

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 23 25 V1 n33 - DECEMBER 2025 — THE WONDER of the Birth of Christ! (Let us SEARCH the SCRIPTURES!)

I. GABRIEL VISITED ZACHARIAS, Luke 1:5-25. By the time this scene finished, Zacharias had been made "dumb, unable to speak"... and his previously barren wife had become pregnant! According to 1 Chronicles 24:7-19, there were 24 courses of priests who served. The courses were counted from the spring of the year. At least some scholars tell us that Zacharias' course was the 8th. IF SO, he would have been serving around the first of June. When his responsibility was finished, he went to his home and soon thereafter, his wife (Elizabeth) conceived, (Luke 1:23-25).

This would place the probable time of conception as being in late June or in July. Thus, John's birth would have been the following spring in March or April.

Luke also tells us that it was in the 6th month of Elizabeth's pregnancy that Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit, (Luke 1:24-26, 36). With these calculations we have Biblical evidence that the actual birth date of Jesus, (6 months after John's birth), would have been in September or October.

This is of particular interest because we know that Jesus died precisely on the day of PASSOVER and that the Holy Spirit came precisely on the day of PENTECOST. AND WE KNOW that God's Old Testament Holy Days CYCLED the complete plan of redemption so that Old Testament believers were celebrating the coming FULL SALVATION, every year! **In the Spring of the year, they celebrated: (1) Passover; (2) Unleavened Bread; (3) First-Fruits and (4) PENTECOST; And in the Fall of the year, they celebrated (5) The Feast of Trumpets; (6) The Day of Atonement; and (7) The Feast of the Tabernacles.**

The Bible shows that it was in the spring of the year when JESUS FULFILLED the first four of these seven. And, also, it is in the BEGINNING of our being saved that Christians experience the New Covenant fulfillment of these first four aspects of God's FULL SALVATION: **NAMELY,** (1) Christ died for us; (2) We are separated unto Christ; (3) We experience the life of the Resurrected Christ and (4) We experience Christ indwelling and empowering us by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, we have sound Biblical reason to expect that God will continue to unfold His FULL SALVATION in accordance with the Divine Pattern He has already established. Thus, the first coming of Jesus (As well as His Second Coming!) likely was and likely will be precisely in the time of the Fall Feasts of Trumpets/Day of Atonement and Tabernacles. **For when Jesus**

came the first time — "THE WORD was made flesh and dwelt (tabernacled!) among us..." (John 1:14).

Moreover, what happened at His first coming was a veiled foretaste of things yet to come, when for all eternity the redeemed will be in a continual "Feast of Tabernacles!"— A continual spiritual feast of dwelling with Him! (Rev. 22:1-4) **○ COME LORD JESUS!**

The Bible unveils that God has established a SACRED CALENDAR OF REDEMPTION EVENTS which unfold FULL SALVATION! We would do well to build into our lives **a sacred, yearly calendar of FULL REDEMPTION/FULL SALVATION:**

(1) Christ Died for us. (2) We are separated from sin and unto Christ. (3) Christ was resurrected for us and we are raised to new life in Him. (4) Christ is Baptizing, Indwelling, and Empowering His Church by the Holy Spirit. (5) Christ came! And Christ is coming back— for and with His saints. (6) Christ: As He is, so we are in Him! Saints are predestined to be like Him. (7) Christ: All who are in Christ will see Him FACE TO FACE and will rule and reign with Him for all eternity! **THIS IS 'FULL SALVATION!' 'FULL REDEMPTION!' ... which we CELEBRATE, and REMEMBER every time we come to THE LORD'S TABLE; until JESUS RETURNS!!**

Christ's birth was one step in the midst of God's grand unfolding of FULL SALVATION! The Biblical revelation of the

birth of Jesus connects 'Bethlehem and Calvary!' – "You shall call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins!" (Matt. 1:21)

II. GABRIEL VISITED MARY: Luke 1:26-38. Six months after Elizabeth conceived John by Zacharias, Mary (a virgin) conceived the Son of God by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. This miracle is astounding and glorious; **and without the Virgin Conception and birth of JESUS — WE WOULD HAVE NO SAVIOUR!**

TRAGIC: The multitudes of the whole world celebrate the man created, 'Christmas' holidays with NEVER any THOUGHT of and without any wonder of or gratitude as to the VIRGIN CONCEPTION and BIRTH of Jesus Christ! **Even more tragic,** growing numbers of pastors in the Pulpits do not believe or view the Virgin Conception and Birth of Jesus as necessary!]

