

# Should Christmas Trees Be Forbidden?

By [Charles Coty](#)

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Have you ever been told that the Bible clearly warns us against having a Christmas tree in our home, in our church, or anywhere else? I have received such an admonition very recently. Is it true that Old Testament passages [caution us](#) against this *pagan* tradition? If this is an accurate reading of God's Word then I am fully prepared to consider adhering to this rather sober directive. If it is not then we need to be willing to let go of incorrect teaching. Let's read a few verses from Jeremiah & see if we can find support for such a prohibition.



[KJV] *"Learn not the way of the heathen...For the customs of the peoples are vain; for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not,"* [Jeremiah 10:2-4](#).

After isolating these verses from the KJV translation, one might conclude that the Christmas tree is corrupt by nature & should be eliminated. I've considered this & other passages of Scripture, as well as the potential problems that Christians may encounter when adhering to "*pagan traditions*"—some have concluded that these Christmas evergreens are clearly forbidden by God & they have discontinued this practice—in so doing they claim a familial blessing because of their obedience to the Word. I cannot speak to the experiences of others but I can attempt to determine what I believe the Scripture has to say about this subject.

After careful & diligent study, it is my opinion that there is no such prohibition in the Bible. Jeremiah is clearly not speaking about Christmas trees. In addition, the Apostle Paul clearly delineates a position regarding idol worship that flies in the face of this ban. Let me be clear—I do not stand in judgment against those whose conscience forbids the Christmas tree tradition—but I do want to examine this issue in the light of God's word in an attempt to free us from the potential bondage that perhaps may accompany a distorted conclusion. Above all I want to allow Scripture *not man* to order my path.

Let's look at some of the arguments. Earnest L. Martin, an arduous proponent of eliminating the *pagan* celebrations of Christmas & Easter wrote the following in his 1991 *The Christmas Tree Debate*:

*"The pagan customs of the Gentile peoples were held in contempt by the people of God who lived in the biblical periods. This has not been the case, however, in modern times. It is usually reckoned by modern Christian authorities that the many customs of our early pagan forefathers can be innocent forms of frivolity and celebration and that God in no way condemns such practices. The vast majority of church leaders of the various denominations not only condone the Christmas and Easter celebrations that they know come directly from pagan religious ceremonies, but they actively encourage the use of them in the churches themselves and in the homes of the people. Among such customs is the setting up of Christmas trees. This custom is nothing more than a retention of pagan "tree worship" (which anthropologists and historians have for centuries informed the general public), but the setting up of Christmas trees continues unabated in multitudes of Christian churches around the world."*

Martin continues, *"Anyone can do what he or she pleases. As for me, observing Christmas customs is analogous to childishness in the faith. It shows a lack of understanding regarding what pleases or displeases God and Christ Jesus. To my wife Ramona and me, Christmas is simply a workday like any other day of the week."*

Then Martin becomes decidedly more caustic as he writes, *"Since the pagan origin of these things is so well understood by all intelligent people, then how can there be a discussion in Christian circles that would provoke "The Christmas Tree Debate" which is the title of this article? The debate is not over whether the Christmas tree is pagan because every mature Christian knows that. What has become a*

matter of discussion, however, mainly among Christian theologians, is whether the Christmas tree (or something similar to it) has been singled out by Jeremiah. The section of Scripture that evokes this debate is Jeremiah 10:1-5 and 8,9. Let us see what Jeremiah states with the King James Version being the basis of the translation.

Mr. Martin surely is entitled to his opinion that others who don't agree with him have a *childish faith*, but I would like to explore his notion that the Christmas tree tradition is in fact singled out by Jeremiah.

A closer look at the passage will show that it has nothing to do with Christmas trees and everything to do with idol worship. When [Jeremiah 10:3-4](#) is read in context with [verse eight](#) (translations below), [NKJV] "*A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine*", we begin to see the picture more clearly. Jeremiah is describing the process of manufacturing an idol. The tree was cut down, & its branches were removed with an axe, leaving a simple trunk at the desired length. Then a craftsman carved the figure of a man or a woman, often complete with sexual organs, which was then ornately decorated with gold & silver. Sometimes it was adorned with intricate weavings or hangings of unique cloth which had been prepared for it ([Jeremiah 10:9](#)). After its construction, it was permanently mounted in an upright position; and worship, which should have been offered to God, was directed to this idol. Does this sound like your Christmas tree tradition?

