

GROWING IN GRACE LETTERS! – Calling saints in Christ, (in our homes and with one another in Church), to walk in the Steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:15-25) Edited by James Bell, a servant of Jesus Christ!

12 2 25 V1n30 A HISTORY LESSON AS TO THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST!

[REMINDER: Every genuine Christian is a believer priest, indwelt with the Holy Spirit, WHO ‘breathed out the Word of God; and who is our indwelling Master Teacher! **THEREFORE, let each CHRISTIAN be a ‘STUDENT’ of the Word of God; a learner at the feet of Jesus!** MOREOVER, in any study of Scripture, let us be ready, as needed, to receive CONVICTION from and YIELDED-NESS to the Holy Spirit breathed Word of God!]

PART ONE: A Brief, UPDATED, Outline of an ancient holiday, which the whole world now calls, **CHRISTMAS!** (This article is just a HISTORY lesson.)

In PART ONE, we will only quote or refer to SOURCES which are PRO CHRISTMAS! For example, Dr. Earl W. Count, dedicated his PRO-Christmas book, ***FOUR THOUSAND YEARS OF CHRISTMAS, “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.”*

Encyclopedias and other sources also chronicle these events and reveal that — **for 4000 years** man has, indeed, had a great December celebration, on or around December 25.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY:

[1] Ancient Babylonians were among the first who are known to have engaged in 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.

[2] In the third century, something took place that would radically impact the whole world, even to this day! **The Roman Emperor CONSTANTINE** professed to become a ‘Christian’ ... And he established ‘Christianity’ as the state religion. Persecution of Christians ceased. He required all of his armies to be baptized. However, **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 also change the names of their temples and their traditions; and then, to do these same practices to the glory of God. So, the Catholic Church simply re-imaged the great celebration day of the masses, to be changed

to the birth day of Christ. **THUS, beginning at around 300AD, the CENTER-PIECE of the holiday would become a celebration of the birth of Christ, via the CATHOLIC MASS.** Over time the name was shortened from 'Christ's Mass' to 'Christmass' ... to Christmas.

[NOTE: Bible believers are quick to say, "*We do not celebrate the Catholic Mass, nor the previous pagan gods at our Christmas!*" THIS IS TRUE.]

THUS FAR, in our historical journey, WE ARE SEEING that the celebrations of December, (which were already being practiced in Roman culture; and previously in Babylonian culture) --- 'jumped ship' and were placed in 'Christianity' by Emperor Constantine and the Roman Catholic Church. **(This is not a criticism; it is just a point of history.)**

Maymie R. Krythe, in her PRO-Christmas book, ALL ABOUT CHRISTMAS, (As a matter of history), refers to Christmas as, "A celebration at the time of the winter solstice, when all were looking forward to the coming of spring; **(and it) was not an original idea with Christians.**" She proceeds to speak about the Saturnalia; and then says: "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), brought over their ancient practices and Christianized them!

(Again, this is just history!)

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

[4] THEN (during the 1500-1600s) came the Protestant Reformation. THE REFORMERS were in revolt against Catholicism. *Thus, they rejected the Catholic MASS; therefore, it was natural for them to reject, (what to them was), the greatest Roman Catholic Mass, Christmass.*

THUS: 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. **MOREOVER, 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!" (Once again, all this is just a matter of history!)

HOWEVER, let's be clear about this: There is ZERO PLACE in Biblical, 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, today, there is NO PLACE for bad attitudes or of fussing/fighting among folks in families or churches who are at different places in their understanding as to the Birth of Christ. **RATHER, the powerful New Testament method is to** — Love, bless, pray, do good, to not be overcome by evil, overcome evil with good; to personally DRAW UPON GRACE to manifest Christ... and leave all others with the LORD! **The Puritans were DEAD WRONG in their methods.**

[5] 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 ‘FIVE shilling’ fine for any pilgrim found observing Christmas! **[COMMENT: Again, they may have been well intended; but their method was wrong.]**

[6] 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 a statement about 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, 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 to

the present.” **[INDEED:** The commercialization of Christmas has exploded! Our very national economy depends on a BIG CHRISTMAS! **EVEN, church growth experts know the power of holidays;** and so, they guide churches in how to ‘use Christmas’ and other holidays to grow their churches.]

