

GROW IN GRACE NEWSLETTER

Volume 45, No. 48, December 1, 2020 / Southside Baptist Church / 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 JESUS CHRIST!"***

THE 'REASON' FOR THE SEASON!

DECEMBER 2020 has arrived! THUS, for multitudes around the globe - (be they Christians or not!) - Something the whole world calls CHRISTMAS is coming! I **'googled' the word 'CHRISTMAS' and in 0.71 SECONDS I RECEIVED 3,130,000,000 results! (Over 3 billion!)** I am sure that there is a lot of exciting information in those 3+ billion responses— and it is widely believed that JESUS is THE REASON! **SO, two questions: [1] What does HISTORY reveal? [2] What does the BIBLE REVEAL?**

[IMPORTANT NOTE: I will seek to set forth, (1) Accurate history; and (2) Accurate Bible teaching!

IMPORTANT NOTE: (1) LET Each of us who are in Christ, function as responsible, Believer Priests— the indwelling Holy Spirit is our MASTER TEACHER... giving us understanding of the Word of God, giving motivation, and power to heed the Word of God! (2) There is NO ONE receiving this Newsletter over whom I sit in judgment— and that includes the things you may do, the positions you may take as to matters relating December beliefs and/or practices. (Romans 14:4-23]

I. WHAT DO THE PAGES OF HISTORY REVEAL?

The 'SEASON' (of what today is known as Christmas) has, by various names, existed for about 4,000 years! 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.**” [Quote is from, **Four Thousand Years of Christmas**; many books and Encyclopedias give the same basic history.]

IN THE THIRD CENTURY AD, something took place that would radically impact the whole world, even to this day! **The Roman Emperor Constantine claimed** to become a Christian and established Christianity as the state religion. Persecution of Christians ceased. **He required all of his armies to be baptized.**

However, there was a problem: **Saturnalia had the hearts of the masses.** How could the state church, Roman Catholicism, overcome the practices of the people’s beloved traditions? **Pope Gregory** 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. (This method of worshiping the LORD, was tried much earlier, during the time of Moses... as recorded in Exodus 32!)

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.

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

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, (what to them was the greatest Roman Catholic 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.**

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 NOTE:** *There is ZERO PLACE in New Testament Christianity for seeking to FORCE adherence to religious or Biblical practices or doctrines— regardless if the practices and doctrines are right or wrong.*

LIKEWISE, 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 THE BIRTH OF CHRIST; or as to Christmas, etc.

NOTE: ON ANY DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCE AMONG GENUINE CHRISTIANS, the Holy Spirit filled Christian will humbly and boldly stand for the Word of God; and patiently wait for the Holy Spirit to give revelation to others... remembering how patient the Holy Spirit has been to them!

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.**

We move to the twentieth and the twenty first century and note the **Modern 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!”

We conclude our 4000 year ‘sketch’ of Christmas by noting the **Growing CULTURE WARS of our time. REALITY: MANY BELIEFS and practices are CHANGING IN AMERICA!** THUS, we are in a re-modeling, re-imaging stage of the December holiday in America **because our society is becoming more and more SECULAR. This leads us back to the 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...”**

Historical reality: Our present DECEMBER HOLIDAY SYSTEM has a long history of around 4,000 years. It was not birthed from any Biblical revelation or event. MANY YEARS after the actual time of the BIRTH OF CHRIST, Men of Christian religion sought to and have in the eyes of the masses married it to Christianity.

II. Biblical Revelation of the Birth of Christ and New Testament era Responses to His Birth.

THE BIBLICAL REVELATION OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM ANYTHING WE HAVE SEEN IN HISTORY. *The reality is that the New Testament makes NO mention of Christmas. Moreover, the Word of God does not show any New Testament Christians celebrating the birthday of Jesus; NOR do we find them celebrating the ‘DECEMBER FESTIVALS’ by any name—on December 25 or on any other date.*

(Please understand... all I am doing is reporting what is revealed in the Bible!)

IN CONTRAST, God's Word is full of wonder and celebration of THE BIRTH OF CHRIST— for while they DID NOT set aside any ONE DAY for any sort of 'birthday' celebration, they continually REJOICED in the glorious truth of GOD who came in THE FLESH TO PAY THE SIN DEBT of SINNERS! CONSIDER the following EXAMPLES:

1. THE ANGEL, (when speaking unto Joseph), SAID, "...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 SENT to **'save His people from their sins!'**

2. The prophet, Isaiah: "**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.**" (Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-9)

3. Gabriel to Mary! "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....**" (Luke 1:28-36)

4. John the Baptist, six months in Elisabeth's womb; and Elisabeth: "... **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: **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) **NOTE:** Like all of us, Mary knew she was a sinner; and thus rejoiced in, **‘God my Saviour!’** The birth of Christ is God coming down to rescue His enemies from the wrath they/we all so richly deserve.