Dr. Richard P. Bucher, in an article entitled, [Jeremiah 10 and the "Pagan" Christmas Tree](#), writes, "This passage and the passages that follow make it crystal clear that the "decorated tree" that Jeremiah was talking about in 10:3-4, was a tree that was cut down and made into an idol, a very common custom in the ancient world. There is the immediate context of this passage. The very next verse, 10:5, goes on to say, "Like a scarecrow in a melon patch, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good." 10:8-10 also confirms this, where the wooden idols are contrasted with the LORD, who is the true and living God".

As most of us are fully aware, idol worship was a clear violation of the Ten Commandments. [Exodus 20:3-6](#) says, "*You shall have no other gods before me.* <sup>4</sup>*You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.* <sup>5</sup>*You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,* <sup>6</sup>*but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*" [ESV]

As we can see, a thorough reading of the Jeremiah 10:1-10 makes it clear that this is about idol worship not Christmas trees, palms, or any other kinds of evergreens. If you are truly worshiping your Christmas tree, & if you have dedicated it to a god of your choice, then you in fact are in grave danger. The God who purchased us with His blood has commanded us to love Him with all our heart, soul & mind—for "*You shall have no other gods before me*" says the Lord! Is that what you are really doing when you adorn your Christmas tree? Does the mere setting up of this tree constitute idol worship?

Let's look more closely at [Jeremiah 10:1-5](#) and [8-10](#). Contained are most of the details concerning the manufacturing and worship of an idol, *not a Christmas tree*. It is referred to in verse 8 as "*the stock*" representing "*a doctrine of vanities*." It was the equivalent of the *totem pole*, which is still used by pagan tribes and nations around the world. Read the following 3 translations centering in on [verse 8](#). Then compare them to the Hebrew to see which translation(s) lends itself to the clearest understanding of the text.

[KJV] "*Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. <sup>5</sup>They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do*

good. <sup>8</sup>But they are altogether brutish and foolish: **the stock is a doctrine of vanities**. <sup>9</sup>Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men. <sup>10</sup>But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation." [Jeremiah 10:1-5, 8-10](#)

[ESV] "Hear the word that the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. <sup>2</sup>Thus says the LORD: "Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, <sup>3</sup>for the customs of the peoples are vanity. A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman. <sup>4</sup>They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move. <sup>5</sup>Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good." <sup>8</sup>They are both stupid and foolish; **the instruction of idols is but wood!** <sup>9</sup>Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz. They are the work of the craftsman and of the hands of the goldsmith; their clothing is violet and purple; they are all the work of skilled men. <sup>10</sup>But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation." [Jeremiah 10:1-5, 8-10](#)

[NKJV] "Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. <sup>2</sup> Thus says the LORD: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. <sup>3</sup> For the customs of the peoples are futile; For one cuts a tree from the forest, The work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. <sup>4</sup> They decorate it with silver and gold; They fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple. <sup>5</sup> They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; They must be carried, because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor can they do any good." <sup>8</sup>But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; **A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine**. <sup>9</sup>Silver is beaten into plates; It is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the craftsman and of the hands of the metalsmith; Blue and purple are their clothing; They are all the work of skillful men. <sup>10</sup> But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, and the nations will not be able to endure His indignation." [Jeremiah 10:1-5, 8-10](#)

When reading only the KJV, I would surmise that some people have no idea what "the stock is a doctrine of vanities" in verse 8 actually means. However when we realize that the Hebrew word for "stock" [עץ] etc] is wood & "doctrine of vanities" is more easily understood as "worthless doctrine", then we will understand the gist of this passage—which is clearly speaking about useless or worthless idols. I ask again. Are you worshiping your Christmas tree? Does the mere presence of a prominently displayed evergreen qualify as an idol as it relates to this text?

When we search the rest of the Old Testament, we find many other examples of trees being planted, cut down, & carved into idols. [KJV] "Thou shalt not plant thee **a grove** of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee," [Deuteronomy 16:21](#). Forty such references in the Old Testament speak of "a grove" and "groves" of trees being used for idol worship. When we hear the word *grove of trees*, what immediately comes to mind?—a group of closely growing trees? Is that in fact what the passage below is actually referring to?