III. MARY VISITED ELIZABETH: Luke 1:39-56.

When Mary arrived in the presence of Elizabeth, **John (six months in Elizabeth's womb) jumped for joy!** (Luke 1:41-46) Yes, pregnant MOM— inside of you is more than a mere fetus! There cradles a living child who already knows and experiences a lot more than you might think! **[PARENTS: 'DO NOT ABORT!'... PARENTS: COMMUNICATE with your unborn child! GIVE YOUR UNBORN child a healthy environment of God's Word and PRAISE TO GOD!]**

NOTE: There was no worship of Mary. The total focus was on the coming of Jesus, the Son of God; and glorious responses of FAITH! This announcement fills every enlightened, saved sinner with profound joy and celebration; and gives hope to those yet lost. **O THE WONDER OF IT ALL: Christ was in the womb of a virgin! John was in his mother's womb. John leaped for joy! This was total, focused, undiluted celebration WORSHIP.**

Let us learn from six-month-still-in-the-womb John! JOY at Christ's coming is exclusive. The birth of Christ is the ultimate rescue operation from the ultimate disaster — namely from the holy and just wrath of God!

THUS, 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, like Mary, 'in GOD MY SAVIOUR!'

IV. MARY RETURNED HOME, JOHN BAPTIST WAS BORN, THE ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO JOSEPH: Luke 1:57-80 and Matt. 1:18- 25. When Mary, (three months pregnant), returned home— needless to say, Joseph was shocked. Mary and Joseph were betrothed to each other. During this period, they were considered to be husband and wife, although the marriage had not been consummated. In the will of God, they were to remain VIRGINS! **BUT it seemed obvious that Mary had fornicated!** Joseph could have had her stoned or he could have divorced

her. He seemed committed to the latter. (Matt 1:18- 25) **HOWEVER**, after the Angel of the LORD appeared to Joseph in a dream, Joseph received Mary and together they bore a great shame from society. They were looked upon as fornicators.

Jesus lived 33 years under the cloud of being an illegitimate. (John 8:41) (This was a part of the price Jesus paid for sinners, even long before He ever got to Calvary!)

PAUSE, LET REALITY GRIP US: The angel did not announce or set up the beginning of a big secular and/or religious holiday. RATHER, In all of the Biblical ‘snap shots’ of joy and celebration at Christ’s birth there is the same singularity of focus— **JESUS IS THE FOCUS; AND THE JOY IS THIS: Jesus came to save His people from their sins! That is GREAT and sufficient reason for joy and rejoicing!**

V. JOSEPH AND MARY WENT TO BETHLEHEM. JESUS WAS BORN: Luke 2:1-7 INN: Literally, “guest room”... A totally different word is used when actually speaking of an Inn, such as the Good Samaritan used: Luke 10:25- 37. The average home in Bethlehem would have had upper living quarters and a lower portion for their animals to use at night. If visitors came, they would normally stay with the family in the upper portion in the guest area. In Mary and Joseph’s case, this was likely the home of someone that they knew; but the guest room was already filled — thus, they went to the lower level, among the animals.

When Jesus was born, after being securely wrapped, He was laid in an animal's feeding trough. Again, based on the information under the first point of this article, the probable time of Christ's birth was in the fall of the year. **This also gives a good explanation as to why there was "no room in the Inn... or guest room."** For in addition to the taxing, the **Feast of Tabernacles would have drawn as many as two million Israelites to Jerusalem.** Bethlehem, just five miles north, would have experienced much overflow. **The Feast of Tabernacles looked forward to a time of completion and fulfillment, a time when God would dwell with men!** And unknown to the masses, Jesus did just that: "The WORD became flesh, and dwelt (tabernacled!) among us..." (John 1:14)

LET US BE WATCHING AND WAITING! JESUS IS COMING BACK!
(Revelation 19-22)

CHRISTIAN: Even now Jesus by His Holy Spirit, 'tabernacles' within you! **CHRISTIAN: Your heart is His home!**
WELCOME HIM! LET US Be Still! Stand in Awe!

