



# West Suffolk Epistle



Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America



## West Suffolk Baptist Church

Volume 1, Issue 9

*“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”*

December 2014

### *Quote from George Evanke’s Farewell Sermon*

"how much soever God takes from you, it is less than you owe him; and how little soever he leaves you, it is more than he owes you. Therefore instead of murmuring that your condition is so ill, bless God that it is no worse, saying with Ezra, Ezra 9:13 *"Thou, O Lord, hast punished us less than our iniquities have deserved."*

### *From the Editor*

We are fast approaching the season where we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. Much can be said about this subject because it is the focal point of our faith. Without Him all of us who are not *‘in Him’* would be eternally lost. I felt that this issue of our newsletter should appropriately be dedicated to the Lord Jesus and what He has done for us. So as a tribute to the Lord of hosts let us all celebrate this season in hopes that many will come to know Him and that He will soon return to claim His elect. ~ *Walt Lawrence*

### *God Became a Man*

God became a man. That foundational gospel truth is pictured in every manger scene you’ll see around town this Christmas. Though the incarnation is culturally familiar, it’s utterly foreign to the unbelieving world.

Unfortunately, a heart attitude of unbelief concerning Jesus’ identity has characterized the majority of men and women since the Fall. The Jews who opposed Christ vividly illustrated that attitude on more than one occasion (John 5:18; 7:28–30; 10:30–39). But such hostility and lack of faith should not discourage us or deter us from embracing and defending the truth of Christ’s virgin birth. The apostle Paul reminds us, “For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar” (Romans 3:3–4, 10:16; Isa. 53:1). The world’s opinion, popular as it might be, is rarely a reliable source of truth.

Undoubtedly, therefore, the Holy Spirit acted with significant purpose in devoting an early passage from the Gospel of Matthew, at the front of the New Testament, to establish right away the humanity and deity of our Lord. His incarnation, properly understood, is foundational to Christianity. There could have been no genuine work of redemption apart from the fact of God becoming man and, by being both completely God and completely man, reconciling people to Himself through His substitutionary death and physical resurrection. If Jesus had not been both human and divine, there would be no gospel.

Many skeptical New Testament commentators will concede that Matthew and other authors of Scripture sincerely believed and taught that the Holy Spirit conceived Jesus without any assistance from a human father. But such interpreters nevertheless glibly discount the validity of Scripture’s claims by immediately asserting that its writers were naive, uneducated, and subject to the myths and superstitions of ancient times. According to the critics, the Gospel writers merely adapted some of the familiar virgin birth legends to the story of Jesus’ birth.



# *West Suffolk Epistle*



## *God Became a Man - Continued*

But nothing could be further from the truth. Matthew's account, for example, reads as history, but it is history he could know and record only because God revealed it and accomplished it by miraculous intervention. Matthew's words are far superior to the immoral and repulsive nature of the secular stories he and the other writers allegedly drew from. Here is his clear, uncomplicated narrative of the Incarnation:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus. (Matthew 1:18-25)

Matthew declares Jesus' divine lineage in that passage and reveals five aspects of His virgin birth: its first announcement, Joseph's response to it, the angel's clarification of it, its connection to prophecy, and its actual occurrence. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

## *The Titles of Jesus*

A few years ago a distinguished professor of New Testament was invited to address an academic convocation at a large seminary. The occasion of convocation in a university or seminary is one that is attended with pomp and circumstance. The faculty are adorned in full academic regalia as they march in procession to the front of the auditorium. The guest speaker on such occasions is expected to bring an address of weighty, scholarly material. When the New Testament professor entered the hall, there was a hush of expectancy as students and faculty waited with eager anticipation for his remarks. Being an expert in the field of Christology, it was expected that the lecturer would present an address revealing his most recent research in the field. Instead, he stood at the podium and began to recite a litany of the titles of Jesus drawn from the Scriptures. The litany went on for several minutes, as the full impact of the titles in themselves, given without commentary, was felt by the audience. The professor stood and simply said with pauses in between: Christ; The Rose of Sharon; Lord; The Bright and Morning Star; Rabbi; The Alpha and Omega; Son of Man; The Logos; Son of God; The Advocate; Son of David; The Prince of Peace; Lion of Judah and The Only Begotten of the Father.