Why would the Lord care if a *grove* of his majestic creations were planted near the altar? He doesn't—but how can I in good conscience ignore this *clear* text? Because the verse doesn't say what you may think that it says—the problem is with this KJV translation—but then how would we know unless we either consulted other translations or we sought out the Hebrew. On first blush, again it certainly appears that this passage warns that these trees have something inherently evil in them. If you put your full trust in the KJV as the final source of authority you would have no way of knowing otherwise. (I regret singling out the KJV as though it's the only translation that can cause confusion but the reason I do is because it is the only translation that is almost worshipped by its ardent proponents. I have read books & pamphlets extolling the virtues of the KJV as the only truly authorized version of the Holy Scripture. I see many obvious weaknesses in the KJV & there are still translational errors after a number of revisions, but then again there are problems with all translations

because they are created by fallible man. The original manuscripts are inspired and we need to get as close to them as possible.)

In the KJV the word *grove* is the Hebrew word *asherah* [אשרה] which means "the goddess" or "goddesses." It's not a group of trees! This explains why God prohibited the planting or placing of a [grove](#) - that is, an idol - near His altar. (Compare 'Ashtoreth' ([6253](#)) as well).

Dr. Bucher again comments, *"One of the most common examples of a tree idol was the Asherah, mentioned often in the Old Testament. Asherah was a pagan goddess that was worshiped throughout the Mediterranean world. She was considered to be the goddess of the sea, the consort of El, and the mother of Baal. She was always represented as a tree or pole, either planted or erected, then decorated."*

Many hold an incredibly high view of the KJV but there are plenty of instances where the language is not properly conveyed from the original manuscripts. I find it prudent to look at more than one translation when forming a doctrinal conclusion. [ESV] *"You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the LORD your God that you shall make."* [Deut 16:21](#) [NKJV] *"You shall not plant for yourself any tree, as a wooden image, near the altar which you build for yourself to the LORD your God."* [Deut 16:21](#) Holding the conviction that the KJV is inspired might create more problems for us than merely believing that Christmas trees are an affront to God. Again we find that this verse does not support the Christmas tree ban any more than the passage from Jeremiah.

Next in line we find a similar passage in [2Kings 17:7-12](#); the sins for which the ten northern tribes of Israel were taken into captivity by Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, are listed. Among other things, there was idolatry. Again we have the same potential confusion if we rely solely on the KJV:

[KJV] *"And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree,"* [2Kings 17:10](#).

[ESV] *"They set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree,"* [2Kings 17:10](#)

[NKJV] *"They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images<sup>[a]</sup> on every high hill and under every green tree."* [2Kings 17:10](#) <sup>[a]</sup>Hebrew Asherim, Canaanite deities

The ESV & the NKJV refer to *Asherim* either in the text or the footnote. One of the many reforms which took place as a result of the great revival under King Josiah was the removal of such idols from the house of God.

[KJV] *"And he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord, outside of Jerusalem, unto the brook, Kidron, and burned it at the brook, Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder of it upon the graves of the children of the people,"* [2Kings 23:6](#).

[ESV] *"And he brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD, outside Jerusalem, to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron and beat it to dust and cast the dust of it upon the graves of the common people."* [2Kings 23:6](#)

[NKJV] *"And he brought out the wooden image<sup>[a]</sup> from the house of the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people."* [2Kings 23:6](#) <sup>[a]</sup>Hebrew Asherah, a Canaanite goddess

In the same article Dr. Buser writes, *"There are many warnings in the Old Testament about the Asherah tree. For example, in [Exodus 34:12-14](#), we read, "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you."<sup>13</sup> Break down their altars,*

*smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. <sup>14</sup> Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." From a more thorough study we learn that the Asherah idol was sometimes planted" (Deut. 16:21; Micah 5:14), sometimes erected at high places (1 Kings 14:23, 2 Kings 17:10), with altars and incense stands next to them where they would be worshiped (In Judges 6:25, Gideon is commanded by God to "Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it." See also Isaiah 17:8 and Jeremiah 17:2). The Asherah, along with other man-made idols, were often decorated with various cloth hangings (2 Kings 23:7), as well as gold and silver.*

If you think that I have isolated a few verses to make my case do a search for “grove” or “groves” in the KJV. You will find [41 occurrences](#) of which 40 refer to the idol worship of the Asherah. I apologize for the redundancy but we ought to be able to clearly see that “grove” does not refer to a group of growing trees. There is no resemblance whatever between the practices described in Jeremiah 10, or anywhere else in the Scripture with the setting up of a decorated “Christmas tree.” No one I know puts up a Christmas tree in their home or church for purpose of idol worship. Idol worship reveals the substance of the heart. So applying Jeremiah 10 to the prohibition of the “Christmas tree” is a distortion of Scripture.

