

They Don't Like Him Very Much by Jeff Strite

John 15:18-15:25

OPEN: About 5 years ago, the American Humanist Association spent \$40,000 in December for an ad campaign in Washington D.C. that attacked God during the Christian season.

Now, that's not what the spokesman for the humanist group said they meant to do: "Our reason for doing it during the holidays is there are an awful lot of agnostics, atheists and other types of non-theists who feel a little alone during the holidays because of its association with traditional religion." Fred Edwords

The group defines humanism as "a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism (the belief in God), affirms our responsibility to lead ethical lives of value to self and humanity."

Now notice the ad here: (<http://atheistbillboards.com/2008/11/why-believe-in-a-god-just-be-good-for-goodness-sake/>)

Notice the phrase: "Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake."

Who's that guy in the picture supposedly portraying?

That's right Santa.

So what's Santa got to do with God?

Well, Santa doesn't really have much to do with God... and of course the humanists know that. But in their ad they're acknowledging that Christmas has a LOT to do with God. The story of Christmas IS ALL ABOUT God loving the world so much that He sent us His only begotten Son.

And almost everyone knows that.

Almost everybody knows that the little baby was God in the flesh.

In fact, that's what the angel had said to Joseph: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' —which means, 'God with us.'" Matthew 1:22-23

The Humanists know the story.

And they also know that Christmas is one of THE most effective advertisements for Jesus. So, in their ad, they are admitting Jesus IS the reason for the season. And they're telling all of us... they don't like it!!!

These humanists aren't worried about folks feeling a "little alone during the holidays".

They don't care about that! What they care about is that Christmas is about Jesus... and they don't like Jesus.

And Jesus said that was going happen: Jesus told us there would always be people who wouldn't like Him very much.

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first..." John 15:18

There are many people in the world who hate Christmas because they don't want Jesus around.

ILLUS: There was the true story of a lady who served on many civic committees, who'd been asked to select carols suitable for a community Christmas-tree lighting. So, she asked for her preacher to help her out. When he supplied her carols, the woman was dismayed by his selections.

She said: "But they're all so theological."

And that's why there's a constant battle in the schools over traditional Christmas Carols. They ARE theological.

They declare that Jesus was more than just a baby in a barn.

Sing a few of them with me, and notice the theological statements they contain:

"Oh come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.
Oh come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him, BORN THE KING OF ANGELS.
OH COME LET US ADORE HIM, oh come let us adore Him
Oh come let us adore Him – Christ the Lord."

"Hark the herald angels sing 'GLORY TO THE NEWBORN KING!
Peace on earth and mercy mild - GOD AND SINNERS RECONCILED'
Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim: 'Christ is born in Bethlehem'
Hark! The herald angels sing 'Glory to the newborn King!'"

"Joy to the world, THE LORD IS COME! LET EARTH RECEIVE HER KING;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
AND HEAVEN AND NATURE SING, and Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing."

And that's just a sampling of the popular carols that declare that...

- Jesus was born to be worshipped
- That He was born to be a King
- That He was born to reconcile sinners to God
- And that His birth would inspire all of creation to sing His praises.

That message so permeates the American view of Christmas that it makes non-Christians nervous. Most schools have banned the singing of Christmas carols. Others have even banned carols where they weren't sung... there were just instruments. Why? Because the message of the carols is so powerful that they fear that the students will just hear the music and think of Jesus.

ILLUS: And that's not all they ban!!!

Back in 2004, a school district in Plano, Texas banned the colors red and green from their "Winter Break Party" (pause) because they felt the colors pointed to Jesus.

They banned candy canes when religious cards were attached.

They banned parents giving religious-oriented items to one another on school property.

And (my personal favorite) they even banned criticizing school board members or administrators while on campus.

I can't imagine why anyone would criticize them for this.

So, the traditional songs, colors, and decorations of Christmas make the world nervous. Why?

Because those items point directly back to God coming down in human form. And the world will not be comfortable with that because – as Jesus said – the world hates Him. John 15:18

Now, the question is, WHY would the world hate Jesus so?

Well, the answer is very simple... and it's declared in that advertisement we saw earlier.

