

THE HISTORICAL PAGAN ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

LET START WITH A BIBLE STUDY ON THE GREEN TREE

Deuteronomy 12:2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

which being shady and solitary, and pleasant to the sight, they fancied their gods delighted in, and this notion prevailed among other nations; and there is scarcely any deity but what had some tree or another devoted to it; as the oak to Jupiter, the laurel to Apollo, the ivy to Bacchus, the olive to Minerva, the myrtle to Venus, &c. se

1 Kings 14:23 For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.

2 Kings 16:4 And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

2 Kings 17:10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:

2 Chronicles 28:4 He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

Isaiah 57:5 Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks?

Jeremiah 2:20 For of old time I have broken thy yoke, [and] burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

Jeremiah 3:6 The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen [that] which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.

Jeremiah 3:13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 17:2 Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.

Ezekiel 6:13 Then shall ye know that I [am] the LORD, when their slain [men] shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols.

Ezekiel 17:24 And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done [it].

Ezekiel 20:47 And say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein.

Luke 23:31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

NOW LETS LOOK AT THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

- Jeremiah 10:1** Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel:
- Jeremiah 10:2** Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

3. **Jeremiah 10:3** For the customs of the people [are] vain: for [one] cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.
4. **Jeremiah 10:4** They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.
5. **Jeremiah 3:6** The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen [that] which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.
6. **High places are used for worship and trees are used for worship**
7. **So these Israelites were committing spiritual fornication against the Lord using green trees**
8. **Jeremiah 3:9** And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.
9. **Jeremiah 3:10** And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD.
10. **Jeremiah 3:11** And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.
11. **Jeremiah 3:12** Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; [and] I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I [am] merciful, saith the LORD, [and] I will not keep [anger] for ever.
12. **Jeremiah 3:13** Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD.
13. **Jeremiah 3:14** Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:
14. **The Lord is showing us that they had sought after other gods that is how they went a whoring after other gods under every green tree that was used for worshipping false gods**
15. **Jeremiah 17:2** Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.
16. **Wait this is that Jeremiah that said in chapter 10 learn not the way of the heathen with the green tree**

17. and we see how worship with God is never accepted with a green tree he hates it

THE GREEN TREE OR CHRISTMAS TREE AND WORSHIP OF gods

- 1. Jesus Christ is called the vine and we are the branches, Not the tree**
- 2. The christmass tree is a phallic symbol just like the obelisk. Every time you decorate the tree especially when you hang your round little ornaments on it (think about what that is symbolizing) you are performing pagan rituals.**
- 3. NIMROD IS PICTURED WITH THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE AND HOLDING A REINDEER BY THE WAY**
- 4.**
- 5. Many Pagan cultures used to cut boughs of evergreen trees in December, move them into the home or temple, and decorate them. 7 Modern-day Pagans still do. This was to recognize the winter solstice -- the time of the year that had the shortest daylight hours, and longest night of the year. This occurs annually sometime between DEC-20 to 23; most often, it is DEC-21. As the solstice approached, they noticed that the days were gradually getting shorter; many feared that the sun would eventually disappear forever, and everyone would freeze in the dark, and starve to death because of the failure of next-year's crop. But, even though deciduous trees, bushes, and crops died or hibernated for the winter, the evergreen trees remained green. They seemed to have magical powers that enabled them to withstand the rigors of winter.**
- 6. Not having evergreen trees, the ancient Egyptians considered the palm tree to symbolize resurrection. They decorated their homes with its branches during the winter solstice. 3**
- 7. "The first decorating of an evergreen tree began with the heathen Greeks and their worship of their god Adonia, who allegedly was brought back to life by the serpent Aessulapius after having been slain." 5**
- 8. The ancient Pagan Romans decorated their "trees with bits of metal and replicas of their god, Bacchus [a fertility god]. They also placed 12 candles on the tree in honor of their sun god" 2 Their mid-winter festival of Saturnalia started on DEC-17 and often lasted until a few days after the Solstice.**

