

Merry Christmas! A look at Some traditions



Ms. Smallback

Christmas for me has always been a season, not a day. From Thanksgiving until Christmas Day, then to New Year's Day, it's a season of family and festivities and a magic of sorts. Most people are a little kinder, and there's an anticipation that builds that holds a special excitement. I have always loved the Christmas season.

As a Christian, the focus on the Messiah's birth progressed as my faith grew and my walk with God deepened. I have both heard and held the hallowed traditions of the Christmas tree, the lights, the decorations, etc. I have both lauded and echoed them myself.

So it was with great pain that I learned of the origins of the concept of the Christmas tree being a phallic symbol, the decorated balls hung on the tree as symbols of the testes, the tinsel symbolic of semen, and the wreath symbolic of the cervix.

It took me two years of research, pondering and prayer to finally decide to no longer bring a tree into the house to decorate for Christmas. It's been about a decade now of no Christmas tree, and I'll admit, it has been a trying adjustment. Of course our children were disappointed. I myself was disappointed, as I'd been known to actually sleep by the tree lights a night or two in the season, mesmerized by

the simplistic beauty.

Don't fret, this article isn't to influence or persuade anyone not to have a Christmas tree. I am quite fine with anyone else having a tree. Our children are all grown now and they each get trees in their homes. I have no judgment for anyone who does or does not. I still love seeing them everywhere; I still enjoy their beauty.



Learning that Christmas was a sleight of hand to incorporate Christian ideologies into pagan ceremonies was just as difficult. There is really nothing Christian about Christmas, except that Saturnalia was hijacked from the pagans and wiccans and Christianized. We have quite adeptly transformed ancient pagan ceremonies into Christian traditions, and that isn't all a bad thing.

No, for me I have had to wrestle long and hard with what things mean, and what convictions I was or was not willing to compromise. As a family, we had a tradition of an hour Christmas morning where we spent solo time reflecting on Christ and His birth*. We had a trunk where we would put mementos or creations of what we were giving to Christ in a memorial of His entry into our world as Messiah. I still have the trunk and I still like to go through all the handwritten notes, letters, hand drawn pictures, etc. commemorating a pause to reflect and appreciate our Savior's entry to this

world.

[*No, Christ was not born on December 25. He was born during the Feast of Tabernacles in what we know as mid to late September. My favorite researcher on the topic has it as Sept. 25.]

But as I have long lamented the words of Solomon, even in this it rings louder and clearer:

Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.

Eccl 1:18 NASU

It has been painful to let go of certain aspects of Christmas. I don't think God has a problem with honoring your loved ones and pausing to remember the Messiah's entry into the world. I know God has used the Christmas season to open blind eyes to the miracle of Christ, and to soften hard hearts of the amazing gift of salvation that came through Christ's advent. I am in no way suggesting Christmas be abolished. I find much value in it, personally. We continue to celebrate it as a family. I continue to reflect upon the mystery and wonder of Christ's advent.



But I, I am a truth seeker. And when I find truth, I cannot change truths I do not care for or that make me uncomfortable. Truth is stark and unapologetic. It stands alone. We don't change truth. We can ignore it. We can minimize it, rationalize it, judge it, and any number of other actions – but nothing we do in reaction or action to truth actually changes it. It is what it is.

So I have to learn how to live with newly discovered or understood truths that contradict my paradigms. I have to

either change my paradigm or disregard those truths. And whether I embrace or reject those truths is irrelevant to pretty much anyone else. We each answer for ourselves.

This is why I do not feel a need to tell my adult children to conduct their affairs with **my** personal convictions. We are each on a journey of truth, and we are each in varying stages. We only need to be accountable to that which we have learned.

Paul says it like this:

Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

Phil 3:15-16 NASU

The English Bible says it like this: *“Only let us hold true to what we have attained.”*

The Complete Jewish Bible like this: *“Only let our conduct fit the level we have already reached.”*

Yes, I know this passage isn't referring to holidays, but the principle still applies. As our knowledge increases and our walk with God grows, we are responsible for applying our knowledge. We're supposed to walk in our revelations. My life should reflect the knowledge and convictions of my faith.

So when I read Jeremiah 10:1-4 [NASU]:

Hear the word which the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel. Thus says the Lord, “Do not learn the way of the nations, and do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens although the nations are terrified by them; for the customs of the peoples are delusion; because it is wood cut from the forest, the work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. They decorate it with silver and with gold; they fasten

it with nails and with hammers so that it will not totter."

and consider that this is an admonishment to reject the ways of the pagan nations and their customs, I am inclined to apply this to the pagan roots of Christmas. I don't want to participate with them. [And yes I realize this Scripture is just as easily addressing the idols of that day – but what else is a phallic symbol than an idol?]

