

With the advent of Christianity, the Spring Gods became identified with Christ, and the birthday of the sun with the birthday of the Light of the World.

The early church father Tertullian did not approve of Christmas decorations. "Let those who have no light in themselves light candles!... You are the light of the world, you are the tree ever green...." But by the time of St Gregory and St Augustine, four centuries later, this had changed. Pope Gregory instructed Augustine not to worry about harmless outward customs, as long as the right God be worshipped through them. And so many Anglo-Saxon customs were never discarded, but simply endowed with a new significance.

By 1598 one John Stow of London wrote how: "Against the feast of Christmas, every man's house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holme, ivie, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the yeare afforded to be greene."

Blessed are the peacemakers

Matthew Ch5 v9

In this season of peace and good will, do your relationships seem more of a battleground? This may help...

The blessing of God is on peace-makers, not just peace-lovers. There's a difference: peacemakers pay the price, peace-lovers enjoy the benefits. Look at Jesus; He confronted evil and stood up for those who'd been enslaved by it. Finally, He paid the ultimate price so that you could have peace with God (Col.1.20).

Sometimes you've got to 'make waves' before you can make peace. Jesus said if you've got a problem with somebody, go to them privately. If that doesn't work, take someone with you who can help. If that fails, take the matter to the church leadership. If the offender still refuses to respond, then you must love them and leave them in the hands of God, (Matt 18.17). Those are the steps Jesus gave us for handling conflict.

Paul too said, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone." (Romans 12.18). But sometimes it's not possible! After all, you can't love flowers and tolerate the weeds that kill them. Paul was willing to give up eating certain things that offended others. (1 Corinthians 8.13) But He wouldn't tolerate troublemakers for one minute, (Romans 16.17).

If you want to be a real peacemaker, talk to God about it. His name is Jehovah-Shalom, which means 'The Lord is Peace' (Judges 6.24). Note, the word 'shalom' doesn't mean the absence of trouble, it means - the peace of God in spite of it. Be a part of the solution, not part of the problem.

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**If we have God in all things while they are ours,
we shall have all things in God when they are taken away.**

Anon