*Mr. Martin clearly doesn't see it that way. He closes his article with, “One wonders what Jeremiah, if he were alive today, would say about all the Christmas trees that now decorate our Christian homes and Christian churches? Would he sound a similar alarm like he did among the ancient Jewish population in Jerusalem? He probably would. And knowing how the apostles of Christ said to flee idolatry, the apostles would probably be equally against perpetuating these heathen customs. But as for the preachers and religious leaders today, they condone the whole thing and delight in the pagan festivities.”*

Although Martin disagrees with many commentators who he says don't want to offend us (regarding the fact that the heart of the issue is the actual tree itself not the creation of a totem-pole-like object), I think he drastically misses the point that Paul makes in both Corinthians & Romans (verses to follow). Worship is the key. This is a matter of the heart. It is not about the object that is in question. This to me is a typical pharisaical response—to strain out gnats while swallowing camels. [ESV] *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. <sup>24</sup>You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! <sup>25</sup>“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup>You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.” [Matt 23:23-26](#)*

The Pharisees were overtly concerned with outwardly abiding by the full measure of the law & yet they failed to recognize that what God cares about is the heart's condition. Jesus said in [Mark 7:18-20](#), *“...Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him,...What comes out of a person is what defiles him.* Jesus was making the case that even a nice ham sandwich was not out of bounds. This was anathema to the religious leaders. Jesus constantly violated their customs and laws always pointing to the truth that He was solely concerned about the greatest commandments: loving the Lord with our entire being & loving people more than self. This is an issue of the heart & to forget that will put unnecessary strain on the body of Christ.

If, as we adorn our trees with pretty ornaments, tinsel & lights, we begin to esteem our trees as taking the place of God, then by all means remove the tree. However, in our culture today there is a much greater potential for the worship of money, status & power than there is in worshipping Douglas Furs or even totem poles. [ESV] *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” [1Tim 6:10](#)* The exultation of material possessions is of far greater concern than the worship of a tree. Are we to eliminate money because it may cause us to sin?

I must add at this point—if some who have a weaker conscience ([1Cor 8:7](#)) actually fear that their Frazier Fur will prick their sense of conscience then they might be better off without that wonderful Christmas tree aroma. God clearly warns against violating our conscience.

If the Christmas tree is as great an issue as Martin suggests, then why is “tree worship” never mentioned one time by Jesus or any of the New Testament writers? Surely this omission doesn’t negate Martin’s argument but I find it odd, if as he suggests this problem is of global significance that some NT author didn’t deal with it. Paul certainly has plenty to say about idol worship but mainly as it pertained to food sacrificed to idols or the esteeming of one day over another. Even in the context with food that had actually been used in the worship of idols, Paul writes in [1Cor 8:8](#), [ESV] “*We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do*”. So even if we were to fully agree with Martin’s scriptural interpretations, Paul appears to have completely snuffed out the flame of Martin’s argument.

When we trust Christ to be our savior & place Jesus on the throne of our lives we become fully adopted as sons & daughters of God & share in the riches of His inheritance as we begin a new life eternal with Him. We are no longer slaves to sin nor are we held captive by the law of sin & death. We become fully new. [ESV] “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* [1Cor 5:17](#) As we begin this new life we become free to pursue a life of godliness. [ESV] “*For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*” [Romans 8:2](#)

How exciting that we no longer have to live life in the bondage of sin & the chains of the law; for we who are redeemed drink living water from the cup of life. We have the opportunity to bring the life of Christ into the hearts of all those who we come in contact with. We don’t simply “put Christ back in Christmas” but we share in the surpassing greatness of the gift of Emmanuel, God with us.

