



**GROW  
IN  
GRACE**  
NEWSLETTER

**Volume 44, No. 49, December 5, 2017** / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter **is a weekly Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church; and is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

**IMPORTANT INTRODUCTION:** **When it comes to 'Christmas'... no one has any reason** to be uncomfortable around me. I am no man's judge. Personally, I enjoy colors, lights, pretty decorations, family, food, music, and etc. **However, when it comes** to teaching and preaching the Word of God— PLEASE UNDERSTAND, **I am under orders by God not to add to nor to take away** from God's Word! (Deut. 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19) **Therefore, as to the birth of Christ**, I seek to proclaim what is presented in the Word of God. I also seek to simply tell the historical truth about what we now call 'Christmas.' **MAY WE one and all** yield to CHRIST— by the Spirit of God and through the Word of God so as to walk in paths of honoring Christ! Grace to one and all! James Bell

### **AMAZING HISTORY and BIBLICAL REVELATION!**

THIS ARTICLE has THREE points, but no poem! 1. A brief, POSITIVE history of what is known around the world as, CHRISTMAS! OUR SOURCES will be from those who dearly LOVE CHRISTMAS! 2. I will share what I find in the Word of God about Christmas. 3. I will

share some of what the Bible reveals about the Birth of Christ.

## **POINT ONE: AN OUTLINE OF THE AMAZING HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS**

Dr. Earl W. Count, dedicated his pro-Christmas book, **“To you who have loved Christmas and have made it beautiful.”** On page 11, he states, *“Christmas is one of mankind’s greatest experiences. For more than four thousand years, spreading over the earth, it has drawn loyalties and longings of millions of people...”* On page 12, he states that ancient history tells us, *“of an old, old Babylonian festival that moves westward, dividing its ways as it comes: through Greece into Rome as a festival that **remodels itself at every step to fit the people among whom it settles.**”* [Quotes from Four Thousand Years of Christmas]

Various Encyclopedias and other readily available sources chronicle these events and reveal that **although different names were used— for 4000 years man has** had a great December celebration, on or around December 25. The Babylonians were among the first who are known to have engaged in huge, merry-making, feasting, gift-exchanging December festivals. **Moving west, when we get to Rome** we find that beginning in the middle of December, the Romans celebrated what was called ***Saturnalia***.

**In the third century,** something took place that would radically impact the whole world, even to this day! **The Roman Emperor Constantine claimed** to become a Christian and he established Christianity as the state religion. **He required all of his armies to be baptized.** Persecution of Christians ceased and Christendom rushed further and further away from Biblical practices.

**Saturnalia had the hearts of the masses.** What could be done? How could the state church, Roman Catholicism, overcome

the practices of the people's beloved traditions? **Pope Gregory had a solution.** He believed that the best policy was to let the masses keep their practices, but to change the names of their temples and their traditions; and then to do these same practices to the glory of God.

**Therefore the Catholic Church simply re-imaged** the great celebration day of the masses, normally December 25, to be changed to the birth day of Christ. And, of course, they re-imaged many of the practices. BUT THE CENTER-PIECE of the holiday would be the CATHOLIC MASS. Over time the name was shortened from 'Christ's Mass' to 'Christmass'... to Christmas. Thus, **the very first Christmas**, (a re-image of ancient Babylonian traditions and the Roman Saturnalia; Plus the MASS), **was around 300AD.**

**BUT WHAT IS THE MASS? The Creed of Pope Pius IV, states:** "I profess that in the Mass is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice [that is, a sacrifice which satisfies the justice of God and so offsets the penalty for sin] for the living and the dead; and that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there is truly, really and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, which the Catholic Church calls Transubstantiation." **NOTE: To embrace the MASS is seriously contrary to the New Testament. It fully denies the once and for and totally sufficient atoning sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary.** (Heb. 7:24-28; 9:1-28; 10:7-18)

**REALITY: Bible believers will say, "I do not celebrate the Catholic Mass at Christmas!"** Of course, THIS IS TRUE. PLEASE UNDERSTAND, ALL we are doing in this article is **discovering and tracing the historical roots** of the December 25 celebration.

Thus far, WE ARE SEEING that the celebrations of December, which were already being practiced in Roman culture... ‘Jumped ship’ and got mixed up in Christianity by the actions of Emperor Constantine and the Roman Catholic institution.

Maymie R. Krythe, in her **pro-Christmas** book, *ALL ABOUT CHRISTMAS*, writes in similar fashion: “A celebration at the time of the winter solstice, when all were looking forward to the coming of spring, was not an original idea with Christians.” She proceeds to speak about the Saturnalia; and then says: “When Emperor Constantine established Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire, **the persecution of Christians came to an end.** At first [the first 100+ years of the New Testament Church], Christ’s birthday was not observed by His followers... **But in the third century Roman Catholicism became dominant under Constantine.**” **And so the Roman Catholic church**, (being unable to abolish the customs of the masses she had baptized by force), took over their ancient practices and Christianized them!