There is ample information that the pagans used trees and obelisks as phallic symbols of sex and fertility. [I'll leave resources at the end of this article.] There is no question that December 25 originated as pagan celebrations of Saturnalia, or that it centers around the winter solstice and their pagan festivals to their idols and gods.

Do I mean that when I celebrate Christmas? Absolutely not! I find it abominable. So for the knowledge I have obtained thus far in my walk with God, I have chosen to reject the pagan rooted symbols yet embrace the good that the modern Christmas season brings. I will focus on commemorating and remembering my Messiah's advent to this earth. The story needs told and celebrated and it's the time of the year people are most receptive to hearing about it and reflecting on it.

Romans 14 has been the most instructive chapter in the whole of Scripture for me on how to handle diverse convictions within the body of Christ (the Christian believers). I am not to judge my brethren in the faith for their convictions – as the Lord is able to make each person stand. As a believer, Paul says, *"So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."* [Romans 14:19]

I'm not here to tear another down because someone else's knowledge or conviction is not where mine is. Who's to say mine is the right one? I only know I follow God, love God, and purport to honor Him as I learn more about Him.

I would venture a guess that 99.9% of real Christians have no

intention of idolizing sex and fertility or erecting phallic symbols to celebrate when they think of Christmas. I have no judgment for those who celebrate Christmas with trees. I, however, cannot.

When my husband and I were first married, an older woman in the church we attended became a type of spiritual grandmother to me. She has since passed away, but of all the things she spoke into my life in those early years, the thing I remember the most is this... Alta had a simple saying I heard her utter numerous times, "Others can, you may not." She told me the Spirit told her this as an instruction in various situations. It took me awhile to learn this concept, but it's really quite simple, and it's found at the close of Romans 14.

The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he [partakes of what he is convicted is sin], because his [action] is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

Rom. 14:22-23 NASU

My personal faith has found it more honoring to God to restrain from the practice of a Christmas tree, so I must not, for to do it for me would be sin. But it is not a judgment or condemnation on any other who does not have that conviction. In verse four he is plain, "*Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*"

We each must walk in the faith we've been given, and our God is able to make us stand. If our walk with God is vibrant, we will grow in our faith, and also in our knowledge. And as I've already pointed out, sometimes that knowledge comes at our discomfort or even pain.

My husband and I have found a happy place to celebrate the

season of Christmas by our convictions and maintain some family traditions at the same time. Before we gleaned the knowledge of the pagan origins of the tree, we had spent years gathering ornaments that reflected different aspects of our family, faith and friends. So we created a space to suspend them from the ceiling for the Christmas season. Here's a picture:

[They're suspended from the ceiling behind the stockings, which is an open space to another room.]

Christmas is a truly magical time of the year. When I stop to reflect on the miracle of a five hundred year prophecy coming to pass in the innocence and helplessness of a newborn in difficult times on the earth, I am confounded to silence at the miracle of it. It speaks without words.

That an angelic host announced the arrival of the Messiah with such proclamation as:

I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:10-12 NASU

This is what we celebrate! That God thought the salvation of the world should be brought in by the birth of a baby is the greatest story ever told! That we spend weeks getting ready to commemorate and celebrate this occasion is only fitting! May you and those you love reflect on the birth of Christ, and may you encounter the power of Christ's advent message. Merry Christmas!

Some resources for information. I'm not endorsing anything or anyone here. This is strictly for research. I encourage everyone to do their own study and to pray about what they learn, seeking the heart of God for His thoughts and ways.

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E-Mail Ms. Smallback: M.Smallback@cox.net

Resource Information:

- <http://www.fossilizedcustoms.com/christmastree.html>
- <http://www.abovetopsecret.com/forum/thread774599/pg1>
- <https://christian-restoration.com/fmasonry/obelisks.htm>
- <https://shatteredparadigm.blogspot.com/2008/12/christmas-tree-ancient-pagan-fertility.html>
- [This is just to demonstrate that even the world acknowledges the Christmas tree is a phallic symbol: <https://www.dailysquib.co.uk/world/26881-feminists-want-phallic-christmas-trees-banned.html>]
- http://fortfairfieldjournal.com/mpl_christmastree.htm