



BIBLE REFLECTIONS

Wann Fanwar, PhD

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This Newsletter

The purpose of this Newsletter is to provide you with answers to certain biblical facts which have been misconstrued or misunderstood.

Q: Who are our readers?

A: Anyone interested in matters of faith.

Q: What will our readers want to know?

A: Timely, helpful, problem-solving information regarding the Bible.

Christian 'fake news' comes from inaccurate propositions we refer to as 'doctrines', in the form of songs and hymns which become integral to believers' subconscious minds, in tropes which become 'tradition' and in story retellings which become accepted folklore.

Fake News: Since this is the month for the Advent Season in Christian calendars, it means that churches all around the world will be retelling the nativity story. From the largest to the smallest, churches will be putting together their Christmas pageants. Christian schools will be doing the same. Carols will be sung, candles will be lit, trees will be decorated and presents will be opened. The real question is, 'How accurate are these retelling versions of Jesus' birth story?'

Fact Check: While such retellings are not the most egregious forms of 'fake news', they do perpetuate Christmas myths that are not entirely factual. Some sampling may illustrate this. First, It is nearly 'universal' knowledge that three wisemen visited the baby Jesus. Even the carol 'We Three Kings' sells this 'fact'. However, Matthew's gospel, which records this visit, merely mentions three gift types but makes no reference to the number of magi who actually came. Second, every pageant makes a big deal of King Herod's attempt to assassinate the baby Jesus. However, we fail to note that Luke's gospel makes no mention of this. In reality, Matthew and Luke's timelines do not synchronise. Third, in Matthew the angelic annunciation was given to Joseph, while in Luke it was given to Mary. Most pageants attempt to synchronise the story by either ignoring one account or making one take precedence over the other. The truth is that we cannot be certain as to which annunciation came first. There are other pageantry discrepancies but I think we get the point. It would be far more accurate to present a Christmas pageant as Matthew's nativity story or as Luke's. I fear that in trying to collate them we end up creating a 'different' gospel story than what Scripture records. Much can be made as to why there are differences in the two accounts or why Mark and John do not even record nativity stories. My discomfort is that we try to rewrite the gospel story to suit our theatrical intentions and in the process sell a 'product' which is not real. I can only hope that Christmas 2025 stays closer to the Gospels as they portray the birth of Jesus and not as we wish the story to be told!

I am drawn to the following assertion of Paul, 'What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with my understanding.' (1 Cor 14.15 HCSB). I suggest this maxim should be our *modus operandi* when we contemplate theological and biblical truths. In a world filled with 'fake news', the Church should be the bearer of real good news not more 'fake news'.

