

Franklin Graham: The War on Christmas Is a War on Christ

Millions of Christians around the world soon will be celebrating the birth of Christ. In many places, like ancient Bethlehem where Jesus was born, commemorating the birth of the Savior is still the main focus. Unfortunately, the United States in the last few decades has witnessed increased hostility toward the sacred nature of Christmas, erupting into what has become a blatant war on Christmas.

Stores, schools and communities across America continue to find new and intolerant reasons to remove any religious references to Christmas, stripping it of any holy or historical significance. Christian songs, prayers and other spiritually vital connections to the Lord Jesus Christ are deleted or diminished.

Some flagrant examples:

In Ramsey County, Minnesota, the courthouse banned red poinsettias because someone deemed them a “Christian symbol.”

The city of Pittsburgh refers to the Christmas holidays as “Sparkle Days,” in an ironic attempt at avoiding offense.

A Veteran’s Administration hospital in Augusta, Georgia, adopted a policy banning religious Christmas songs in public areas.

But none of this should surprise us.

That’s because at its root and core, the war on Christmas isn’t really about Christmas at all—it’s about the Son of God. The war on Christmas is a war on Christ and His followers. It’s the hatred of our culture for the exclusive claims that Christ made: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one

comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

When Christ stepped out of eternity and into a cold animal stall in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, the angels announced His birth with these stunning words to shepherds huddled in the Judean darkness: "But the angel said to them, "Listen! Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, became as fully man as He was fully God. He took on human flesh for one reason—to die for our sins, to rescue us from eternal separation and unending punishment. He fulfilled that mission three decades later when He hung on a cross in Jerusalem, was buried, rose again and ascended into heaven.

Believers in Christ call Jesus' birth His first Advent, or His first Coming. It was a time for miracles and healings, but also a time for suffering at the hands of sinners. He was betrayed, scorned, beaten and crucified.

When Christ returns—His second Advent or Coming—it will be an entirely different experience. He will come with undiminished power and glory, as a conquering King who will cast Satan and unbelievers into an eternal lake of fire. His kingdom will be finally consummated with the new heavens and the new earth.

Scripture calls the time between those two Advents the last days. We don't have to wait for them. Everyone born from the resurrection of Christ until His triumphant return has lived in them.

The Apostle Peter, in his first sermon at Pentecost, referred to the Holy Spirit's outpouring with the words of the prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh" (Acts 2:17).

The writer of Hebrews began his letter with a magnificent

description of Jesus Christ, saying that God “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:2).

And the Apostle Paul told his protégé Timothy that “in the last days perilous times will come” (2 Timothy 3:1). He goes on to list nearly 20 chillingly familiar character traits that describe those days, such as pride, brutality, treachery and heartlessness.

We should not be taken aback, then, when a day that should be devoted to meditating upon the marvelous, virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ is instead treated in a scandalously secular way that denies His deity and saving work.

The name of Christ is an offense to the unbelieving world. The mention of His birth, or life, or death and resurrection, is an insult.

The world, the flesh and the devil all hate the mere mention of His glorious name. They are mortal enemies of the Savior.

The world the Bible speaks of is the world system that is set against the rule and reign of Christ. It is enthralled with power and greed, and it wants no part of the Messiah’s absolute authority.

The flesh refers to the rebellious, sinful soul of man that is corrupted with deceitful desires and refuses to acknowledge God. It is willful, prideful disobedience that reacts with instinctive disdain for the Savior.

The devil animates it all. Knowing that his time to roam on earth is short and that he will one day be cast into the lake of fire, he opposes Christ at every turn. He and his demons will help gather all the nations into a great last-ditch rebellion against the King of kings before he is defeated.

Until then, however, we should expect stiff, relentless opposition to the gospel message from our culture. The

persecution that many believers already experience in many countries may still be far into the future for us, but don't expect that it will not intensify and heighten.

However, since we know that Christ has already made every provision for sinners like us, we can steadily and obediently be about the Father's work of letting our light shine before men. We can be about the business of living uprightly in an evil age, testifying of Christ's power to deliver us from sin, Satan and the world.

The war on Christmas—the war on Christ—is doomed to fail. Christ came the first time to rescue us from our sin; He is coming a second time to establish His kingdom forever under His righteous reign.

Every believer from every age who has repented and trusted in Him for the forgiveness of sin will be with Him. The Babe at Bethlehem will be the conquering King.

So this Christmas, don't worry if you see the opposition building. Praise Him that He came to earth 2,000 years ago on a rescue mission, that He has rescued you.

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