

O' Tannenbaum (o' Fir Tree)

Prayer

There are various origin tales of the Christmas tree, some have a basis in fact, but more often than not, it is utter clap-trap. I have heard Christian people pick up one small fact from history and blow it into a great big thing. Let me give you a couple of examples:

Vikings:

The fierce Vikings in Scandinavia thought that evergreens were the special plant of the sun god Balder. Naturally then evergreen trees are evil and should be avoided by any decent Christian family. After all you don't want to have a symbol of the Sun god Balder in your house.

Romans:

Early Romans marked the solstice with a feast called the Saturnalia in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture. The Romans knew that the solstice meant that soon farms and orchards would be green and fruitful. To mark the occasion, they decorated their homes and temples with evergreen boughs. In Northern Europe the mysterious Druids, the priests of the ancient Celts, also decorated their temples with evergreen boughs as a symbol of everlasting life.

Druids:

How about the fact that the druid used to decorate trees? They would adorn them with gold and silver. Trees were mysterious objects to the Druids; they considered them the embodiment of the incomprehensible meaning of life. Druids love trees. In fact, they often visit trees in the woods to meditate and hold ceremonies.

"Druidry" Says:

"Some modern scholars agree with the classical Roman and Greek authors that the most likely derivation for 'Druid' is from the word for oak, combined with the Indo-European root *wid* - to know, giving their translation of the word Druid as 'One with knowledge of the oak' or 'Wise person of the oak'. Those who possessed knowledge of the oak possessed knowledge of all the trees. The Druid was one with 'knowledge of the trees' and was a 'Forest Sage'."

Today, those who study as Ovates within Druidry learn to work with the powers of Nature – they learn the Ogham which is the Tree Alphabet of the Druids, and come to know the trees as living Beings with their own medicines and gifts. They work with the sacred animals of tradition, and with different methods of divination, and many begin a study of herbalism or other methods of healing, and in particular they learn how to encourage the flow of Nwyfre through the body. Nwyfre is the Druid term for Life-force, known as Chi' or Prana in the East.

So obviously because of these ancient pagan practices, the Christmas tree is an idol. It is evil incarnate etc...

All of these are the basis for what I would call Harry Fairy doctrine... Because a tree was used in these practices, and the similarity of decorating the tree, it must be a pagan practice.

This is what happens with a lot of zeal and little study...

In actual fact, the Christmas tree tradition comes from Germany in the 16th century

In German it is called: Weihnachtsbaum or Christbaum.

The German Lutheran Christians brought trees into their houses and decorated them. A Christmas tree was traditionally decorated with candles, roses made of colored paper, apples, wafers and sweetmeats. The apples were meant to symbolize the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. The candles represent the light of the Holy Spirit and so on. An Angel or a Star might be placed on top of the tree to represent the archangel Gabriel or the Star of Bethlehem.

It is interesting that it was Martin Luther who originally thought of the Candles.

But even before all of this in Jeremiah 10:1-5 it says:

You people of Israel, listen to what the Lord has to say to you. The Lord says, "Do not start following pagan religious practices. Do not be in awe of signs that occur in the sky even though the nations hold them in awe. For the religion of these people is worthless. They cut down a tree in the forest, and a craftsman makes it into an idol with his tools. He decorates it with overlays of silver and gold. He uses hammer and nails to fasten it together so that it will not fall over. Such idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field. They cannot talk. They must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them because they cannot hurt you. And they do not have any power to help you."

The first 16 verses of chapter 10 are parenthetical. Before continuing his discussion of the coming Exile, Jeremiah focused on the nature of the God who would bring this judgment. God addressed the entire house of Israel, which included the Northern Kingdom already in exile, and explained the foolishness of idols. Israel was not supposed to learn the ways of idolatry practiced by the nations around her, nor was she to be terrified by signs in the sky. These "signs" were most likely unusual occurrences such as eclipses or comets which were thought to be signs of coming events given by the gods.