On and on the litany went, as the man recited all of the titles that the biblical writers had conferred upon Jesus. These titles reveal something of his identity and they also give us a hint as to the meaning of his activity. It is customary in theology to distinguish between the person of Christ and the work of Christ. The distinction is an important one, but it must never involve a separation. Who Jesus is, is known in part by what he did. On the other hand, the significance of what he did is strongly conditioned by who he is. Though we may distinguish between person and work, we must never isolate the one from the other. When we look at the titles conferred upon Jesus in the New Testament we see an interplay between person and work.

Space does not permit an examination of all the titles ascribed to Jesus biblically, but let us examine briefly one that is generally considered his chief titles.



# West Suffolk Epistle



## Jesus as Lord

The *second* most frequent designation for Jesus in the New Testament is the title Lord. So important is this title to the biblical understanding of Jesus that it became an integral part of the earliest Christian creed. The first creed was the simple statement, “Jesus is Lord.” The title Lord is the most exalted title conferred upon Jesus. Sometimes it is difficult for people in the United States to grasp the full significance of the title Lord. An Englishman came to this country in the decade of the sixties, and upon arrival spent his first week in Philadelphia becoming acquainted with historic landmarks, such as Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell.

In order to familiarize himself with American culture, he visited several antique stores that specialized in colonial and revolutionary memorabilia. In one such shop he saw several posters and signboards that contained the slogans of the revolution, such as *No Taxation Without Representation*, and *Don't Tread on Me*. One signboard attracted his attention more than the rest. In bold letters the sign proclaimed: **WE SERVE NO SOVEREIGN HERE**. As he mused on this sign, he wondered how people steeped in such an antimonarchical culture could come to grips with the notion of the kingdom of God and the sovereignty that belongs to the Lord. The concept of lordship invested in one individual is repugnant to the American tradition, yet this is the boldness of the claim of the New Testament for Jesus, that absolute sovereignty and imperial power are vested in Christ.

The New Testament word for Lord is the Greek word *kurios*. The word was used in several ways in the ancient world. In its most common usage it functioned as a polite word for sir. As our English word sir can be used in an ordinary sense and in a special sense, so it was with *kurios*. In England, men who are knighted are given the title sir, indicating the elevation of the common use of the word to the formal use of it.

A *second* use of the title Lord in the Greek culture was as a title given to men of the aristocratic class who were slave owners. This title was used figuratively for Jesus throughout the New Testament. He was called “Master” by his disciples. Paul frequently introduced his epistles by saying, “Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ.” The word he used was *doulos*. There could not be a slave (*doulos*) without a lord (*kurios*). Paul declared, “You are not your own; you were bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Here the believer is seen as a possession of Jesus. Jesus owns his people. He is not a despot or tyrant, as we might expect in an earthly slave/master situation. In fact, the irony of New Testament lordship is the irony that only in slavery to Christ can a man discover authentic freedom. The irony is pushed further by the New Testament teaching that it is through a slave/master relationship to Jesus that a person is liberated from bondage in this world. This strange and ironic twist in teaching is found particularly in the writings of the apostle Paul.

The *third* and most important meaning of the title Lord was the imperial usage. Here the title was given to one who had absolute sovereignty over a group of people. It is a usage that was usually understood politically.

Perhaps the most striking aspect about the title Lord was its relationship to the Old Testament. The Greek translation of the Old Testament used the word *kurios* to translate the Hebrew word *adonai*, a title used for God himself. The sacred name of God, “Yahweh,” was unspoken, often replaced in the liturgy of Israel with a substitute word, or by means of circumlocution. When a substitute title was used to replace the ineffable name of God, the usual selection was the term *adonai*, a title which called attention to God’s absolute rule over the earth.

