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West Suffolk Epistle West Suffolk Baptist Church



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Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant

Awaiting His Return

There is a widespread fascination with the end of the world. Throughout history, we have witnessed the bold assertions of soothsayers, naysayers, and doomsdayers. Every day, self-proclaimed prophets of the end times make whimsical predictions about the future. Claiming to have biblical authority, they tout their cleverly devised schemes about the end of the world as we know it, and by reading between the lines of the Old Testament prophetic books, they carefully contort the words of sacred Scripture to fit their fictional fantasies about the second advent of Christ.

Christians throughout the world have become so enamored with some obscure aspect about the second advent of Christ that they construct their entire systems of doctrine upon what might happen—not upon what has happened. We are, indeed, called to live with eager expectation of the second advent of Christ, but we should only do so in light of the first advent of Christ. In remembrance of Christ's first advent, it is not enough simply to wish Jesus a happy birthday. In fact, to do so borders on blasphemy. Instead, we are called to remember and to celebrate the incarnation of the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Logos.

At the first advent of Jesus Christ, the fullness of time had come and God sent forth His Son into this fallen world. As the prophets foretold, He was born of a virgin who was richly blessed of God. He was born under the law of God, not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. As was necessary to redeem those under the Law, He fulfilled the righteous demands of the Law and took upon Himself the sins of His people, His sheep for whom He laid down His life.

As His people, we confess that Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. We believe He will return to this world not as a babe in a manger but as the King of all the earth, in power and glory to manifest His reign over the new heavens and the new earth.

We confess His return because of what He taught us at His first advent and on account of the hope that is within us. For this reason, during the wonderful Advent season that comes each year, we should eagerly await the second advent of Christ as we celebrate the first advent of Christ. Nevertheless, let us always be mindful that although Christmas day comes only once a year, we are called to remember and celebrate the eternal work of Christ—past, present, and future—each day of our lives *coram Deo*, before the face of God. ~ *Dr. Burk Parsons*

The Foundation for the Joy of Christmas

Along with the great theologian and philosopher Anselm of Canterbury we ask in 1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave the question, *Cur deus homo?* Why the God-man? When we look at the biblical answer to that question, we see that the purpose behind the incarnation of Christ is to fulfill His work as God's appointed Mediator. It is said in 1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself . . .”



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The Foundation for the Joy of Christmas

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Now, the Bible speaks of many mediators with a small or lower case “m.” A mediator is an agent who stands between two parties who are estranged and in need of reconciliation. But when Paul writes to Timothy of a solitary Mediator, a single Mediator, with a capital “M,” he’s referring to that Mediator who is the supreme Intercessor between God and fallen humanity. This Mediator, Jesus Christ, is indeed the God-man.

In the early centuries of the church, with the office of mediator and the ministry of reconciliation in view, the church had to deal with heretical movements that would disturb the balance of this mediating character of Christ. Our one Mediator, who stands as an agent to reconcile God and man, is the One who participates both in deity and in humanity. In the gospel of John, we read that it was the eternal Logos, the Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us. It was the second person of the Trinity who took upon Himself a human nature to work out our redemption. In the fifth century at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the church had to fight against a sinister teaching called the Monophysite heresy. The term *monophysite* is derived from the prefix *mono*, which means “one,” and from the root *phusis*, which means “nature” or “essence.” The heretic Eutyches taught that Christ, in the incarnation, had a single nature, which he called a “theanthropic nature.” This theanthropic nature (which combines the word *theos*, meaning “God,” and *anthropos*, meaning “man”) gives us a Savior who is a hybrid, but under close scrutiny would be seen to be one who was neither God nor man.

The Monophysite heresy obscured the distinction between God and man, giving us either a deified human or a humanized deity. It was against the backdrop of this heresy that the Chalcedonian Creed insisted Christ possesses two distinct natures, divine and human. He is *vere homo* (truly human) and *vere Deus* (truly divine, or truly God). These two natures are united in the mystery of the incarnation, but it is important according to Christian orthodoxy that we understand the divine nature of Christ is fully God and the human nature is fully human. So this one person who had two natures, divine and human, was perfectly suited to be our Mediator between God and men. An earlier church council, the Council of Nicea in 325, had declared that Christ came “for us men, and for our salvation.” That is, His mission was to reconcile the estrangement that existed between God and humanity.

