that in the very last book of the Bible (**Revelation 22:14**) we see the significance of the tree. God created trees and HE has nothing against them unless HIS people are using them improperly in worship. Especially when they

are used to replace TRUE worship of the TRUE GOD with practices that stem from paganism. The Bible is replete with references of HIS displeasure with these pagan practices. Here are just a few to consider:

1. **Deuteronomy 12:1-4** *These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. ²You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. ³And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. ⁴You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things*
2. **1Kings 14:22-24** *Now Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. ²³For they also built for themselves high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. ²⁴And there were also ^operverted persons in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.*
3. **Jeremiah 10:1-4** *Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. ²Thus says the LORD: “Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, For the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers So that it will not topple.*
4. **Ephesians 5:8-10** *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the [□] Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*

But that’s not how I look at a Christmas tree!

After looking at it’s origins and possible uses, we might be tempted to say “sure, I understand that GOD would not want us to participate in practices where we would worship a tree, **but that’s not how I look at** it’s use regarding Christmas. I have my own perspective of what it represents.” That’s true. However, when we consider how detailed GOD is in HIS WORD when HE was instructing Israel as HOW HE was to be worshipped, are we so naive to think that now WE can contrive methodology and practices that originate in pagan worship and “redeem” them as practices that are blessed by GOD? Rather than being preoccupied with “how we look at” shouldn’t we be more concerned with how “HE looks at it?” After all, it is HIS SON that is to be remembered, isn’t it?

(For a more comprehensive study on Christmas and the practices surrounding it, as well as studies on other holidays, contact the Church office)

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