**WE ‘FAST-FORWARD’... During the middle-ages, Christmas** was the most popular holiday— there were tournaments, pageants, and plays. Some were religious.

**BUT THEN** (during the 1500-1600s) **came the Protestant Reformation.** The Reformers were in revolt against Catholicism. They rejected the Roman MASS; therefore it was natural for them to reject the greatest Mass, Christmass. **In 1642, under Oliver Cromwell**, the Reformers gained political power. Puritan preachers openly preached against observing Christmass. **They influenced the British Parliament to pass a law forbidding the celebration of both Christmass and Easter.** Parliament decreed penalties of imprisonment for anyone caught celebrating the holiday.

**HOWEVER, IN 1647, riots broke out in various places demanding the legalization of Christmas.** The Puritan government stood firm and proceeded to break up Christmas celebrations by force of arms. **People were arrested and jailed.** In the next elections the Puritans were **thrown out of power and Christmas was back on the march!**”

**CRITICAL NOTES: There is NO PLACE in New Testament Christianity** for trying to FORCE adherence to religious or Biblical practices or doctrines— regardless if the practices and doctrines are right or wrong.

**There is NO PLACE** for bad attitudes or of fussing/fighting among folks in families or churches who are at different places in their beliefs and understanding as to Christmas.

**RATHER, the powerful New Testament ‘weapons’ to wield,** (so as to effect godly change), **are the Gospel— Love, bless, pray, do good, do not be overcome by evil, overcome evil with good; personally DRAW UPON GRACE to manifest Christ... and leave all others with the LORD!** The Puritans were DEAD WRONG in their methods.

**PUSHING FORWARD to the ‘new world’ with our sketch of Christmas history,** we find that when the Puritans came to the shores of America, they celebrated Thanksgiving but not Christmas. In fact, there was a 5 shilling fine for any pilgrim found observing Christmas! **Again, they may have been well intended; but their method was wrong. Certainly,** volumes could be written about the varied ways in which the world has celebrated Christmas.

**However, we move to** America and the twentieth and the twenty first century and note the **Modern Day Commercialization of Christmas.** **James H. Barnett, in *The American Christmas: A***

**Study in National Culture, writes:** “At the close of the war in 1918, the American economy was geared to a high level of output and a host of new products were ready to be sold. However, the consumer demands were shrinking, and there was a serious danger of a stagnant market. Both merchants and advertising agencies recognized the commercial possibilities of the folk festivals, and began to exploit these occasions shortly after 1920. This was immediately successful and **has continued unabated** to the present.” **Mr. Barnett, if you could only see us now!**

The commercialization of Christmas has exploded! **Our very national economy depends on a BIG CHRISTMAS!**

**MOREOVER, church growth experts** know the power of the holiday system; and so they guide churches in how to ‘use Christmas’ and other holidays to grow their churches. (Many use Pope Gregory’s method, year around: **Let the masses keep what they love and add Jesus.**)

**THE HONEST TRUTH: TO HAVE A BIG CHRISTMAS in a home and/or in a church takes a lot of money! Here in 2017, MANY** people will once again speak words from heavy and fearful hearts: **‘We have no money for Christmas!’ Fear and pain will be in the faces of so many. Stealing always increases** as folks try to provide Christmas for their families. **And, yes, in the midst of all this** there are many big-hearted Americans, (Christians or not), doing what they can to help others *‘have Christmas.’*

We conclude our 4000 year ‘sketch’ of Christmas by noting the **Growing CULTURE WARS!**

**How dare** others commercialize Christmas or remove the public display of manger scenes, etc... **How dare** they not call the tree, a Christmas tree!

This leads us **back to the insightful quote of Dr. Earl W. Count:** *“Christmas is one of mankind’s greatest experiences... as a festival that remodels itself at every step to fit the people among whom it settles...”*

**PURE AND SIMPLE:** We are in a re-modeling, re-imaging stage of the December holiday in America **because** our society is becoming more and more SECULAR.

## **POINT TWO: WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT CHRISTMAS**

**Well...** nothing. **There is NO mention** of Christmas in the New Testament in any shape, form or fashion. **We do not have any Biblical example** of anyone celebrating the birthday of Jesus. **(I am simply reporting.) There is no mention** in the Bible of the MASS. **NO ONE in the New Testament sought to connect JESUS with** the then 2000 year holiday system, (which is now a 4000 year holiday system), that continues to ‘remodel’ so as to ‘fit the people’ among whom it settles.