- 9. In Northern Europe, the ancient Germanic people tied fruit and attached candles to evergreen tree branches, in honor of their god Woden. Trees were viewed as symbolizing eternal life. This is the deity after which Wednesday (Wodensday) was named. The trees joined holly, mistletoe, the wassail bowl and the Yule log as symbols of the season. All of these predated Christianity. 5**
- 10. Druid priests in Great Britain also used evergreen plants and mistletoe in pagan ceremonies, and the mistletoe plant was the symbol of the birth of a god. Celtic Druids and Norseman of Scandinavia also used mistletoe in a mysterious ceremony just after the winter solstice.**
- 11. In the mid 1500's, Germans began using evergreen trees as a symbol of hope for the coming of spring. This practice is likely to have gradually evolved from pagan rituals of past, and merged with the celebration of Christmas leading to the tree's Christian beginnings.**
- 12. There are also claims that the first proper Christmas tree was erected in Riga, Latvia in 1510. Today, there is a plaque in the Town Hall Square in Riga that is engraved with the text "The First New Year's Tree in Riga in 1510". It is believed that this tree was burned during a New Year's celebration, and possibly decorated with paper flowers. However, it seems more likely that this celebration was related more to the Christmas tree's pagan past.**
- 13. The most likely Christian beginnings of the modern Christmas tree were in the mid 1500's in Germany. In 1521 in the region of Alsace (formerly part of Germany), the first pine tree was decorated and used in a Christmas celebration. In 1539, in the Cathedral of Strasbourg, there are church records that state a Christmas tree was used for the Christmas celebration. And in 1570 there are reports from a Bremen guild chronicler that a fir tree was decorated with fruits and nuts which children ate on Christmas day.**
- 14. In the 1700's the Christmas tree custom had spread throughout northern Germany, and people began decorating the tree with candles that were lit on Christmas Eve, as is still done today in many homes across Europe. As the Christmas tree custom spread through Germany, the Roman Catholic Church eventually recognized it in the early 1800's. It was introduced**

to Vienna in 1816, quickly spreading across Austria, and in 1840 to France by the duchesse d'Orleans.

15. The Norse Pagan History of the Christmas Tree:http://delongfarms.com/tree_1.html
16. To fully appreciate the history of the Christmas tree, one must understand the mystical importance coniferous evergreens held for the pagan Norsemen who inhabited the frigid and often enchanting forests of Northern Germany. This era of pre-Christian Germanic history can be characterized as a time as savage as it was beautiful, mystical as it was mysterious, and as warm hearted as it was cold and bitter in a frozen landscape. Pre-Christian Pagans inhabited a land that they believed they shared with numerous Gods, nature-spirits, and demons. A common example was the Norse worship of the Oak tree; its strong and long burning wood was a sign of the strength of the spirits that inhabited the Oak, and it was often used as a symbol of the Norse god chieftain, Odin.
17. When the seasons turned, however, and winter brought with it numerous evils and malicious spirits stalking the shadows of wintry forests, the Pagan peoples would turn to the aid and magic of any nature spirits that would help them. Plants and trees such as mistletoe, holly and evergreen, unlike the forementioned Oak tree, were believed to have some special power against the darker magics of winter because they were the only plants that stayed green throughout the year. During the winter, to shore their homes from malevolent winter spirits, Pagan Germanic peoples would hang wreaths and bushels of evergreens over their doors and windows, believing their spirit was enough to ward off winter evils. In many cases evergreen decor were brought indoors where their scent could freshen the dark, medieval homes of otherwise stagnant straw and thresh. The needles and cones would even be burned as a form of incense; its smoke and fragrance filling the home with the protective spirit-magic of the evergreen.
18. During the Winter Solstice, when winter was at its darkest and the days were the shortest of the year by the Germanic Lunar Calendar, Celtic and pagan civilizations throughout Northern Europe would celebrate and sacrifice to the Norse god, Jul (Though pronounced and temporarily recognized as "Yule."), and celebrate their Yule Tide festival. This is the

tradition from which we have our Yule log, today. The Germanic practice, however, involved cutting down a massive hardwood log that was large enough to burn for twelve days of feasting and sacrifice, and served as a fertility symbol to both help with the coming of spring and prophesize its bounty. During the Winter Solstice, when winter had its strongest influence on the frozen landscape, Norse pagans would, by tradition, bring entire evergreen trees into their homes. These massive evergreens were called Yule trees, and it was believed that the spirits of the trees would inhabit their home and bless its inhabitants. This practice was as much Winter Solstice tradition as it was mystical protection from night-faring spirits during the darkest times of the year.