It is important to note that for Christ to be our perfect Mediator, the incarnation was not a union between God and an angel, or between God and a brutish creature such as an elephant or a chimpanzee. The reconciliation that was needed was between God and human beings. In His role as Mediator and the God-man, Jesus assumed the office of the second Adam, or what the Bible calls the last Adam. He entered into a corporate solidarity with our humanity, being a representative like unto Adam in his representation. Paul, for example, in his letter to the Romans gives the contrast between the original Adam and Jesus as the second Adam. In Romans 5, verse 15, he says, “*For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.*” Here we observe the contrast between the calamity that came upon the human race because of the disobedience of the original Adam and the glory that comes to believers because of Christ’s obedience. Paul goes on to say in verse 19: “*For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.*” Adam functioned in the role of a mediator, and he failed miserably in his task. That failure was rectified by the perfect success of Christ, the God-man.



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The Foundation for the Joy of Christmas

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We read later in Paul's letter to the Corinthians these words: "And so it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man" (1 Corinthians 15:45).

We see then the purpose of the first advent of Christ. The Logos took upon Himself a human nature, the Word became flesh to effect our redemption by fulfilling the role of the perfect Mediator between God and man. The new Adam is our champion, our representative, who satisfies the demands of God's law for us and wins for us the blessing that God promised to His creatures if we would obey His law. Like Adam, we failed to obey the Law, but the new Adam, our Mediator, has fulfilled the Law perfectly for us and won for us the crown of redemption. That is the foundation for the joy of Christmas. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*

The Name of Jesus

Over the past two thousand years, more people on planet earth have known the name of Jesus than any other name. Since AD 33, over eight billion people, by one estimate, have claimed to be followers of this Jesus—or J́esus or *Isus* or whatever the Christ is called in your language. Billions more have heard of His name. Today, the name of Jesus can be found in more than six thousand languages, and more are being added every year.

On the one hand, it's strange that this single name has dominated the past two thousand years of world history, especially Western history. For most of us, the name Jesus has a sacred ring to it; it sounds holy and divine. But this wasn't the case when Mary and Joseph followed the angel's instructions and gave their baby His name. Granted, it had a special meaning, but it was not an unusual name. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus mentions at least twelve different people he knew with the name Jesus, including four high priests. In Acts 9, we read of the Jewish false prophet, Bar-Jesus. In Colossians 4, Paul mentions one of his fellow workers, Jesus, called Justus. And some ancient manuscripts of the gospel of Matthew refer to the robber released by Pilate as Jesus Barabbas, which can be translated, ironically enough, "*Jesus, son of the father.*"

Jesus was a common name, like Jim, John, or Jerry. When Mary and Joseph called their son Jesus, there were no prayers in His name. No one used it as a swear word. No one sang songs about this name, just as there is no religion I am aware of that sings songs to Jim (except for fans of Jim Croce, who know that he's not to be messed around with). We don't name our sons John with the expectation that eight billion people will pray in that name over the next two thousand years. We don't croon, "*Jerry, Jerry, Jerry, there's just something about that name.*"

But common as the name was, Jesus was named "*Jesus*" by design. In Greek, it is *Ísous*; in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, *Yesu*. Both are derived from the Hebrew, in which the name is Yeshua or Joshua. Joshua is made up of two parts: Ya, which is short for Yahweh, and hoshea, which means "salvation." Hence, Mary and Joseph gave their little baby the name Jesus - "*Yahweh saves.*"



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The Name of Jesus *Continued from Page 3*

That He does. Ever since the first Christmas, Jesus has been more than just a name. It's been our only comfort in life and in death, our only hope in a hopeless world. When you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, you have life in His name (John 20:31). There is, in fact, no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved (Acts 4:12). So, naturally, whatever we do, in word or deed, we ought to do in the name of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:17). *"God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:9–11).

But let's be clear: the name of Jesus is not a magic wand. Chanting it does not give one special powers. The power in the name is the person behind the name. In biblical times, names meant something. They were more than badges of identification. They often told others who you were and what purpose God had for your life. Thus, Adam was the first man. Eve was the mother of all living things. Abraham was the father of many nations. Benjamin was the son of his father's right hand. Moses was drawn out of the water. Peter was the rock. Barnabas was the son of encouragement.

