

Christmas Carols that Lie

Celebrations in the season of the winter solstice serves as an occasion for the singing of many songs, presumably to God, that either contradict Scripture or bear no obvious connection to the statements of Scripture. The Son of God is pleased when we worship Him in a manner that is in accordance with what He commands in His Word. Therefore, whatever our sentimental attachment may be to Christmas carols such as those below, we ought to cease singing them in worship to God, since He does not accept them at our hands, or if we are unwilling to do so, at least admit that what we are doing is not worship pleasing to the holy Trinity, but will-worship that we continue out of stubborn rebellion, because we care about our own desires more than about what God desires. If we have never seriously considered whether or not God is pleased with the Christmas carols below, now would be a good time to start.

“As With Gladness Men of Old” teaches that the wise men went to the manger. However, the wise men arrived about a year after Christ left the manger. Matthew’s Gospel is clear the Lord Jesus was residing in a “house” at that time, with Joseph and Mary, not a manger (Matthew 2:11). Sadly, many Christmas carols teach this same lie.

Along those lines, we ought not to have a manger scene with wise men at a manger. For that matter, we ought to have no images, statues, or physical representations of the Lord Jesus Christ at all, because of the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-6) and many other passages of Scripture that forbid worshipping God with images—[see here for more on this topic](#).

“Away in a Manger” makes statements about Christ as a Baby waking up because of cattle but never crying, none of which is found in the Bible anywhere. After statements never found in the Bible, the people singing the song ask Christ to “stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.” Unless all of the singers are staying inside of a cradle instead of a house, condo, or apartment, this prayer is nonsense. The song concludes asking, Christ to bless all the children and take every one of them to heaven, which will not happen and is a false gospel.

“God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen.” This hymn commands people to remember that “Christ, our Saviour, was born on Christmas Day,” which is not true. Later it makes affirmations about what Mary was doing when the shepherds arrived that are not stated in Scripture. It also states that Christmas is holy, which is not the case. Whether one thinks it is appropriate to, in a special way, think about Christ’s incarnation on December 25 or not, God never set apart or consecrated Christmas, so

it is in no way any more special than any other day of the year. The only special day for the Christian is the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10).

“I Wonder as I Wander.” Unless you are not singing this song in church or in your home, but are singing it as you are wandering around outside, you are lying when you repeat, over and over again, “I wonder as I wander out under the sky.” When you say, “Mary birthed Jesus . . . in a cow's stall/ with wise men and farmers and shepherds and all,” you are also stating what is false, since the wise men were not there. You also have no idea whether there were cows near where Christ was born, nor whether He was born in a stall of one of them, nor if there were any farmers present.

“In the Bleak Midwinter” has many great lines, but unless you are sure that Christ was born in midwinter, and that it was bleak on the day He was born, you cannot sing this song with the confidence of faith.

“Oh Christmas Tree.” Do you really think you should sing to a tree instead of to the God who is jealous over His pure worship and His holy name? Do you really think you should sing “Oh Christmas tree, Oh Christmas tree/ Such pleasure do you bring me!” to a dead tree instead of to the living God who is the Author of all true pleasure, and whom to know is the greatest of all pleasures? (I believe that the [study here on the question of whether we ought to have Christmas trees in church](#) is worthy of consideration also).

“Of the Father's Love Begotten.” There is much wonderful teaching and truth in this song, but the modern rendition in most hymnals contains a very dangerous alteration of the original hymn's first line. The hymn originally stated that Christ was begotten of the Father's “heart,” that is, of His substance—orthodox and Biblical Trinitarian teaching. To say that the Son is begotten of the Father's “love” sounds very dangerously like Arianism. God has showed the saints, His adopted children, His love in adopting them (1 John 3:1), so Christians are in a sense begotten of the Father's love, but Christ is eternally begotten by His very nature, and the Father's paternity is a necessary element of His blessed Person, so the Son is begotten by the Father's eternal Person and of the Father essence, not begotten by a temporal act of love or begotten in any sense by a mere attribute. Are you 100% sure that the eternal Father and His eternally begotten Son want to hear you sing that Christ is a product of the Father's “love”? What if He is highly displeased by this?