In many translations of the Bible both Yahweh and *adonai* are translated by the English word Lord, though a distinction between them is found in the method of printing used. When Yahweh is translated, the word is usually printed with a capital letter followed by small capital letters: Lord. When *adonai* is the Hebrew word, it is printed “Lord.” Psalm 8, for example, begins: “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!” The Hebrew would be: “O Yahweh, our *adonai*, how majestic ...” Here Yahweh functions as the name of God and the term *adonai* is used as a title.



# *West Suffolk Epistle*



## *Jesus as Lord - Continued*

The Old Testament passage that is quoted more often than any other text in the New Testament is Psalm 110. Here we find something strange indeed. Psalm 110 reads, “The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand!’ ” Yahweh speaks to Adonai, who is seen as David’s Lord and is seated at God’s right hand. In the New Testament, Jesus is the one who is elevated to the right hand of God and receives the title Lord. This is the title that is “above every name” and is conferred upon Jesus at his ascension.

Thus, Jesus being seated at the right hand of God is elevated to the seat of cosmic authority where all authority in heaven and earth is given into his hands, and he receives the title Adonai that had formerly been exclusively restricted to God the Father. The exalted nature of the title can be seen not only from this context, but also from usage in its superlative form. When Jesus is called “Lord of lords” there is no doubt what is meant. Here absolute authority over all lesser authority is clearly indicated.

The title Lord functions so frequently in the life of the New Testament Christian community that the English word church derives from it. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, which is brought over into English in the word ecclesiastical. The English word church is similar in sound and form to other languages’ word for church. Kirk in Scotland, kerk in Holland, and kirche in Germany all derive from the same root. That source is the Greek word *kuriache*, which means “those who belong to the *kurios*.” Thus the word church in its literal origin means “the people who belong to the Lord.”

One puzzling note in the New Testament is the statement, “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3). Some have pointed to this as a contradiction because Jesus says on other occasions that people do in fact profess that he is Lord without meaning it. Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount with the somber warning, “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord ...’ ” But he will say to them, “I never knew you; depart from me” (Matthew 7:22–23). Since it is evident that people can honor Christ with their lips while their hearts are far from him, and offer the words Jesus is Lord, what does the Bible mean when it says, “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit”?

There are *two* ways in which we can answer this question. The *first* would be by asserting what is tacitly understood in the text, but left unspoken. That is, no one can say that Jesus is Lord and mean it, except by the Holy Spirit. That would be sound theology, and we have literary license to fill in the unstated qualifier. There may, however, be something more concrete in view here. At the time the text was written, Christians were considered enemies of the established order of Rome and guilty of treason for their refusal to subscribe to the cult of emperor worship. Repeatedly the test for loyalty to the empire was to be found in the public recitation of the words Kaiser kurios (“Caesar is Lord”). It was this oath that Christians refused to recite, even when it cost them their lives. When they were called upon to utter it, they would substitute the words Iesous ho Kurios (“Jesus is Lord”). Christians were willing to pay their taxes, to give honor to Caesar where honor was due, to render to Caesar those things that were Caesar’s. But the exalted title Lord belonged to Jesus alone, and Christians paid with their lives to maintain that assertion. What was in view in the biblical text, “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit,” may have referred to the fact that in those days people hesitated to make such a bold statement publicly unless they were prepared to take the consequences. ~ *Following Christ - Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*

## *Christ Alone*

Reformed theology affirms that Scripture and its teaching on grace and faith emphasize that salvation is solus Christus, “by Christ alone”—that is, Christ is the only Savior (Acts 4:12). B.B. Warfield wrote, “The saving power of faith resides thus not in itself, but in the Almighty Savior on whom it rests.”



# *West Suffolk Epistle*



## *Christ Alone - Continued*

The centrality of Christ is the foundation of the Protestant faith. Martin Luther said that Jesus Christ is the “center and circumference of the Bible”—meaning that who He is and what He did in His death and resurrection is the fundamental content of Scripture. Ulrich Zwingli said, “Christ is the Head of all believers who are His body and without Him the body is dead.”