19. During the 8th Century, missionaries from the Holy Roman Catholic Church began to make their way North to what is now Germany and the Netherlands. One such missionary, who would become the saintly Bishop of Germany, was Boniface of Crediton. Boniface, a stalwart and moral gentile, was quickly set aback by the pagan rituals of polytheism, nature worship, and human sacrifice. While many Germanic peoples readily accepted the Catholic faith, there were still some hardened tribes that even proved violently hostile in their resistance to Catholic missionaries such as Boniface. It would be in a single legendary act that Saint Boniface of Crediton seemed to symbolically set the tone for the Holy Roman Catholic Church: instead of usurping the pagan faith completely with Catholicism, Boniface chose to shift their focus and also adopted the more desirable pagan beliefs and customs himself.
20. It is said that when Saint Boniface came across a human sacrifice at the foot of the Oak of Thor in Geismar, Boniface cut down the oak in a symbolic act of removing the older barbaric Celtic traditions. Pointing to an evergreen that was growing at the roots of the fallen oak, Saint Boniface said, "This humble tree's wood is used to build your homes: let Christ be at the centre of your households. Its leaves remain evergreen in the darkest days: let Christ be your constant light. Its boughs reach out to embrace and its top points to heaven: let Christ be your comfort and guide." In much the same way that the Holy Roman Catholic Church assimilated many other pagan customs and traditions to help with the

converting of the Northern Germanic peoples, Saint Boniface accommodated the pre-existing Celtic beliefs in the mysticism of evergreens and incorporated it to help with a smoother transition for pagan peoples over to Catholicism.

21. In many ways, this legend of Saint Boniface of Crediton would have helped with the incorporation of the Yule trees and Yule Tide evergreens of the Germanic Winter Solstice into the Roman's "Christ's Mass" celebrating the birth of their savior, Jesus. The converted Germans who were celebrating Christ's Mass would have celebrated in much the same way as they did the Winter Solstice, save for many of their central traditions being more gentile. The evergreen trees that they brought indoors were now symbols of the holy trinity; the stars at the top serving as a symbol of heaven and God. Apples were hung from the branches that would later become Christmas decorations, symbolizing the fruit of the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. This tradition would continue until the Victorian Era where not a single German household was complete at Christmas without a small, table-top "Tannenbaum" or Yule tree.

22. The History of the Victorian Christmas Tree:

23. While the Yule trees of Germany may have made appearances throughout Europe after being culturally transplanted from Germany, the Victorian "Christmas tree" hadn't made its popular Victorian appearance until 1848. With the marriage of Princess Victoria to her cousin, Prince Albert of Germany, the custom of the Christmas tree came with the new prince of England and was celebrated in Windsor Palace for the sake of the young royal family. Prince Albert had written, "I must now seek in the children an echo of what Ernest (Albert's brother) and I were in the old time, of what we felt and thought; and their delight in the Christmas-trees is not less than our used to be." At this, the London Illustrated News published a woodcarving print of the young royal family at Christmas time with a decadently decorated Christmas tree in the December of 1848. With the widespread distribution of the illustration, within two years every home in England had an evergreen Christmas tree in their home.

24. An interesting attribute of the Victorian era and incidentally the Victorian Christmas, was the popular attempt to bring

elements of the countryside into city homes during the holiday season. Thanks to the Victorian era's Industrial Revolution, a significant concentration of the nation's newly wealthy were living in cities. With this move away from country homes and villas, successful and independently wealthy alike quickly picked up where Prince Albert left off. In an attempt to recapture a quaint and warm image of the country side and the country homes they had left behind, Victorians had Christmas trees that were elegantly decorated with glass ornaments, silver tinsel, gold stars, and delicate candles that would glow over the children's Christmas gifts. Evergreen Christmas wreaths that were decorated with an array of dried berries, apples and ribbons were popular with the Victorians and would be hung on doors and given as gifts to loved ones for the holidays. In much the same way we associate the Victorian era with decadent crafts and decorations, it was the Victorian era that truly made Christmas trees and Christmas wreaths what they are today.

