

WHAT'S WRONG WITH CHRISTMAS?

Matthew 2:5,16

By Raymond White

Christmas is under attack. There are many people who would like to see Christmas just go away. They cite “separation of church and state” as a good reason why Christmas should go away. It is troubling that such attacks have any legs at all.

But more troubling than attacks from non-believers is attacks from believers. It is very often Christians who complain the most that Christmas is too much this or too much that, and we really ought to shut up about it and just enjoy it. Just consider that Christmas, whatever for it takes, is the greatest single witness we have for Jesus Christ. If all of Christendom pooled all of its money, we could not buy the attention that Christmas each year focuses on Jesus Christ, and for that we should be grateful and not complaining.

So with that opening, let's reflect, really, on what is wrong with Christmas.

[1] IS CHRISTMAS TOO COMMERCIAL?

Luke 2:7 And [Mary] brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn

As Christmas profits grow, money does seem to push holy things aside. But it was taxes, not commercialism, that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, and that meant profits for tax collectors and merchants and innkeepers.

Bethlehem was crowded, inns were full, and Joseph and Mary were desperate to find a vacancy. The innkeeper had no vacancies, but he improvised and made a place for them anyway. It wasn't elegant, but it was someplace. Christ at least was born in a stable and not in the street. So, while it was a challenge, the stable was a blessing too, of sorts.

Commercialism takes its toll on Christmas. Santa and Christmas trees compete with Jesus and the manger for our attention. But give credit where credit's due. The commercialism of Christmas, ironically, helps keep Christmas alive which helps Christians tell the real Christmas story again each year. The more we complain about the commercialism of Christmas, the more likely stores will throw up their hands and say, “Why bother? They just criticize us anyway.”

There are lots of atheists who would love to see Christmas vanish. Why should we help that agenda by complaining about the commercialism of Christmas which is not a problem?

[2] IS THERE TOO MUCH APATHY?

Matthew 2:3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. :4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. :5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet.

Everyone knows what Christmas means. The problem is, not enough care. The chief priests and the scribes and Herod all understood Christmas. They knew their Bible, and they

knew the place: *in Bethlehem of Judaea*. But they made no pilgrimage to Bethlehem. With their minds on other things, they just didn't care.

But some cared: magi from Persia, shepherds, an old prophet and an old prophetess. And today, it is still the wise men who seek him.

[3] IS THERE TOO MUCH VIOLENCE TO TAKE CHRISTMAS SERIOUSLY?

Matthew 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

Christmas will come and go, and there will still be wars and murders and abortions. When the Prince of Peace was born, a King of hate tried to kill him. The world is a violent place. How gracious God is to have sent to our world of hate, peace on earth good will to men.

What's wrong with Christmas? There is nothing wrong with Christmas. Our commercial, apathetic, and violent world is, after all, a better place because of Christmas.