So shall we, based on the pharisaical notion that Christmas is a pagan holiday, be ruled by the law of sin & death? Shall we treat the day (it doesn’t really matter if it’s July 9<sup>th</sup> or February 22<sup>nd</sup>) of Christ’s birth as do Martin & his wife Ramona as he states, “*Christmas is simply a workday like any other day of the week*”? This is a time of the year when hearts are more open & thoughts are more attuned to the things of God. We have a choice between fixations with worthless idols or we can exhale the life of God to a world that desperately needs Christ. Shouldn’t we seize the day & share the good news with great joy & not merely become the Pharisees of our own generation—more interested in abiding by misunderstood edicts of days gone by?

[Colossians 2:13-23](#) (ESV) <sup>13</sup> *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,* <sup>14</sup> *by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.* <sup>15</sup> *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* <sup>16</sup> *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.* <sup>17</sup>

*These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.* <sup>18</sup> *Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,* <sup>19</sup> *and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.* <sup>20</sup> *If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—* <sup>21</sup> *“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”* <sup>22</sup> *(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?* <sup>23</sup> *These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*

Certainly we don’t desire to abuse the liberty we have in Christ by willfully placing anything on the throne of our lives other than Christ Jesus. ([1Peter 3:16](#)) However, Paul is quite clear when he said, “*let no one pass judgment on you*” regarding the practice or abstinence of certain rituals—and then

further exhorts the brethren, *“let no one disqualify you”*, therefore voiding the claims of legalism as a *“self-made religion”* with *“an appearance of wisdom”*. God clearly abhors anything that usurps His preeminence in our lives but we should not confine those things to external rituals but rather to matters of the heart.

Money, sex and power clearly are the idols of our day. That’s why they are addressed regularly by Jesus and His followers. They are of far greater danger to our spiritual condition and our relationship with God than an ornately decorated evergreen prominently displayed in our front bay window. Let us not puff ourselves up by focusing on Christmas trees or pagan rituals as if the elimination of such things will lead us down the path of righteousness—for by doing so we open ourselves up to every kind of evil that lurks within the human heart. The misdirection of legalism is clearly an ever-present danger. When we begin to focus our attention on the external we unwittingly lower our guard against the potential of all kinds of wickedness as encased in a judgmental spirit.

In the New Covenant God no longer trifles with trivial matters of *“food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath”* but with the place that we have given Jesus Christ in our lives. Focusing on the elimination of external observances seems to create the form of false godliness. God said that all 611 commands were reduced to two, simple yet all encompassing marching orders: To love God and others with everything that’s in us. Is it not possible to be in outward conformity to the law while having no love for God or our brother?

I do not want to be unduly harsh with Mr. Martin. I trust that he’s a godly man attempting to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit. I am reacting to the content of this kind of message that seems to strike at the heart of the gospel. Are we not free? Do we not worship the King of Kings? Should we allow ourselves to be held captive by the judgment of others as they misapply God’s word? Paul writes, [ESV] *“do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. <sup>17</sup>For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* [Romans 14:16](#)

Paul points out in [1Cor 8:4](#) that idols are nothing. They hold no value other than the esteem placed by a human heart. Don’t allow those who haven’t had the privilege of meeting Jesus Christ to co-opt anything that God has made.

This year as you joyfully adorn your tree with ornaments, lights & memories, let this beautiful evergreen represent the eternal life we have in Christ. And each night as your tree comes to light, pray that the light of our savior clearly shines in your heart such that it’s evident to all. [ESV] *“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, <sup>25</sup>to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”* [Jude 24-25](#)

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Following [below the 10 points] are some New Testament passages that deal with the concept of idols. I believe they should be applied not only to idols in general but specifically to the argument at hand. Read these passages in their entirety. I have drawn a series of conclusions based on points that I believe Jesus & Paul are making:

1. [An idol has no real existence](#) – they are created by the mind of man. Anything can become an idol in our lives. We need to be on constant guard for anything that can usurp God’s place in our lives. ([1Cor 8:4](#))
2. [Idol worship is a matter of conscience](#) – It is not about the object [idol] in & of itself but the way our conscience relates to this particular thing. Idol worship is a matter of the heart &

therefore what sears one man's heart may have no effect on another. It is not the Christmas tree that's the issue but the heart of the person that's the question. As Paul clearly states, idols have no real existence since there is only one true God. ([Rom 14:14](#))