“Silent Night” teaches that in the stable where Christ was born everything was calm and bright. How likely is that in a stable full of animals? Perhaps “hectic night” would have been more accurate. Furthermore, where does the Bible state that the night was silent?

“The First Noel.” The word “Noel” means “Christmas,” and the hymn states that the first Christmas celebration took place when the angels came to the shepherds in the field. However, no Christians celebrated Christmas for centuries after the Lord Jesus became incarnate, started the church, and then died and rose again (get the history by [clicking here](#).) When the festival day was added to worship in Christendom, it was the Catholic State-Church that pushed it. It simply is not true that the first Christmas was celebrated when Christ was born. Furthermore, the hymn states that Christ was born on a “cold winter’s night that was so deep.” However, there is no evidence that Christ was born in winter at all, nor anything about the kind of night it was when He was born. The hymn also states that the wise men came to the stable, saw the star the whole time of their journey from the east, and that there were three wise men. None of this is stated in Scripture, and some of it is contrary to Scripture. The hymn is packed with unscriptural information.

“While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.” This hymn states that the shepherds were “all seated on the ground” when the angels came to them. Scripture simply states that they were “abiding in the field” (Luke 2:8), not that they were all sitting on the ground. There is no way to know that they were all sitting down at that particular moment, and it is not especially probable. If they were not all sitting on the ground, though, the song is teaching falsehood, and those who sing it are singing falsehood to God. The hymn also states that a “seraph” appeared to the shepherds, but the seraphim are a special group of heavenly beings around God’s throne that are not identical with the category of beings called “angels” (Isaiah 6), and Scripture never states that one of the seraphim came to the shepherds. This song states what is not true.

While these songs—and many other Christmas carols—contain false teaching, sadly, they are some of the better ones. There is also, of course, trite drivel such as “Frosty the Snowman” that has not yet, happily, widely infected Bible-believing churches, and songs with nothing remotely resembling Biblical content, like the hymn about the unregenerate Roman Catholic “Good (?) King Wenceslas.”

“Oh, it doesn't matter,” you may say. “All that matters is that the people singing these Christmas carols enjoy themselves and that they are having a Christian (?) religious experience.” It doesn't matter if you sing lies to the infinitely holy God? Scripture says “lying lips are an abomination to the LORD” (Proverbs 12:22). “These six things doth the LORD hate, yea, seven are an abomination to him . . . a lying tongue” (Proverbs 6:16-17). The devil is the father of lies (John 8:44) and God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Sorry, but it does matter if you sing lies to God. It matters a lot. If you have done it in the past, you should immediately stop, repent of your wickedness, and

resolve by His grace never to do it again. God wants to hear truth on the lips of His people, not lies.

Of course, not all hymns about the incarnation of Christ are unscriptural. “O Come, O Come Immanuel” and quite a few other hymns about the incarnation of Christ are wonderful. Indeed, it is unfortunate that the glorious second stanza of “Oh Come All Ye Faithful” is so often omitted in modern hymnals:

*God of God, Light of Light,
Lo! He abhors not the virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten not created,
Oh come let us adore Him . . . Christ the Lord!*

It is hard for me sing this stanza or think about the glorious truth contained in it without tears coming to my eyes. Oh, astonishing fact! Oh glorious truth! Certainly it is right to sing about the incarnation of Christ—to sing what is true, not what is false, about that union of God and the creature, of the holy Son of God with the race of men, of that taking of manhood into the Godhead in the undivided Person of the blessed God-Man.

Indeed, let us sing about the incarnation of our Redeemer the whole year long, not just near the winter solstice. Let's also [sing, not hymns only, but also psalms](#) that speak of the incarnation of Christ (e. g., Psalm 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:5-7), so that we are singing to God the absolutely perfect and infallible words, with not the slightest bit of false teaching in them anywhere, which the Spirit has specifically given us to offer to the Triune God in worship. Let's sing those infallible words that represent the very mind of God Himself and the very words Christ Himself sang to His Father during His time on earth.

Furthermore, let's not think that December 25 is one whit more holy than any other day of the year, and certainly not more than a “normal” Lord's Day, the only Day ordained and instituted by the incarnate and ascended Christ for His church's worship. And certainly let us not use December 25 as a reason to sing lies, instead of truth, to the holy, holy, holy Lord.