Without Christ, we can do nothing; in Him, we can do all things (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13). Christ alone can bring salvation. Paul makes plain in Romans 1–2 that though there is a self-manifestation of God outside of His saving work in Christ, no amount of natural theology can unite God and man. Union with Christ is the only way of salvation.

We urgently need to hear *solus Christus* in our day of pluralistic theology. Many people today question the belief that salvation is only by faith in Christ. As Carl Braaten says, they “are returning to a form of the old bankrupt nineteenth-century Christological approach of Protestant liberalism and calling it ‘new,’ when it is actually scarcely more than a shallow Jesusology.” The end result is that today, many people—as H. R. Niebuhr famously said of liberalism—proclaim and worship “a God without wrath who brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”

Our Reformed forebears, drawing on a perspective traceable all the way back to the fourth-century writer Eusebius of Caesarea, found it helpful to think about Christ as a Prophet, Priest, and King. The 1689 London Baptist Confession, for instance, puts it this way: “Christ, and Christ alone, is fitted to be mediator between God and man. He is the prophet, priest and king of the church of God” (8.9). Let us look more closely at these three offices.

### *Christ the Prophet*

Christ is the Prophet whom we need to instruct us in the things of God so as to heal our blindness and ignorance. The Heidelberg Catechism calls Him “our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption” (A. 31). “The Lord thy God,” Moses declared in Deuteronomy 18:15, “will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (KJV). He is God’s Son, and God demands that we listen to Him (Matt. 17:5).

As the Prophet, Jesus is the only One who can reveal what God has been purposing in history “since the world began” and who can teach and make manifest the real meaning of the “scriptures of the prophets” (the Old Testament; see Romans 16:25–26). We can expect to make progress in the Christian life only as we heed His instruction and teaching.

### *Christ the Priest*

Christ is also Priest—our sorely needed High Priest, who, as the Heidelberg Catechism says, “by the sacrifice of His body, has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession with the Father for us” (A. 31). In the words of the 1689 London Baptist Confession, “because of our estrangement from God and the imperfection of our services at best, we need his priestly office to reconcile us to God and render us acceptable to him” (8.10).

Salvation is only in Jesus Christ because there are two conditions that, no matter how hard we try, we can never meet. Yet, they must be done if we are to be saved. The first is to satisfy the justice of God through obedience to the law. The *second* is to pay the price of our sins. We cannot do either, but Christ did both perfectly. Romans 5:19 says, “By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Romans 5:10 says, “When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” There is no other way to come into the presence of God than through Christ alone.



# *West Suffolk Epistle*



## *Christ Alone - Continued*

Jesus' sacrifice took place once only, but He still continues as our great High Priest, the One through whom all acceptable prayer and praise are made to God. In heavenly places, He remains our constant Intercessor and Advocate (Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1). Little wonder, then, that Paul calls for glory to be given to God "through Jesus Christ for ever" (Romans 16:27). We can grow in our enjoyment of access to God only by a deepening reliance on Him as our Sacrifice and Intercessor.

### *Christ the King*

Finally, Christ is the King, ruling over all things. Over His church He reigns by means of His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:30–33). He sovereignly gives repentance to the impenitent and bestows forgiveness on the guilty (Acts 5:31). Christ is "our eternal King who governs us by His word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves us in the enjoyment of that salvation, He has purchased for us" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A. 31). As the royal Heir of the new creation, He will lead us into a kingdom of eternal light and love.

As such, we can agree with John Calvin when he says, "We may patiently pass through this life with its misery, cold, contempt, reproaches, and other troubles—content with this one thing: that our King will never leave us destitute, but will provide for our needs until, our warfare ended, we are called to triumph." We can grow in the Christian life only as we live obediently under Christ's rule and by His power.

If you are a child of God, Christ in His threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King will mean everything to you. Do you love *solus Christus*? Do you love Him in His person, offices, natures, and benefits? Is He your Prophet to teach you; your Priest to sacrifice for, intercede for, and bless you; and your King to rule and guide you?