3. Everything is clean – it only becomes defiled when someone thinks it is. Everything God made is good including adorned evergreens! Simply because a mind given to corruption chooses to worship an object, does not take that object out of play for the Christian. Everything God made is good & man does not have the authority to call evil what God calls good. ([Rom 14:20](#))
4. We are no worse off eating meat sacrificed to an idol than we are abstaining. This thought can be extended to any number of items of worship. ([1Cor 8:8](#))
5. However, we must be diligent to consider the needs of others and not simply revel in the liberty we have in Christ. For if we negatively affect a weaker brother by partaking we may cause our brother spiritual harm. ([1Cor 8:12-13](#))
6. The freedom we have in Christ makes all things lawful but they don't all build up. Therefore, we must be others-centered. ([1Cor 10:23](#))
7. We must be careful not to develop definitive doctrines based solely on personal conscience. ([1Cor 10:29](#))
8. We should attempt to please everyone in everything – or as Paul states, “Be all things to all people”. ([1Cor 10:33](#))
9. Everything that doesn't come from faith is sin. This is a hard teaching & one that I still struggle fully comprehending. ([Rom 14:23](#))
10. Not one stroke of the law was to be abolished until heaven & earth passed away – Is the Old Testament law still binding on us today? It is if you don't believe that heaven & earth have passed away. If this is the case then the Christmas tree really is the least of our worries since some of us have violated at least a few Old Testament laws that were punishable by death! Possibly we should begin to redefine “heaven & earth” but that's for another discussion. ([Matthew 5:17-18](#))

### Relevant Passages Regarding Idol Worship

#### Food Sacrificed to Idols - [1Cor 8:4-13](#)

[ESV] *“Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” <sup>5</sup>For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth--as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”-- <sup>6</sup>yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. <sup>7</sup>However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. <sup>8</sup>Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. <sup>9</sup>But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. <sup>10</sup>For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? <sup>11</sup>And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. <sup>12</sup>Thus, sinning against your brother and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup>Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.”*

#### Warnings against Idolatry – [1Corinthians 10:1-22](#)

[ESV] *“I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup>and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup>and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup>Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*



<sup>6</sup>Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup>Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." <sup>8</sup>We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup>We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, <sup>10</sup>nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. <sup>11</sup>Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup>Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. <sup>15</sup>I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. <sup>16</sup>The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup>Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. <sup>18</sup>Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? <sup>19</sup>What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? <sup>20</sup>No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. <sup>21</sup>You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup>Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

### Do All to the Glory of God – 1Corinthians 10:23-31

[ESV] "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. <sup>24</sup>Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. <sup>25</sup>Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. <sup>26</sup>For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." <sup>27</sup>If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. <sup>28</sup>But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience-- <sup>29</sup>I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? <sup>30</sup>If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

<sup>31</sup>So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. <sup>32</sup>Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, <sup>33</sup>just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Do Not Pass Judgment on One Another – Romans 14:1-12

[ESV] As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. <sup>2</sup>One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

<sup>5</sup>One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup>The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup>For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. <sup>8</sup>If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup>For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

<sup>10</sup>Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; <sup>11</sup>for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." <sup>12</sup>So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

### Let No One Disqualify You - Colossians 2:13-23

[ESV] <sup>13</sup>And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup>by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>He disarmed the rulers and

authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. <sup>16</sup> Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. <sup>18</sup> Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, <sup>19</sup> and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. <sup>20</sup> If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— <sup>21</sup> “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” <sup>22</sup> (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? <sup>23</sup> These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

### Do Not Cause Another to Stumble - [Romans 14:13-23](#)

[ESV] <sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. <sup>14</sup> I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. <sup>15</sup> For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup> So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. <sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. <sup>19</sup> So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

<sup>20</sup> Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. <sup>21</sup> It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. <sup>22</sup> The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. <sup>23</sup> But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

### Christ Came to Fulfill the Law – [Matthew 5:17-18](#)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

### What Defiles a Person? – [Mark 7:14-22](#)

And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: <sup>15</sup>There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” <sup>17</sup> And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. <sup>18</sup> And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, <sup>19</sup>since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) <sup>20</sup> And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. <sup>21</sup>For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, <sup>22</sup>coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

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