What about Jesus? *"And you shall call his name Jesus,"* the angel told Joseph, *"for he will save his people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21). More than a great teacher, more than an enlightened man, more than a worker of miracles, more than a source of meaning in life, more than a self-help guru, more than a self-esteem builder, more than a political liberator, more than a caring friend, more than a transformer of cultures, more than a purpose for the purposeless, Jesus is the Savior of sinners.

"Jesus the name that charms our fears and bids our sorrows cease; 'tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life and health and peace." That'll sing. *"All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all."* That'll work, too. I guess there really is just something about that name. No, not just something; make that everything! ~ *Reverend Kevin DeYoung - Senior pastor of Christ Covenant Church in Matthews, N.C., and associate professor of systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C.*

The Real Meaning of Christmas

One of the most remarkable stories of Christmas comes from one of the darkest moments of modern history. World War I ravaged a continent, leaving destruction and debris in its wake. The human cost, well in the millions, staggers us. But from the midst of this dark conflict comes the story of the Christmas Truce of 1914. The Western Front, only a few months into the war, was a deplorable scene of devastation. Perhaps as if to give the combatants one day to breathe again, a truce was called from Christmas Eve through Christmas Day.

As darkness settled over the front like a blanket, the sound of exploding shells and the rat-tat-tat of gunfire faded. Faint carols, in French or English voices on one side and in German voices on the other, rose to fill the silence of the night.



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The Real Meaning of Christmas *Continued from Page 4*

By morning, soldiers, at first hesitantly, began filing out of the maze of trenches into the dreaded and parched soil of No Man's Land. There was more singing. Gifts of rations and cigarettes were exchanged. Family photos were passed around. Soccer balls appeared. Up and down the Western Front, soldiers, who only hours before had been locked in deathly combat, now faced off in soccer games.

For one brief but entirely remarkable day, there was peace on earth. Some have called the Christmas Truce of 1914 “the Miracle on the Western Front.”

Anxious to print some good news, The Times of London reported on the events of the Christmas Truce. Soldiers recorded the day in letters home and in diaries. Some of those lines made it to newspapers, while others remained unknown until later brought to light. Here's one such line from the diary of a German infantryman: *“The English brought a soccer ball from the trenches, and pretty soon a lively game ensued. How marvelously wonderful, yet how strange it was. The English officers felt the same way about it. Thus Christmas, the celebration of Love, managed to bring mortal enemies together as friends for a time.”*

“Friends for a time,” “the celebration of love,” “peace on earth”—this is the meaning of Christmas. But these celebrations, these truces, don't last. After Christmas Day, the soccer balls and the soldiers went back into the trenches. The Christmas carols subsided and the war carried on. And even though World War I eventually ended, a few decades later, Europe's countryside and cities became the field of battle once again, as did Africa and the Pacific, during World War II.

Events like the Christmas Truce are worth celebrating. But they lack something. They lack permanence. Such impermanent peace is what we often find in our quest for the real meaning of Christmas. If we are looking for permanent and ultimate goodwill, love, and peace, we must look beyond our gift-giving, get-togethers, and office parties. We must look to no other place than to a manger.

We must look to a baby born not with fanfare, pomp, and circumstance, but to poor parents in desperate times. Joseph and Mary, and the Baby Jesus for that matter, were real historical figures. But in a way, Joseph and Mary extend beyond themselves, beyond their particular place and time. They represent all of us. We are all poor and living in desperate times. Some of us are better than others at camouflaging it. Nevertheless, we are all poor and desperate, so we all need the promise bound up in that baby.

We are in need of a way out of our poverty of soul and the desperate state of our human condition. We find it in this child lying in a manger, who was and is Jesus Christ, the long-promised Messiah, Seed, Redeemer, and King.

The birth of Jesus so many centuries ago might have been a slightly-out-of-the-ordinary birth. Even in ancient times, stalls didn't typically double as birthing rooms and mangers didn't typically double as cribs for new-born babies. And that newborn baby was very much out of the ordinary. Of course, in some respects, He was perfectly ordinary. He was a human being, a baby. He got hungry. He got thirsty. He got tired. When He was born, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes—the ancient equivalent of Pampers.