After a rousing performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the famous Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini is said to have told the orchestra: "I am nothing. You are nothing. Beethoven is everything." If Toscanini could say that about a brilliant but dead composer, how much more should Christians say that about the living Savior, who, with respect to our salvation, is the composer, musician, and even the beautiful music itself. ~ **Dr. Joel Beeke - Minister of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary**

## *The Christ of the Old and the New*

We have all heard the ancient maxim about the relationship between the Old and New Testaments: "The new is in the old concealed, and the old is in the new revealed." While the words concealed and revealed do not entirely accurately describe the relationship between the testaments, they do help us grasp the fundamental truth that the New Testament is found in seed form throughout the pages of the Old Testament and that the Old Testament blossoms forth as a flower in the New Testament.

Nevertheless, the New Testament is called the "New Testament" for the simple reason that it is, in fact, new. It is new revelation, not merely commentary on previous revelation. It is not simply a collection of apostolic reflections on the Old Testament from the first century. In real space and real time, in the history of God's redemption of His people and by His superintendence of His appointed, sinful, human authors, God revealed to us His new testament, accompanying our long-awaited Messiah and His promised kingdom. However, it's not as if the coming of the Christ and the continued revelation of God was a surprise to those who understood the Old Testament and, more importantly, the God of the Old Testament.



# *West Suffolk Epistle*



## *The Christ of the Old and the New - Continued*

In real space and real time, in the history of God's redemption of His people and by His superintendence of His appointed, sinful, human authors, God revealed to us His new testament, accompanying our long-awaited Messiah and His promised kingdom. However, it's not as if the coming of the Christ and the continued revelation of God was a surprise to those who understood the Old Testament and, more importantly, the God of the Old Testament.

On nearly every page of the New Testament, God sovereignly reminds us that everything He has done, is doing, and will do is in accordance with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The common refrain of the New Testament, "according to the Scriptures," is by no means to be taken lightly but is to drive us over and over again to behold the faithfulness of God, the trustworthiness of His revelation, and the beautiful harmony of the testaments as God shows forth His sovereignly woven scarlet thread of redemption from creation to glorification, all according to the covenant of redemption of our triune God. In each of the three portions of the Old Testament — the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings — the Lord majestically sets forth that which Jesus Himself set forth when He was with the two men on the road to Emmaus interpreting to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

That doesn't mean, however, that Jesus is hiding under every stone in the Old Testament, nor does it mean that we need to overturn every stone in our pursuit to find Him at the cost of sound exegesis. Nevertheless, it does mean that every stone points to Christ and beckons us to examine the manifold ways in which Christ is in the foreground and background of the landscape of every stone in all the Scriptures, by God's sovereign orchestration and for our redemption in Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. ~ *Burk Parsons - Editor of Tabletalk Magazine and Co-Pastor at Saint Andrews Chapel - Sanford, Florida*

## *The Extraordinary Birth of Jesus*

Extraordinary births are certainly not unprecedented in biblical history. As part of the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised to send a son to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:19–22). They were both beyond normal childbearing ages and laughed at the prospect of being parents, yet they ultimately witnessed the miraculous arrival of their son, Isaac (Genesis 21:1–3). In Judges 13, an angel of the Lord told Manoah and his barren wife that they would have a special son. True to the heavenly messenger's words, Samson entered the world and for a time delivered the Israelites from the oppression of the Philistines.

Samuel, the first prophet, final judge, and anointer of kings, also demonstrated in his birth the providential power of God. He was the answer to the faithful, persevering prayers of his godly mother, Hannah, who had remained childless until then. John the Baptist's mother, Elizabeth, was also unable to have children until God graciously intervened when she was in her sixties or seventies and made her the mother of the forerunner of Christ (Luke 1:15–17, 76–79). But none of those special births was as amazing as the virgin birth of the Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Even though the fact of Jesus' virgin birth is clearly and concisely stated in Scripture, the unconverted mind of sinful humanity, as with all essential doctrines of the Christian faith, resists embracing the truth of His unique birth.

