

# Should We Have A Christmas Tree?

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Some have argued Christians should not have a Christmas tree because the practice is associated with pagan worship. Should Christians have Christmas trees?

First, it is clear that Christians today who use a Christmas tree do not use it in any form of pagan worship. Instead it is part of Christmas tradition, one piece in the larger celebration of the birth of Jesus. Simply having a Christmas tree is not wrong since no pagan worship is taking place.

The modern custom of a Christmas tree does not come from any form of paganism. There is no evidence of any pagan religion decorating a special holiday tree for their mid-winter festivals, although the Romans celebrated the winter solstice with a festival called Saturnalia in honor of Saturnus, the god of agriculture. They decorated their houses with greens and lights and exchanged gifts. Late in the Middle Ages, Germans and Scandinavians placed evergreen trees inside their homes or just outside their doors to show their hope in the forthcoming spring.

The first Christmas tree was decorated by Protestant Christians in 16th-century Germany. Our modern Christmas tree evolved from these early German traditions, and the custom most likely came to the United States with Hessian troops during the American Revolution, or with German immigrants to Pennsylvania and Ohio.

There is nothing in the Bible that either commands or prohibits Christmas trees. It has been falsely claimed by some that Jeremiah 10:1-16 prohibits the cutting down and decorating of trees in the same manner as we do at Christmas. However, even a cursory reading of the text makes it clear that the passage is one in which Jeremiah sets forth the prohibition against idols made of wood, plated with silver and gold, and worshiped. A similar idea appears in Isaiah 44, where Isaiah speaks of the silliness of the idol-worshippers who cut down a tree, burn part of it in the fire to warm themselves, and use the other part to fashion an idol, which they then bow down to. So, unless we bow down before our Christmas tree, carve it into an idol, and pray to it, these passages cannot be applied to Christmas trees.

There is no spiritual significance to having or not having a Christmas tree. Whatever choice we make, the motive behind a believer's decision about this, as in all matters of conscience, must be to please the Lord. Romans 14:5-6a sets out the principle in a passage about liberty: *"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord;"*

The Lord is grieved when Christians look down upon one another for either celebrating or not celebrating Christmas in a particular way. This is spiritual pride. When we feel that somehow we have achieved a higher plane of spirituality by doing or not doing something about which the Bible is silent, we misuse our freedom in Christ, create divisions within His body, and thereby dishonor the Lord. *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* (1 Cor. 10:31).