

A lit candle in the foreground, with a bokeh background of many other lit candles. The text is overlaid on a dark rectangular box in the center-right of the image.

**THAT PLASTIC JESUS IN
THE MANGER SCENE**



**IS JESUS BEING
TRIVIALIZED?**

- Many people want a Jesus who is manageable – one who will not judge (John 12:48), one who can be contained and then put away when convenient.
- The celebration of Jesus' birth has taken on an almost mythical quality, where fact and fiction are confused and the reality (however gritty) of His life is secondary to the legend.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

"But these details are really ancillary to my concerns," writes Shane Scott. "What troubles me the most is the almost fairy-tale quality of many of the Christmas carols, the unrealistic way they describe the birth of Jesus. The problem is that many Christmas carols paint such a rosy picture of Jesus' birth, a scene of unrelenting joy and peace and beauty, that the story becomes too unrealistic, totally irrelevant for a world that is filled with pain and conflict and evil. When that happens, the miracle of the incarnation can easily be relegated to the same bookshelf as Mother Goose and the powerful message of the coming of Jesus is muted"

"Of Him then His mother's burden was light, the birth immaculate, the delivery without pain, the nativity without defilement, neither beginning from wanton desire, nor brought to pass with sorrow. For as she who by her guilt engrafted death into our nature, was condemned to bring forth in trouble, it was meet that she who brought life into the world should accomplish her delivery with joy."

(Homily on the Nativity, St Gregory of Nyssa)



A REAL JESUS FOR THE REAL WORLD

- Rather than thinking of Jesus merely as a rosy-cheeked, halo-ensconced newborn, we need to see Him as He is actually presented in the Bible – very real, approachable, and human, but also fully divine.
- Hebrews 5:7ff
- If it was not for the gritty, heart-wrenching, trouble-filled life of Jesus, we would not be saved (Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:14-16). We should never try to minimize Him.

- The real Jesus was despised (Is. 53:3), thought of as an unimpressive, uneducated commoner by the elites of His day.
- The real Jesus lost many disciples – This means He understands our own alienation from the world (John 6:60-66).
- The real Jesus was not popular, and did not thrive or feed on other people's approval.
- The real Jesus could not convert everyone – Many walked away without changing (Mark 10:22, Luke 17:17, John 6:26).
- The real Jesus could not win over the high and mighty – 1 Corinthians 1:26ff.

THE REAL JESUS