First of all, ancient mythologies and world religions counterfeited Christ's virgin birth with a proliferation of bizarre stories and inaccurate parallels. These stories undercut and minimized the uniqueness and profound impact of our Lord's birth. Satan has propagated many legends, all with the purpose of undermining the nature of Christ's birth and deceiving people into seeing it as just another myth or nothing exceptional.



# *West Suffolk Epistle*



## *The Extraordinary Birth of Jesus - Continued*

In addition, the scientific age and the emergence of modern and postmodern theologies during the past two centuries have eroded many professed believers' confidence in the reality of the virgin birth. (Along with that trend has been a noticeable decline in the percentage of "Christians" who believe in the deity of Christ.) But such skeptical thinking is foolish and directly contrary to the explicit teaching of all four Gospels, the Epistles, and the historical testimony of the entire early church that Jesus was none other than the virgin-born Son of God. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

## *The Morning After*

Let us not forget that the moment Jesus took on flesh and came into the world as a baby, it was, like it is for all of us, the first day of a long descent towards death. Christmas is only merry if it gives way to the suffering and death of Easter. You cannot celebrate the one without a view toward the other. Christ became a baby so He could die as a man. He died as a man so we could be reborn as new babes in Christ. We are reborn through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit so we might take up our own cross and follow Jesus. We are buried in His death so we might be raised to everlasting life.

Life in this fallen world, lived in this corrupted body, is a journey towards death. For the one who has tasted and trusted in the goodness of God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, it is a crossing of the Easter river of death and resurrection into the land of eternal Christmas. Every day is a day of new life, new glory, new discovery, new pleasures, new gifts, new celebration forever and ever and ever. To those who refuse to associate with Christ in His death now, there will be a crossing of the river Death into an eternal night where every day is a new death, a new loss, a new sorrow, a new regret forever and ever and ever. Or to use C.S. Lewis' image, an eternal winter with no Christmas. This would be the deserved fate of us all if not for a Christmas that gave us Easter and an Easter that made Christmas possible for us again. ~ **Pastor Joe Bailey - Pinnacle Classical Academy - Little Rock, Arkansas**

## *Christ's Example*

If ever a man might have lived without prayer, it was our spotless, perfect Lord, and yet no one ever prayed as much as He! His love for His Father was such that He loved to be in communion with Him. His love for His people was such that He desired to be regularly interceding for them.

The fact that Jesus placed such importance on prayer is a lesson for us—He has given us an example that we may follow in His steps. The time He chose was admirable—it was the hour of silence when the crowd would not disturb Him, the time of inaction when everyone else had stopped work, and the season when sleep made men forget their difficulties and stop applying to Him for relief. While others found rest in sleep, He refreshed Himself with prayer. The place was also well selected. He was alone where none would intrude, where none could observe: And so He was free from Pharisaic ostentation and vulgar interruption. Those dark and silent hills provided a suitable prayer chapel for the Son of God. Heaven and earth in midnight stillness heard the groans and sighs of the mysterious Being in whom both worlds were blended.

The continuance of His pleadings is remarkable: The passing hours were not too long; the cold wind did not chill His devotions; the grim darkness did not cloud His faith or loneliness prevent His persistence. We fail to watch with Him for one hour, but He never fails to watch for us night and day. The occasion for this prayer is notable; it was after His enemies had been enraged. Prayer was His refuge and solace; it was before He dispatched the twelve apostles. Prayer was the gate of His enterprise, the herald of His new work. Should we not learn from Jesus to resort to special prayer when we are under peculiar trial or considering new ventures for the Master's glory? Lord Jesus, teach us to pray. ~ **Dr. Alistair Begg - Senior Pastor - Parkside Church near Cleveland, Ohio**



