

CHRISTMAS

Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38

It has been said, “We’re in danger of losing Christmas.” I can understand this statement, can you? Subtle, but sure, erosion is eating away at the Christmas story. The world has reduced it to little more than an elaborate fable. Storytellers and singers have so added to the Christmas story that most people don’t know which details are biblical and which are fabricated.

Tradition has turned the unnumbered visitors from the East into three kings, and some have even given them names. Songs placed animals in the stable and personify them like characters out of Aesop. The manger scene is often pictured with snow, singing angels, a crowd of worshipers, and a little drummer boy. However, none of this is found in the biblical account. The magi – wise men – did not visit Jesus the night of His birth. Matthew tells us that they found Jesus in a house (Matthew 2:11). This could have been weeks, even months, after Jesus was born. The facts of the story have been lost in mythology.

Some years back, I came across an article that was talking about the growing tendency to secularize Christmas. The article is as follows:

“I’m not referring entirely to the ubiquitous Santa’s, reindeer, and talking snowmen that dominate our Christmas decorations, although that is part of it. What concerns me most is that the spiritual values of Christmas are giving way to crass consumerism. Christmas has become the ultimate holiday for committed hedonists. Drunken parties, self-indulgence, mad-cap spending, and obscene gluttony all characterize the way much of the world celebrates Christmas. The trends are not hard to document. Visit your local shopping mall during the week before Christmas, and you’ll witness graphic evidence of how Christmas is rapidly slipping away from us. Notice how stores advertise their merchandise – and notice *what* they advertise. Listen to shoppers talk. Stop by a card store and look at the greeting cards...What message would you get from what you see?”

I love the Christmas season and all its trapping, but may God help us not to forget the real meaning of Christmas. Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Jerry W. Arnold
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