25. For the less wealthy and poor, the Victorian era was the pinnacle of the Industrial Revolution in another way. With it came the detached monotonies of factory labor and a harder, bleaker life in the cities. In much the same way they served the Pre-Christian Germans, evergreen trees, wreaths and garland began to spread as an "old country" symbolic defense against the harsh realities of winter in an industrialized 19th century city. Most importantly, evergreens were used as a symbol of the holiday season, and a time for the philanthropy and good will that the Victorian era bestowed on the celebration thanks to writers and poets such as Clement Clarke Moore ("A Visit from St. Nicholas" or "The Night Before Christmas," published in 1823) and Charles Dickens (A Christmas Carol, published in 1843). Evergreen Christmas décor represented a shift in the emotional climate; away from the work houses and begging orphans, towards a warmer spirit of heart-felt benevolence and charity. Incidentally, the 'spirit' of Christmas is aroused from a Victorian Christmas tree in much the same way the spirit of the evergreen was enticed from a Yule tree in a pagan Germanic North.

26. History of the Christmas Tree

- 27. The English Puritans condemned a number of customs associated with Christmas, such as the use of the Yule log, holly, mistletoe, etc. Oliver Cromwell preached against "the heathen traditions" of Christmas carols, decorated trees and any joyful expression that desecrated "that sacred event."**
- 28. Tertullian (circa 160 - 230), an early Christian leader and a prolific writer, complained that too many fellow-Christians had copied the Pagan practice of adorning their houses with lamps and with wreathes of laurel at Christmas time. 8,9,10,11**
- 29. Ludwig Feuerbringer adds some more details to the historic event: Schwan was the first one to introduce the Christmas tree in church and this took place in the fifties in Cleveland. It caused a real sensation in the city. To some extent it became the talk of the town. In those days of very pronounced Reformed, unliturgical ideas, it was considered almost a sacrilege that a special day aside from the Puritan Sabbath should be observed in church, and above all things, that the sanctuary should be 'desecrated' by the introduction of a Christmas tree, decorated, undoubtedly, in the usual way. Schwan even had constructed the story of Bethlehem in little figures under the Christmas tree, and that especially was regarded as an abomination. Even in factories members of Schwan's church were accosted, and to some the intimation was given that they could hardly continue in their factory employment if they were in harmony with such execrable practices. (Ludwig Feuerbringer, Eighty Eventful Years [St Louis: CPH, 1944], 248-240).**
- 30. Early on Christmas Eve 1851, the Rev. Schwan, newly installed pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Cleveland, went into the forest near his parsonage and chopped down a small beautifully-shaped evergreen. After taking it into his church and placing it in a prominent spot in the chancel, he and his wife, Emma, spent the afternoon trimming the tree with cookies, colored ribbons, fancy nuts and candles. A silver star that Schwan had brought with him from his boyhood home in Hanover, Germany, topping off the tree, was a reminder of his happy boyhood Christmases.**
- 31. He wanted to share this same happiness with members of his congregation, most of whom were also German-born and thus**

likely to have seen a Christmas tree in their past. The custom hadn't caught on yet in America.

32. Most of the members of his congregation were pleasantly surprised, and wonderful Christmas memories of the Old Country were enkindled by the sight of the beautifully decorated and lighted tree. Others, however, were offended by the idea of having a Tannenbaum in church.
33. Within a day or two, Schwan's Christmas tree was the talk of the town, and the talk was not good. A prominent local newspaper called it "a nonsensical, asinine, moronic absurdity, besides being silly." It editorialized against "these Lutherans . . . worshipping a tree . . . groveling before a shrub." Worse, it recommended that the good Christian citizens of Cleveland ostracize, shun and refuse to do business with anyone "who tolerates such heathenish, idolatrous practices in his church."
34. Even members of the congregation thought it was sacrilege and idolatry to have such a tree in the church. During the following year, Schwan carefully researched the issue of Christmas trees. He ultimately concluded that such trees were not a sacrilege but rather a solid Christian custom — a custom in which Christians could express their joy at the birth of the Christ Child.
35. "[T]he claim has been made that Pastor Schwan was the first to introduce the use of the Christmas tree in a church. That claim, however, is not quite correct. There is evidence that the Rev. John Muehlhaeuser of Rochester, New York, used the Christmas tree in his church as early as 1840. There, however, it was chiefly a money-making scheme, admission being charged to raise money for the church. Therefore, although Pastor Schwan was not the first to introduce the Christmas tree into the church, as was believed for a time, we may still credit him with the honor of lifting the custom to a worthy plane and bringing out its beautiful significance."
36. Although Pastor Schwan was not the first person to decorate a Christmas tree in North America, he was the first to introduce one into a church. And he was almost singlehandedly responsible for this custom gaining widespread acceptance and popularity in the United States.