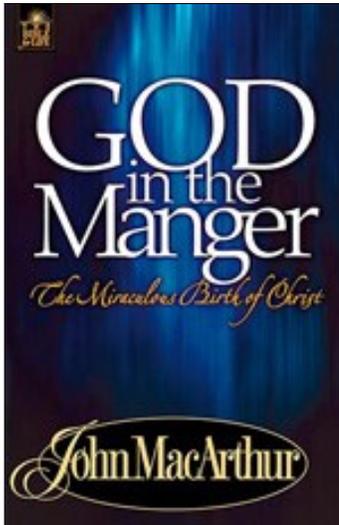
# *West Suffolk Epistle*



## *Book Reviews*

### *God in the Manger (Softcover)*

*Dr. John MacArthur*



Pastor/teacher John MacArthur unravels the intricacies of the event that changed the face of human history: the birth of Christ. As he examines every angle of Christ's birth—from the heavenly announcement, to the mixed reactions and the powerful ramification—the superiority and preeminence of Jesus Christ will shine through and speak volumes about creation, redemption, and divine destiny.

This book comes with a study guide in the back of the book.

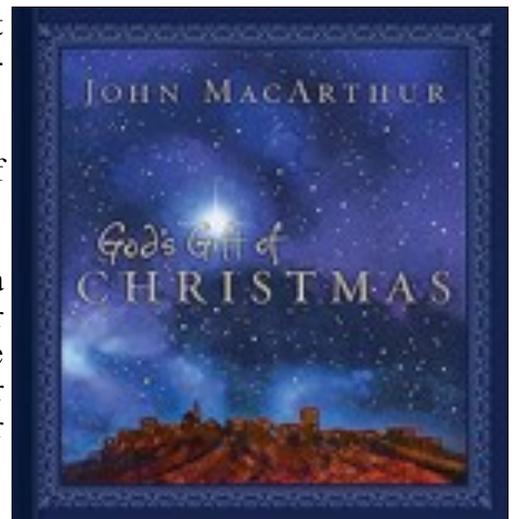
### *God's Gift of Christmas (Hardcover)*

*Dr. John MacArthur*

You're no stranger to the charm and beauty of the Christmas story. But there are glorious truths surrounding Christ's birth that are easy to overlook in the busyness of the holidays.

This year, how can you avoid missing one of the greatest truths of Christmas? How can Christ's birth change the way you live today?

In God's Gift of Christmas, John MacArthur looks at the manger from a fresh perspective. He takes you beyond the tender scene of the manger and unfolds deep truths that will change the way you see and celebrate Christmas. Make God's Gift of Christmas a yearly tradition in your family, or give it as a gift to an unbelieving friend or family member who needs to understand the miracle of Christmas.





# West Suffolk Epistle



## Luke Silas Purser November 15, 2013

We had a great day celebrating our sweet little boy's 1st birthday!! How in the world is he ONE already?! Luke Silas Purser was born Friday, November 15, 2013, at 1:26 p.m. weighing 6lbs 6oz. He has gone through so much in his short little life, but we know God is in control and has a plan that will bring glory to Himself! We are so blessed to have Luke in our family. Thank you so much to all of you who have continued to lift Luke and our family up in prayer! We are so grateful for you! ~ **Carrie Purser**

On Saturday November 15, 2014 the church family of Ben and Carrie Purser celebrated the 1st birthday of their son, Luke Silas Purser. The celebration took place at West Suffolk Baptist Church and in attendance included the grandparents Gene and Brenda Arthur and Merle Kay & Paul Blanchard. In addition there were Great Aunts, Great Uncles, cousins and a sister-in-law. As a tribute to this great celebration I am posting some of the photos that were taken by one of our church members, Scott Thomas. ~ **Walt Lawrence**