VI. "They shall call his name, EMMANUEL ... GOD with us." (Matt. 1:22-23; Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-9) The celebration began long before the Angelic announcements to Mary and Joseph — To a prophet, who had been the bearer of so much sad news and

warnings of impending judgment and wrath, awesome prophecies give reason to CELEBRATE—

“Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying, *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!**”

EMMANUEL! GOD with us! HERE IS TRAGIC Modern reality:

“O, yes, I can work in listening to a cantata; and they usually sing something about Emmanuel. But I have parties to plan, parties to go to, and presents to wrap, and company to prepare for, and miles to travel — the list is almost endless.

No, I have never stopped and personally meditated upon ‘GOD WITH US’... It sounds too deep, too serious ... not much fun!”

[UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH: Cultural Christmas is so demanding of time, energy, and resources THAT most have nothing left for much else! THIS STRUGGLE IS REAL! WHY?

BECAUSE, without realizing it, mega-millions of sincere folk attempt to do **what JESUS SAYS CANNOT BE DONE!!** Again, **UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH:**

[1] Man’s Christmas is a great MASTER.

[2] The Birth of Christ is a totally different MASTER, unmixed with any of man’s annual Christmas traditions.

[3] AND, Jesus says that we CANNOT serve two masters. (Matthew 6:24) **When we try, one or the other gets 'shorted'... one or the other, ultimately gets despised.**

DECEMBER 2025: WHAT IS MY FOCUS? BY WHAT ... BY WHOM AM I BEING MASTERED? **[ALERT: JUDGE NO OTHER PERSON ON THESE MATTERS. JUDGE ONLY ONE'S OWN HEART!!]**

VII. THE ANGELS PROCLAIMED MESSIAH'S BIRTH, THE SHEPHERDS VISITED THE CHRIST-CHILD IN THE ANIMALS' QUARTERS: Luke 2:8- 20. The angels were rejoicing that God was bridging the unbridgeable gap between holy God and sinful man, **"UNTO YOU A SAVIOUR IS BORN, JESUS CHRIST THE LORD!"** THIS IS STUNNING and GLORIOUS: Angels were the first to sin! All sinning angels are doomed forever. **The sinning angels received no mercy, no forgiveness. They are reserved in JUST judgment: 2 Peter 2:4!**

[1] The fallen angels only receive holy justice and wrath! **[2]** Yet, a NUMBERLESS MULTITUDE of fallen humans, receive mercy and grace. **[3]** The REJOICING Elect Angels have no complaint against the SOVEREIGN WILL of God! Rather, they lead the way in WORSHIP and praise for God coming to save sinful humans! **And THE Shepherds** responded to divine revelation with faith, praise, and with spreading the GOOD NEWS, 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) DECEMBER 2025, QUESTION: Am I allowing the annual American Holiday system to steal HOLY CELEBRATIONS OF CHRIST from my experience?

Jesus Christ came in the flesh to save "HIS PEOPLE!" from the just and eternal wrath of God in hell; **JESUS CHRIST CAME TO MAKE A WAY TO RECEIVE** us into His Family to worship and serve THE ONE, THE TRUE, THE TRIUNE GOD forever, and forever!

O the wonder of Christ's Birth!

DECEMBER 2025. WHAT IS MY FOCUS?

Grace to all in Christ! James Bell

NEWS NOTES:

SUNDAY SERVICES: DECEMBER 28:

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

***** 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!*) **(December 27; Romans, chapter 5)**

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

*****TUESDAYS: LADIES PRAYER MEETING @ 10:00am - not meeting on 12/24**

Young Adults ... Tuesdays a 7:15pm at Jaden and Rhi's home!

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS:

NO SERVICES at church building on 12/24

***** LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD BY MAIL or by ONLINE GIVING:** SUCH funds, (if checks), make out to Southside Baptist) —
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