37. The location of Zion Lutheran Church has changed since the 1850s, but on its original spot, the corner of Lakeside Avenue and East Sixth Street, stands a historical marker that states:

38. "On this site stood the first Christmas tree in America publicly lighted and displayed in a church Christmas ceremony. [Here] stood the original Zion Lutheran Church, where in 1851, on Christmas Eve, Pastor Henry Schwan lighted the first Christmas tree in Cleveland. The tradition he brought from Germany soon became widely accepted throughout America. The present site of Zion Lutheran Church is at 2062 East 30th Street, Cleveland, Ohio."

The Christmas tree of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert became known in America in the late 1840s, and in the 1850s reports of Christmas trees began appearing in American newspapers.

A newspaper report described "an interesting festival, a Christmas tree," which was viewed in Concord, Massachusetts on Christmas Eve 1853. According to the account in the Springfield Republican, "all the children of the town participated" and someone dressed as St. Nicholas distributed presents.

Two years later, in 1855, the Times-Picayune in New Orleans published an article noting that St. Paul's Episcopal Church would be setting up a Christmas tree. "This is a German custom," the newspaper explained, "and one that has been of late years imported into this country, to the great delight of the young folks, who are its especial beneficiaries."

The article in the New Orleans newspaper offers details indicating that many readers would be unfamiliar with the concept:

"A tree of evergreen, in size adapted to the dimensions of the room in which it is displayed, is selected, the trunk and branches of which are to be hung with brilliant lights, and laden from the lowest bough to the topmost branch, with Christmas gifts, delicacies, ornaments, etc., of every imaginable variety, forming a perfect storehouse of rare presents from old Santa Claus.

What indeed can be more gratifying to children than to take them where their eyes will grow big and bright, feasting on such a sight on the eve of Christmas."

A Philadelphia newspaper, The Press, published an article on Christmas Day 1857 which detailed how various ethnic groups had brought their own Christmas customs to America. It said: "From Germany, in particular, comes the Christmas tree, hung all round with gifts of all sorts, interspersed with crowds of small tapers, which illuminate the tree and excite general admiration."

The 1857 article from Philadelphia whimsically described Christmas trees as immigrants who had become citizens, stating, "We are naturalizing the Christmas tree."

And by the time, an employee of Thomas Edison created the first electric Christmas tree in the 1880s, the Christmas tree custom, whatever its origins, was permanently established.

39. Baptists of the South and the faith community of Southern Baptists after 1845 originally did not attach much significance to Christmas. The holiday is not recognized as a special day of worship in any of the historic Baptist confessions, allusions to it are rare in Baptist history volumes before the 1880s, and the holiday possessed an association with worldliness and even paganism in the minds of many Baptist ministers. Such opinions can still be found among some Baptists today who voice, "The New Testament does not command us to celebrate a festival commemorating the nativity."

40. There was always opposition to christmas trees in america

41. by such names as the Profane Man's Ranting Day, the Superstitious Man's Idol Day, the Papist's Massing Day, the Old Heathen's Feasting Day, the Multitude's Idle Day, and Satan - that Adversary's - Working Day."

42. http://paganwiccan.about.com/od/yulethelongestnight/f/Holiday_Tree.htm

**Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree!
Thy leaves are so unchanging
Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,
Thy leaves are so unchanging**

**Not only green when summer's here,
But also when it's cold and drear.
Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,
Thy leaves are so unchanging!**

**Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,
Such pleasure do you bring me!
Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,
Such pleasure do you bring me!**

**For every year this Christmas tree,
Brings to us such joy and glee.
Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,
Such pleasure do you bring me!**

**Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,
You'll ever be unchanging!
A symbol of goodwill and love
You'll ever be unchanging**

**Each shining light
Each silver bell
No one alive spreads cheer so well**

**Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree,
You'll ever be unchanging**

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