Such idolatrous practices were worthless (hebel, "breath"; cf. comments on hebel in Ecc. 1:2) because the "gods" being honored were created by their worshipers (cf. Isa. 40:18-20). A person would chop down a tree, give the wood to a craftsman

who fashioned it to the desired shape. This "god" was then covered with silver and gold and fastened to a base so that it would not totter. Once the god was made by man it had to be carried to its destination. It was as lifeless as a scarecrow in a melon patch. Certainly such a "god" could not speak to impart knowledge to its followers. So God exhorted His people not to fear those false idols. The idols had no power to harm those who disregarded them or power to do any good for those who followed them.

(Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures. Victor Books: Wheaton, IL)

Seems like a pretty close parallel until you consider that they were forming an idol for the purpose of worship... How many people here this morning put up a Christmas tree with the intention of worshipping it?

I will go out on a limb here and say not very many...

If your intention is to make anything an idol, then it needs to go...

But there are historical accounts of villages that carried the tree around as a rallying point to call people to church. The upraised bows symbolized the raising of hands. The star symbolized the star and so on... The bottom line was that they weren't worshipping the tree. They were using the tree simply to remind people of coming together in worship.

Now if someone doesn't want a Christmas tree that is totally fine with me. Everyone has his or her own beliefs; but, I think we all need to see that many times over zealotry can result in legalistic bondage that is caused by assumptions.

Let me give you an example...

There are individuals and groups of people take the bible pages, and roll up marijuana cigarette with those bible pages, does that mean that because they used the bible for this purpose, that everyone here today reads and uses their bible that they are disrespecting God's word? Of course not...

Let's consider a pioneer who uses a firearm to keep his family fed. Another man uses a firearm to rob a bank. Is the firearm evil or is it the intention for which it is used?

How about a pharmacist that prescribes codeine for a painful operation... Is this the same as the guy selling T3's on the street for people to get high?

Of course not... So, why will some Christians attack other Christians and accuse them of a pagan ritual?

Christianity has eroded through these actions... Let me explain.

If you had a country that was a God fearing nation and you wanted to get them away from God and suppress their influence what would you do?

You see it is not really about a Christmas tree at all. It is about the enemy's plan to create discord and disunity in the church. A house divided against its self cannot stand. What happens to our credibility as Christians when we attack each and fall for tactics like this?

You want to see this in action... Go to a Christian web site and post a scripture and a well-studied opinion on what this scripture means to you... You will not see Greek and Hebrew texts coming out. You will not see in depth commentary research. There will be little if any exegesis, yet you will see many differing opinions, that have very little basis in any study or understanding.

More than that you will see Christians trying to wack each other the head with their personal interpretation of scripture. This is not Godly. The word tells us do not argue over scripture it profits nothing (2 Timothy 2:14)

Have you ever posted a comment or sent a text or even an email and your intention was sincere yet totally and completely misinterpreted?

In a culture of honor, shots are not taken at each other. Discussions, study, loving conversation and so on can occur.

Why do some people feel the need to voice their opinion forcefully? Why do some feel they have to defend God?

What about a person sinning? Galatians 6:1

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.

Did you get that "gently and humbly"? ...

This Christmas season, don't give the enemy a foothold. Don't let him sow division amongst you. Let us guard our hearts...

You see... A decorated tree in and of its self is not evil; it is a thing of beauty... A person worshiping a tree is committing idolatry and is in sin. A person who places decorations on a tree while spending time loving family is not. In the end the tree had very little to do with it.

Pencils don't write nasty or nice words... People do.

In Summary:

Many people will try to tell you things to persuade you they are evil, try not to give offense, but instead love the person and look it up. They may be right, but more often than not, there are cultural or even general misinterpretations.

A 16 year old boy approaches his Dad...

Quoting Proverbs 13:24a he says: "Dad, God says in his word that you need to buy me a cool car... because the bible says that whoever spares the rod hates their children."

I am kidding of course but it is that easy to get it wrong as it were...

So we have talked about a tree... but the message is

Guard your intentions, be excellent to each other and live in such a way that those who know you but don't know God will come to know him because they know you.

Prayer