# *West Suffolk Epistle*



## *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 Free Will - Chapter 9*

1. In the natural order God has endued man's will with liberty and the power to act upon choice, so that it is neither forced from without, nor by any necessity arising from within itself, compelled to do good or evil.
2. In his state of innocency man had freedom and power to will and to do what was good and acceptable to God. Yet, being unstable, it was possible for him to fall from his uprightness.
3. As the consequence of his fall into a state of sin, man has lost all ability to will the performance of any of those works, spiritually good, that accompany salvation. As a natural (unspiritual) man he is dead in sin and altogether opposed to that which is good. Hence he is not able, by any strength of his own, to turn himself to God, or even to prepare himself to turn to God.
4. When God converts a sinner, and brings him out of sin into the state of grace, He frees him from his natural bondage to sin and, by His grace alone, He enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good. Nevertheless certain corruptions remain in the sinner, so that his will is never completely and perfectly held in captivity to that which is good, but it also entertains evil.
5. It is not until man enters the state of glory that he is made perfectly and immutably free to will that which is good, and that alone.

### *What is Conversion?*

Conversion is a U-turn in a person's life. It is turning with one's whole person away from sin and to Christ for salvation. From idol worship to God worship. From self-justification to Christ's justification. From self-rule to God's rule. Conversion is what happens when God awakens those who are spiritually dead and enables them to repent of their sins and have faith in Christ.

- When Jesus calls us to repent and believe, he's calling us to conversion. It's a radical change in what we believe and do. (Mark 1:15)
- When Jesus calls us to take up our crosses and follow him, he's calling us to conversion. (Luke 9:23)
- In order for us to repent, God must give us new life, new hearts, and faith (Ephesians 2:1, Romans 6:17, Colossians 2:13, Ezekiel 36:26, Ephesians 2:8, 2 Timothy 2:25).

#### *Conversion is not:*

- **A one-time event with no implications for how we live.** Conversion does happen at one moment, and it is a moment of radical change. Life should look different thereafter. A new battle begins.



# West Suffolk Epistle

*“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”*



WEST SUFFOLK BAPTIST CHURCH  
ASSOCIATION OF REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA

## *Birthday and Anniversary Corner - December 2014*

Terrye Bradshaw - 12/4  
Katie Dillard - 12/9  
Jennifer Allesandro - 12/13  
Scott Thomas - 12/19  
John McPhatter - 12/21  
Cheryl Prince - 12/22

John and Teresa Hurst - 12/1  
Russ and Terrye Bradshaw - 12/5  
James and Katie Dillard - 12/18  
John and LeAnn McPhatter - 12/22

## *What is Conversion? - Continued*

### *Conversion is not:*

- **A journey with no destination.** Conversion may be preceded by a long process for some, but it always involves a committed decision to repent of sin and trust in Christ, which is the immediate result of God giving new life to a spiritually dead sinner.
- **Optional.** Acts 17:30 says that God commands all people everywhere to repent. Conversion can never be forced, but it is absolutely necessary in order to be saved.
- **A conversation.** While Christians should communicate the gospel humbly, our goal is not merely a pleasant exchange of information. We must call everyone to repent of their sin and trust in Christ for salvation.
- **Saying a formulaic prayer.** Conversion certainly involves praying, but we must be careful not to tempt people toward placing their trust in some special set of words. ~ *Mark Dever - Capitol Hill Baptist Church*

There is no connection between the worship of idols and the use of Christmas trees. We should not be anxious about baseless arguments against Christmas decorations. Rather, we should be focused on the Christ of Christmas and giving all diligence to remembering the real reason for the season. ~ *Dr. John MacArthur*

### *Disclaimer*

The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or it’s leadership.



West Suffolk Baptist Church

The West Suffolk Epistle is a monthly publication of West Suffolk Baptist Church.  
**Office:** 1001 Kenyon Court, Suffolk, VA 23435; **E-Mail:** [pastorscofield@gmail.com](mailto:pastorscofield@gmail.com)  
**Website:** [www.westsuffolkbc.com](http://www.westsuffolkbc.com) **Phone/Fax:** 757-539-0363  
**Teaching Pastor:** Ben Scofield, [pastorscofield@gmail.com](mailto:pastorscofield@gmail.com)  
**Editor:** Walt Lawrence, [gwlcfl0415@gmail.com](mailto:gwlcfl0415@gmail.com)

Please submit information to Walt Lawrence by the second Sunday of the 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.