**Remember:** Study the Word of God. Be a believer priest. Seek to live by the Word of God. DO NOT condemn or judge others.

## **POINT THREE: Biblical Revelation of the Birth of Christ and the Earliest Responses to His Birth.**

God’s Holy Word is full of wonder and celebration when the topic is the birth of Christ! The first Christians just could not stop rejoicing! **May we profit from their examples!**

**1. THE ANGEL,** when speaking unto Joseph, *“...that which is conceived in her (Mary) is of the Holy Ghost...**thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.**”* (Matt. 1:20-21) **Note:** The angel had only ONE MESSAGE: Jesus was coming **to ‘save His people from their sins!’**

**2. LONG BEFORE, a prophet,** spoke: *“Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name, **EMMANUEL**, which being interpreted is, **GOD with us.**”* (Matt. 1:22-23; Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-9) **EMMANUEL! GOD with us!”**

**3. Gabriel’s announcement** to Mary! *“Hail, thou that art highly favored, the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou **among** women....Fear not, Mary: for thou has found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt **call his name JESUS**... the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called **the Son of God**... **For with God nothing shall be impossible.**”* (Luke 1:28-36) There is no worship of Mary. The total focus is on the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, and the need for a response of FAITH!

**4.** The very first one on earth to CELEBRATE the Coming of Jesus Christ was **John Baptist**, six months in Elisabeth’s womb! The second one on earth to CELEBRATE was Elizabeth who proclaimed, *“...Blessed art thou **among** women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb... For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, **the babe (John) leaped in my womb for joy.** And **blessed is she that believeth:** for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the LORD.”* (Luke 1:41-45)

**NOTE:** Christ was in the womb of a virgin! John was in his mother’s womb; **John leaped for joy, in gratitude to God for the Saviour!** Let us learn from John:

**JOY at Christ’s birth is exclusively focused on JESUS as SAVIOUR!**

**5.** Mary’s magnificent Celebration! *“...My soul doth magnify the*

LORD, and my spirit hath **rejoiced in God my Saviour...** For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name..." (Luke 1:46-55) Like all of us, Mary was a sinner! She knew it and thus rejoiced in, **"God my Saviour!"** The birth of Christ is God coming down to rescue His enemies from the wrath we all so richly deserve. It is the ultimate rescue operation from the ultimate disaster. When eyes of faith see and receive the Saviour— no artificial stimulation, no dazzling sights and sounds are needed in order for the saint to be greatly motivated to go forth **in glorious celebration, rejoicing in GOD MY SAVIOUR!**

**6.** The Angel of the LORD and a great multitude of HEAVENLY HOSTS burst forth in praise, giving **grace-filled revelation to lowly shepherds**, *"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the LORD... and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."* (Luke 2:10-14)

**God is shouting to us** from the CELEBRATING Shepherds who quickly became evangelists, preachers— making known what they had heard and seen! *"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."* (Luke 2:15-20)

**7. Simeon and Anna!** *"Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou has prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."* (Luke 2:28-38) In the midst of the stark realities of life in a fallen

world, God sends salvation and the result is peace and CELEBRATION— peace and joy that surpasses all comprehension! **Behold as blessed Anna** joins the mighty chorus of those who GIVE THANKS for the Saviour who brings redemption!

**GOD- FOCUSED celebrations are NEVER an escape from reality; and they never cater to the rich, or the talented, or those who feel themselves righteous! The typical American Christmas requires** lots of money and no broken down lives or families. **In contrast, the Birth of Christ shouts— BRING NO MONEY!** Bring all your broken down lives! Bring a hungry, humble heart and enter into every day CELEBRATION and an eternity with JESUS!

**8.** LATER, Jesus was almost two years old, and now residing in a *house*. **Gentile Wise-men** had left the long entrenched but empty celebrations of Babylon in search of the King of the Jews. By Divine revelation they had learned of ONE WHO WAS WORTHY OF WORSHIP AND PRAISE! *“... they... fell down, and **worshiped Him:** and when they had opened their treasures, they presented **UNTO HIM** gifts...”* (Matt. 2: 1-11) **EVERYTHING was FOCUSED ON JESUS!**

**9. AFTER the DEATH, the RESURRECTION, and ASCENSION of JESUS,** in the midst of daily life— THE INCARNATION, the coming of God in the flesh, brought forth CONTINUING CELEBRATION by New Testament Christians:

**1.** *“And the Word (Jesus) became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:14)

**2. “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift.”** (2 Cor. 9:15)

**3. “...Jesus Christ: Who being in the form of God,...took**

*upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men...he humbled Himself ...unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:1-11)*

**4. “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.....”** (1 Tim. 3:16)

**THEREFORE, let us give preeminent focus to the absolutely astounding:** God came in the flesh to save undeserving rebels (That’s us!) from the just and eternal wrath of God in hell! **He came to** set rebels free from self, sin, and satan.