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The Real Meaning of Christmas *Continued from Page 5*

An infant; helpless, hungry, cold, and tired. Yet, this child was the Son of God incarnate. He was Immanuel, which translated means “God with us.” According to the Apostle Paul’s account, this infant created all things. This infant created His own manger. And this infant, this King, brings peace on earth, ultimate and permanent peace. ~ *Dr. Stephen J. Nichols*

Born of the Virgin Mary

Along with the great theologian and philosopher Anselm of Canterbury we ask the question, *Cur deus homo?* Why the God-man? When we look at the biblical answer to that question, we see that the purpose behind the incarnation of Christ is to fulfill His work as God’s appointed Mediator. It is said in 1 Timothy 2:5: “*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself. . .*” Now, the Bible speaks of many mediators with a small or lower case “m.” A mediator is an agent who stands between two parties who are estranged and in need of reconciliation. But when Paul writes to Timothy of a solitary Mediator, a single Mediator, with a capital “M,” he’s referring to that Mediator who is the supreme Intercessor between God and fallen humanity. This Mediator, Jesus Christ, is indeed the God-man.

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Born of the Virgin Mary *Continued from Page 6*

Paul, for example, in his letter to the Romans gives the contrast between the original Adam and Jesus as the second Adam. In Romans 5, verse 15, he says, *“For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.”* Here we observe the contrast between the calamity that came upon the human race because of the disobedience of the original Adam and the glory that comes to believers because of Christ’s obedience. Paul goes on to say in verse 19: *“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”* Adam functioned in the role of a mediator, and he failed miserably in his task. That failure was rectified by the perfect success of Christ, the God-man. We read later in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians these words: *“And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man”* (1 Corinthians 15:45).

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Jesus Is Savior and Lord

“God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name . . . that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:9, 11).

Scripture never speaks of any human being’s making Jesus Lord. It is God who made Him Lord (Acts 2:36). Yet we often read statements such as this: “It is imperative to trust Christ as personal Savior and be born again. But that is only the first decision. Trusting Christ as Savior and then making Him Lord are two separate and distinct decisions. The two decisions may be close or distant in time. Salvation must always precede lordship. But it is possible to be saved without ever making Christ Lord of your life.” In effect that is saying Christ isn’t Lord unless we give Him permission—a completely unbiblical assertion. To be saved you must confess Jesus as Lord.

Jesus is called Lord throughout the New Testament. To omit the lordship of Christ from invitations to salvation would result in the elimination of numerous passages of Scripture. Peter’s sermon in Acts 2—“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21)—would need to be modified. Paul and Silas’ method of presenting the gospel—“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31)—would need to be corrected.

The centrality of the lordship of Christ is clear in the New Testament gospel. The Jesus who is Savior cannot be separated from the Jesus who is Lord. God cannot be separated from His authority, dominion, rulership, and right to command. When we acknowledge that Jesus is God, we mean He is all that God is. ~ *Dr. John MacArthur*



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If you have a December birthday or anniversary that is not posted here or is listed in error, please e-mail Walt at gwlcf10415@gmail.com.

Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner December 2021

Birthdays

Amelia H. (3)
Terrye B. (4)
Katie G. (9)
Auden Douglas T. (12)
Jennifer A. (13)
Tony H. (14)

Wilma S. (16)
Scott T. (19)
John M. (21)
Cheryl P. (22)
Jessica T. (23)
Lorraine H. (25)

Anniversaries

John and Teresa H. (1)
Russell and Terrye B. (5)
Malcolm and Amber H. (14)
John and LeAnn M. (22)

Being Christ to your Neighbor

Christians must participate in the ministry of the church, and every Christian must endeavor “to be Christ to his neighbor.” To be Christ to your neighbor is not to be your neighbor’s lord and savior. Rather, it is to be Christ’s representative to your neighbor. We are to represent the mercy and ministry of Jesus to all who are around us.

We do not need volunteers driven by guilty manipulation or looking for merits to be redeemed. Christ has taken our guilt and supplied all the merit we need. We need volunteers because in the least of His brothers, Jesus is hungry, Jesus is thirsty, Jesus is homeless, Jesus is sick, and Jesus is imprisoned. We need volunteers who love Jesus in the afflictions of His least brethren.



***West Suffolk Baptist Church
Leadership***

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Please submit information to the editor by the second Sunday of each month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or its leadership.