

## The Bible on Christmas Trees

Although pagans, the Roman, Celtic and Nordic traditions, were all fond of incorporating the use of evergreen and fir trees in their celebrations, it would be inaccurate to suggest that the Christian development of using such things necessarily emerged out of these pagan customs. Trees are very important in Christian theology, beginning with the third chapter of the book of Genesis, the book of Psalms, the Gospel accounts of Jesus' crucifixion on a cross, called a "tree" in Galatians 3:13 and 1 Peter 2:24. The book of Revelation concludes human history by mentioning a tree of redemption. Christian tradition tells of Helena, the mother of the Christian Emperor Constantine, discovery of the remains of the cross of Christ during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the 3rd century. This tradition records that the cross of Christ was in fact made of pine.

There was also a type of anti-demonic/anti-witchcraft festival incorporated in the twelve day Christmas celebration in which pine-resin torches were lit to keep witches and demons away. Larger fires of pine-resin were built on the Twelfth night for the same reason. In Silesia, pine-resin fires were burnt throughout the season of Christmas through New Year to drive witches from farmhouses, because it was generally thought that this was the ideal time for the expulsion of the forces of evil.

Biblically speaking, both the creation of a perfect, curse-less (thornless) world, it's fall, and it's restoration, emphasized a tree as the pivotal symbol of completion and reversal. From Genesis 2:9 to Revelation 22:1-5, the scarlet thread of redemption is woven between these two trees. It is an erroneous notion that the Christmas tree originated as a pagan symbol. It was neither originated by the Egyptians or the Babylonians, both of which are the most ancient arch-types for all other occult systems. Rather, evergreen trees find their origin as symbols and metaphors in the mind of Him who created them. It was "the Creator of heaven and earth" who chose to use thorns as the archetypal symbol of both **the fall** and the consequence of sin. Furthermore, it was God who chose **the tree** as His preferred symbol for redemption, reversal and restoration. God did not choose just any tree for such a purpose, but exclusively chose the various species of evergreen or pine trees (box, fir, cypress, myrtle, cedar, etc...).

It was the Almighty who chose to identify Himself as a pine tree in Hosea 14:8 ("I am like a green pine tree."). Jesus calls himself a green tree in Luke 23:26-31. Legends claim the tree of life in Eden was a pine tree. St. Boniface was the first to use the triangular fir tree as a symbol of the Trinity as he taught the doctrine to his parish. Pine trees are ancient symbols of eternal life. It was God who created the pine tree in such a way that it out-lives almost everything around it, for the oldest living thing on our planet right now (2005) is a bristle cone pine tree called the Methuselah tree after the oldest man in the Bible. It was planted before the founding of Rome and the golden age of Athens, at around the same time as when the great pyramids were being built. This evergreen is four thousand six hundred years old and makes its home 9000 feet up in the white

mountains of California. Scientists say if left alone, Methuselah has another 4-5 hundred years left to live! The pine tree, divinely chosen by God to be the chief symbol of His redemptive love for His fallen world, endures as the oldest organism and symbol of God's mercy and grace in our world, and will continue until it has witnessed to all future generations of the love of God in Christ as it has done for over 5-6 millennia!

Into the midst of the barren desert and dry wasteland of our Christ-forsaking world of thorns, briars and thistles (secular society), God has given us a symbol that has endured throughout time. It is a symbol that could be considered a precursor to the cross, also called "a tree". The pine or evergreen tree serves as God's counter-theme to the curse of sin, symbolized by the thorn. From the Biblical usage of this particular tree, the Christmas tree becomes a Christian symbol or metaphor of reversal (from being cursed to being blessed) and redemption (being brought back from captivity to homecoming). God's words through Isaiah 41:19-20 provides the counter-theme -

19 I will put in the desert  
the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive.  
I will set pines in the wasteland,  
the fir and the cypress together,  
20 so that people may see and know,  
may consider and understand,  
that the hand of the LORD has done this,  
that the Holy One of Israel has created it."

Again in Isaiah 55:13 all manner of evergreen trees are used as the counter theme of reversal to evoke a faith imagination in His spiritually crippled people –

"Instead of the thorn bush will grow the pine tree,  
and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.  
This will be for the LORD'S renown,  
for an everlasting sign,  
which will not be destroyed."

Instead of echoing the inaccurate observations of those who assert that the Christmas tree is a pagan symbol, let us reclaim that which God has chosen as a symbol that counters hopelessness and despair.