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...”* (Luke 2:10-14)

7. “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)

8. 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)

NOTICE— 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! **IN STARK CONTRAST: The typical American Christmas requires** lots of money and no broken down lives or families. **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 into an eternity with JESUS who came on a specific mission to SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS!’*

9. LATER, 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!***

10. 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! **“O Come, let US adore HIM!”**

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, those who have been broken over their sin— never GET OVER the Coming of Christ! LET US focus upon 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, and co-laborers!

***** Jesus left heaven and came to earth on the GREATEST,** most costly missionary journey of all time— to save sinners!

***** REJOICING IN** the birth of **THE SAVIOUR** who came to deliver us from our sins deserves the focus of our whole hearts... **IN DECEMBER and throughout the years— UNTIL He comes back!** **MOREOVER,** we have the high calling of God in Christ Jesus to **LIVE and TAKE** the gospel to the world. **THIS IS THE SEASON FOR WHICH JESUS CHRIST IS THE REASON!**

BEWARE: TWELVE MONTHS A YEAR, THE WORLD is filled with deceiving 'GRINCHES and SCROOGES'— **designed to HINDER heart focus from being upon CHRIST and our Gospel Mission!**

Great Grace to you all! James

www.southsidegallatin.org

NEWS NOTES:

EVERY Saturday, * 8:00am — Men’s Bible Study: — *THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS!* (Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee’s Biscuits are available!)**

***** NEXT Ladies Bible Study— *Tuesday, JANUARY 12, 2021, 11:00am: Women of the Bible!***

SUNDAY’S SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER 6, 2020

***** Sunday School at 9:30am:** Nursery, Children’s classes, Youth, and Adult classes.

***** WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!**

Additional Sunday Events:

1. DECEMBER 6, Fellowship Meal, after morning worship service.

2. DECEMBER 13, 5:00pm - 6:30 pm- Training Faithful Men, 1689 Confession of faith.

3. DECEMBER 20, LORD’S SUPPER, at end of Morning Worship; and HOME GROUPS, in the evening.

4. DECEMBER 27, 5:00pm - 6:00pm- Church Wide DISCIPLESHIP... presently an important STUDY on PRAYER, using R.C. Sproul videos...

TUESDAYS: WEEKLY Youth Group Meeting, ages 12 and up ... NOW, Tuesdays a 7:15pm... at Jaden and Rhi’s home...

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ SOUTHSIDE:

6:30pm— Come in by the back ‘double doors’ under the Drive Thru awning

**** Adult Prayer Service**

**** Young FAMILIES Prayer Service**

HEALTH REMINDERS as to CHURCH SERVICES

1. IF YOU ARE SICK... [OR if you are presently in a state of high immune deficiency **or if** (at home or work) you are caring for one who is sick; **or if** you have • **Fever**; • Coughing; • • Chills; • Headache; • Sore throat; etc.], **please stay home!]**

2. IF YOU ARE HEALTHY and well... you may or may not choose to wear a mask... or gloves... WE do not require; we WILL NOT provide such. WE CONTINUE to encourage FREEDOM... as to 'social distancing'— 6ft apart... give sensitivity and respect one to another.

ADDED NOTE: In addition to carefulness, and good hydration, good nutrition, and sleep— ALSO: so as to SEEK TO HAVE A STRONG IMMUNE SYSTEM... I PERSONALLY TAKE ELDERBERRY, VITAMIN C, ZINC, GINGER, VITIMIN D, Quercetin, and a good multi-vitamin that includes fiber.

3. LET each of us DO OUR PART IN personal hygiene. IF you use the restrooms— please wash your hands with SOAP; and use nearby SANITIZER.

IT IS A MATTER OF SAFETY for all, (ESPECIALLY for SENIOR ADULTS), CHILDREN ANY WHERE IN THE CHURCH BUILDING— No unsupervised Children!

FOR THOSE AT HOME: TO RECEIVE THE 10:45am LIVE STREAMING of the worship service of December 6... GO TO: www.southsidegallatin.org [You can also connect to our YouTube page for past messages & Bible Studies!]

LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD BY MAIL or ONLINE GIVING:

SUCH funds, (if checks), make out to Southside Baptist) —

**MAIL TO: Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594,
Gallatin, TN 37066**

OR, you may choose to GIVE, via ONLINE GIVING

<https://southsidebaptist.breezechms.com/give/online>