The ad declared: "Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake."

The ad declares "Just be good for goodness sake."

Where would they have gotten that from?

That's right, It comes from the old Christmas song "Santa Claus is coming to Town."

So let's sing it:

"You better watch out, you better not cry

You better not pout - I'm telling you why

Santa Claus is coming to town

He's making a list, checking it twice;
Gonna find out who's naughty or nice.
Santa Claus is coming to town

He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake
He knows if you've been bad or good so BE GOOD FOR GOODNESS SAKE."

Now, the song "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town" doesn't mention God. So why would the humanists tie God into the "Being Good" that song talks about?
Because the humanists understand that that's what the Bible teaches.

The Bible teaches us that we can't be good on our own... we need God.
All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23
There is none righteous, no, not one. Romans 3:10
Even as Christians we're told we're going to mess up, at least a little
"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8

The world hates that message!!!
They hate the idea that they can't be "good without God."
And so they hate the Christmas story because it declares you're lost without God.
That's the clear teaching of Matthew 1:21
"... (Mary) shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

People are sinful.
And they need to be saved from their sin.
(That's what Christmas is all about)

Now there are many people in this world (not just "humanists") who reject that. There are many in the world - who believe they can be good without God.
But the way they get to this "goodness" is by "lowering the standards".

ILLUS: This past week I had the opportunity to watch a few Christmas movies on Hallmark channel. They've been running a month-long marathon of Christmas movies they've produced. One of the things I noticed was... Jesus wasn't mentioned in any of the ones I saw.

Which I guess is understandable since Hallmark isn't about Jesus... it's about presenting "nice people" for us to root for.

But one of the movies had an odd plot twist I found ... interesting.

It was called "Santa Switch".

In this movie a man was going through a divorce and is angry at Santa (apparently a surrogate God) for his life falling apart. Santa decides to let the man take his place that Christmas to see if he could do better. It isn't long before the "hero" of the story realizes how much power he's received and decides to use his new Santa powers to try to save his marriage.

But there's one fly in the ointment...his wife's boss (Trevor) starts to date her. He takes her on expensive dates and even comes to her home to give gifts to her and her children to win her over.

The hero sees this happening and decides to see if he can dig up some dirt on his rival.

Now, where on earth would "Santa" look to find "dirt" on someone?

That's right – he'd go to the "Naughty and Nice" list.

He asks the elf who's in charge of that to show it to him and is first shown the "nice" part of the list. And it's a long one. Trevor is very kind to people and spends a great deal of money on charities.

Next, he looked at the "naughty" list... and there was nothing there.

Trevor hadn't done ANYTHING naughty.

As I heard that, I thought to myself:

Trevor's done NOTHING to be on the Naughty list?

Trevor is trying to date a woman who is STILL married, whose marriage is struggling, and he's trying to put the final nail in the coffin of her marriage... and that's not a BAD thing?

(Sounds pretty naughty to me)

Then I happened to watch part of another Christmas movie on the Lifetime channel.

Part of the plot there had the heroine thinking that two of the men in town were interested in her. But she was soon to find out that they weren't interested in her... they were interested in each other. They were living together as a "couple" and much of the movie focused on the humor of their relationship. The movie portrayed their relationship as an acceptable alternative to being straight. They were "normal" and happy and funny to be around.

I'm pretty sure that behavior would put them on God's "naughty" list.

Now, not all Christmas movies this season play so fast and loose with Biblical morality, but these were Christmas, "G" rated, made for TV movies. And they illustrated that

when you leave Christ out of Christmas you end up with a very warped sense of what is Naughty and Nice.

When the world leaves Jesus out of the picture, “Naughty and Nice” become whatever people agree to say they are. That’s how our society has begun to operate ever since atheists have succeeded in pushing God out of the public arena. Our nation has become a nation of morals decided by the majority vote

- If the majority approves living together without marriage... that’s the new morality
- If the majority approves various drugs... those become acceptable.
- If the majority approves homosexuality... that’s ok.
- If the majority approves killing babies in the womb... there’s nothing wrong with it.