**He gives** us new hearts and makes us His own sons and daughters; and makes us His servants, His friends, His saints and His co-laborers! **JOY! WONDER! Giving Thanks!** Praising and CELEBRATING Jesus Christ! TELLING THE GOOD NEWS into all the world, till He comes back— **these are proper responses** from those who have been rescued from sin, self, satan, and a doomed society! **“O Come, let US adore HIM!”**

**THIS IS STUNNING:** Most folk in the first century found no reason to rejoice in the Advent, the Coming of Messiah. **But they did find reason to crucify Him!**

**Why?** Because He exposed their sin, which they loved! Those who do not believe that they need to be saved from their sins and saved from the holy wrath of God will never welcome and celebrate the Saviour! *However, for those who have been broken over their sin— never GET OVER the Coming of Christ!*

**BEWARE: IN 2017, GRINCHES and SCROOGES ABOUND— DON’T ALLOW the annual Holiday system to steal and/or MINIMIZE CHRIST and HOLY CELEBRATIONS OF CHRIST! LET US ALL DARE to focus on the utterly amazing:**

**Jesus Christ came** in the flesh to save undeserving rebels from the just and eternal wrath of God in hell!

**Jesus Christ came** to set the rebels free from self, sin, and satan; and to make them His own sons and daughters, servants, friends, saints, and co-laborers!

**REJOICING IN** the birth of THE SAVIOUR who came to deliver us from our sins deserves the focus of our whole hearts!

**MAY ONE AND ALL** EXPERIENCE THE JOY, WONDER and CELEBRATION OF JESUS CHRIST UNTIL He comes back!

**Let us pray and let us set aside EXTRA LOVE OFFERINGS for the work and ministry of MISSIONARIES AROUND THE WORLD! Jesus left heaven and came to earth on the GREATEST,** most costly missionary journey of all time— to save sinners!

In Christ we have the high calling of God in Christ Jesus to LIVE and TAKE the gospel to the world, from Gallatin/Sumner County to the ends of the earth. LET US COME TOGETHER to PRAY and to GIVE for the furtherance of the Gospel!

James Bell / [www.southsidegallatin.org](http://www.southsidegallatin.org)

### **SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:**

**MONDAYS:** Jail Ministry— First and Second Monday of each month at 7:30pm. Questions? Contact Mike Munday at 615-681-7533

**TUESDAYS:** Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care Nursing Home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM.

**WEDNESDAYS:** ☐ **6:30pm— Children Ministry/activities;** ☐ **6:30pm— Youth** Activities and Bible Study— **(Enter via double doors by gym)**

☐ **6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE... (Enter via IRON STEPS; or double doors by gym) ... meet in Ladies Sunday School Room**

**\*\*\* LADIES BIBLE STUDY— the Gospel of Luke, 11:14-26! ... Cindy Bell, teaching. RESUMES on Tuesday, JANUARY 2, 2018.**

**\*\*\* MEN: EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study!**

**(DECEMBER Study — 24 Biblical Reasons Why JESUS Came!) ENTER AT THE back of Church building... under the drive-thru awning, walk forward! FELLOWSHIP, Juice, coffee, Hardee's biscuits, & Donuts WAITING, starting at 7:30am!**

### **December SUNDAYS:**

**\*\*\* December 10— 9:30am - Sunday School**

**10:45am - Worship Service / Noon MEAL**

**\*\*\* December 17— 9:30am - Sunday School**

**10:45am - Worship Service / No MEAL**

**SPECIAL Note: on 12/17— IN PREPARATION for the LORD'S TABLE...**

The Word of God will be preached; \*\*The Choir and/or others... will lead us in Special PRAISE and THANKSGIVING to GOD THE FATHER, For HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT OF JESUS!

**\*\*\* December 24—**

**9:30am- CHURCHWIDE BRUNCH in fellowship hall... bring 'breakfast-type' foods/snacks**

**10:45am-** WORSHIP (During the Worship Hour, we will again COME TO the LORD'S TABLE— for when Jesus came to earth... HE WAS ON THE WAY to CALVARY!)

**\*\*\* December 31—**

**9:30am** Sunday School and

**10:45am** Worship [NO MEAL]

**\*\*\*\*\* WATCH, LISTEN to, SHARE the Preaching of the Word of God!**

[http://www.southsidegallatin.org/Listen\\_to\\_other\\_sermons\\_on\\_sermonaudio/](http://www.southsidegallatin.org/Listen_to_other_sermons_on_sermonaudio/)