ECONOMIC REALITY: TO HAVE A ‘BIG CHRISTMAS’ in a home and/or in a church takes a lot of money! **Here in 2025,** fear and pain will be in the faces of many, as folks try to provide ‘Christmas’ for their families. **At the same time, every year there are many big-hearted Americans,** (Christians or not), doing what they can to help others ‘HAVE CHRISTMAS!’ **AND THERE ARE many Christian families seeking to have godly family times, seeking** to focus on giving and not getting, and **seeking** to be truth tellers, etc.! **(That’s a good thing!)**

[7] We conclude our history ‘sketch’ of Christmas by just noting the **CULTURE WARS!** MANY **BLESSINGS UPON THEM** PROTEST: *“How dare others commercialize Christmas; or remove the public display of manger scenes, etc. How dare they not call the tree, a Christmas tree!”* **REALITY:** We are in a re-modeling, re-imaging stage of the December holiday in America **because our society is becoming more and more SECULAR.**

As Dr. Earl W. Count stated: *“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!”*

PART TWO: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT CHRISTMAS? AS A MATTER OF HISTORICAL and BIBLICAL ACCURACY, we have to

state that there is **NO mention of and NO CELEBRATION of** Christmas in the New Testament.

Moreover, NO ONE in the New Testament ever sought to connect JESUS with any of the beloved festivals of their day, common in the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, in **2025, OUR WORLD, (INCLUDING most preachers!) EQUATE 'CHRISTMAS' with 'The Birth of Christ.'**

NEVERTHELESS, The BIBLE REVEALS that they are two separate events that are not historically related to each other, in any way.

PART THREE: Biblical Revelation of the Birth of Christ and New Testament era Responses to His Birth. God's Word is full of grand celebration as to the birth of Christ! BEHOLD! LET US EXPERIENCE THE WONDER:

[1] THE ANGEL OF THE LORD, 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) The angel had ONE MESSAGE: Jesus was coming 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 Baptist, six months in Elisabeth's womb; and Elizabeth: "... the babe leaped in my womb for joy ... for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the LORD." (Luke 1:41-45) **NOTE: The joy is focused on JESUS!**

[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 was a sinner! She knew it and thus rejoiced in, **"God my Saviour!"**

[6] The Angel of the LORD and a great multitude of HEAVENLY HOSTS burst forth in praise, giving **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...**" (Lu 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 hast prepared before the face of all people ... ” (Luke 2:28-38)

[9] LATER, Gentile Wise-men, (who by Divine revelation had learned of ONE WHO WAS WORTHY OF WORSHIP AND PRAISE!), “... **came and fell down, and worshiped JESUS ONLY!** And when they had opened their treasures, they presented **UNTO JESUS ONLY**, gifts ...” **EVERYTHING was FOCUSED ON JESUS!** (Matt. 2: 1-11)

[10] AFTER the DEATH, RESURRECTION, and the ASCENSION of JESUS — THE BIRTH OF CHRIST (The coming of God in the flesh!), CONTINUED TO BRING forth CELEBRATION from New Testament Christians:

[1] “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)

“O Come, let US adore HIM!”

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

MOREOVER, in Christ we have the high calling of God in Christ Jesus to LIVE out the gospel;

and to TAKE the gospel to the world!

O COME LET US WORSHIP and SERVE HIM! James Bell

SUNDAY SERVICES: DECEMBER 7, 14, 21, 28:

[1] **Sunday School at 9:30am:** Nursery, Children's classes, Youth, and Adult classes. [2] **WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!**

SPECIAL SERVICES:

***** DECEMBER 7-- FELLOWSHIP, COVERED-DISH meal, after morning worship**

***** DECEMBER 21, INSTEAD OF SUNDAY SCHOOL, A CHURCH-WIDE 'BRUNCH!' /// AND ... LORD'S SUPPER, at close of Morning Worship**

***** December 28, Fourth Sunday Evening worship; 5:00pm:**

EVERY SATURDAY* 8:00 AM,** — Men's Bible Study! (*Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee's Biscuits are available!*)
(Romans, chapter 3)

NEXT Ladies Bible Study, JANUARY, 2026 @ 11:00 AM

*****TUESDAYS: LADIES PRAYER MEETING @ 10:00AM**

Youth Group Meeting, ages 12 and up ... Tuesdays a 7:15pm at Jaden and Rhi's home!

**WEDNESDAY NIGHTS: 6:30pm— ** Adult Prayer Service ** Young
FAMILIES STUDY/Prayer Service**
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