Many in our world have come to the conclusion there is NO higher authority than man. And thus there are no moral absolutes for us to turn to. All morality becomes “relative” to the culture you find yourself in.

ILLUS: Years ago I read about a professor in New York who had become frustrated. “10 to 20% of his students acknowledged that the Holocaust happened but couldn’t bring themselves to say that killing millions of people was wrong.”

One of his students said: “Of course I dislike the Nazis, but who is to say they are morally wrong?”

The article went on to say that “Some students were even unwilling to oppose large moral horrors including human sacrifice, ethnic cleansing, and slavery, because they thought that no one had the right to criticize the moral views of another group or culture.”

John Leo in US News and World Report. (7/21/97).

Without God there is no real good in this world because once you remove God from the equation there’s no true standard of right and wrong.

As one sign I read pointed out

“GOOD without GOD = 0

That clever concept of taking “G” “O” and “D” out of the word “GOOD” left you only with the letter “O” point out, in a very simple way, that taking God out of Good leaves you with nothing.

And that’s what Jesus came to fix.

That’s what His birth in the manger was intended to change.

“His name was to be called Jesus (which means “Salvation is from God”) for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21

So, how does Jesus intend to do this?
How does He FIX our lives?

Jesus said "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world ..." John 15:18-19

Jesus FIXES our lives by calling us “out of the world”
By making it so we know that we don’t belong in this world.
By calling us to commit ourselves to living by God’s standards.

When Jesus calls to be separate from the world He calls us to have different priorities, a different morality and a different objective than the world does. As the old Gospel Hymn says: “This world is not my home, I’m just a passing through.”

God calls us to reject the idea that we can “live” with someone and not be married.
That we can take drugs because “we” think it’s ok.
That we can find a way to try to deceive the police and get away when we’re in the wrong.

We are called to think “differently” than the world does.
And one of the most significant ways we should think differently is in how we view this season called Christmas.

ILLUS: Years ago I wrote a song for our Gospel group called “Looking for a Christmas Tree”

“One foggy winter morning I went out into the field, lookin for a tree for my home.
I searched the field all over just to find the perfect tree to decorate for Christmas morn.
I found what I’d been looking for, a tree both strong and tall.
I decorated, strung the lights, and placed er down the hall.
But somehow there was something wrong, my pretty Christmas tree.
Couldn’t show me what I longed for to see.

(Chorus): Looking for a Christmas tree, with a meaning that says love to me.
I want more than tinsel and garland bright, yes I’m lookin for a tree.

There was a baby boy, born on Christmas day, in Bethlehem so many years ago.
He was a gift to all mankind wrapped up in swaddling clothes, give so that God we
might know.

There were no decorations, no reindeer in the yard.

No Currier and Ives portrait on a Christmas card.

The manger smelled of sheep and goat and cattle in their stall.

There was no Christmas tree down the hall.

(Chorus)

The Story of that baby Jesus still can make me smile, but the little baby soon became a
man.

And the crowds that once had cheered him on, became a howling mob.

“Crucify Him” was their demand.

They nailed Him to a rugged cross, stained with dirt and mud.

The only decoration on that tree... was His blood.

And there upon that Christ filled tree we saw God’s gift of love.

The True Gift from the Father up above.

(Chorus)

(Tag): The story of that Christmas morn, it pointed to the cross.

And now I’m lookin to the tree.”

The point is: As Christians we need to look beyond the manger. We need to avoid the
temptation to keep Jesus as a baby, to never let Him grow and ultimately die on the
cross for our sins. And we should never allow the world to toss Jesus aside like an
unwanted Christmas gift. We must always present Him proudly and with confidence.
Because He is the gift that the world needs most.

CLOSE: One last thought.

Christmas is supposed to be about the birth of Christ.

If I go to a birthday party, who do I usually get gifts for? (the person with the birthday)

On Christmas, who do people usually get gifts for (each other).

Now, I realize that Jesus probably wasn’t born on December 25th, but if we’re going to
celebrate it as the date of His birth... what kind of gifts can we give to Him?

o Have you given Him the gift of your praise?

o Have you given Him the gift of your family?

o Have you given Him the gift of your finances?

o And – most importantly – have you given Him the gift your life?