



Covenant Baptist Church

Reformed and Refreshing

December 20th, 2020

Welcome to Covenant Baptist Church. We are a Reformed church committed to three things:

- **The Exaltation of God**

We desire that the people at Covenant truly understand who God is and His rightful place in their lives as their Lord and sovereign Savior.

- **The Edification of the Saints**

We consider it extremely important to correctly teach the Bible, verse by verse, so we can properly have the Holy Spirit apply it to our lives.

- **The Evangelization of the Sinner**

We understand that God has given us the responsibility to be stewards of the Gospel and that means sharing it exactly like God gave it to us with those who need Jesus.

<https://covenantbaptistsc.org>

Service Times:

Bible Education Hour (Puritans and Systematic Theology)
~ 9:30 A.M.

Sunday Worship ~ 10:30 A.M.

Wednesday Prayer Service ~ 6:00 P.M., 7:00 P.M.

*(We are not interested in traditional worship
or contemporary worship. We are only
interested in true worship.)*

Order of Worship

(December 20th, 2020)

Call to Worship: Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6-7

Observance of The Lords Table

O Come, All Ye Faithful—231

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-21

Silent Night, Holy Night—236

Come, Behold the Wondrous Mystery—184

Message:
More than a Baby
John 1:1-18

Prayer and Benediction

Closing Hymn: May the Mind of Christ, My Savior—377

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On-Call Deacon List:

- December 20: Shumpert
- December 27: Smoak

Church Cleaning Schedule:

- December 26: Allen

Church Bookstore:

Purchases (cash only) can be made by seeing Annsley or Cristan Smoak,
or following the instructions left near the bookstore entrance.

Announcements

We will observe the Lord's Table today at the beginning of the worship service. Make sure you pick up the bread and juice on your way in.

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All are invited to a Christmas Eve Service at Pineview Baptist Church at 5PM December 24th. Masks are required for the service. Brandon Sandifer is pastor. 3010 Leaphart Rd, West Columbia, SC 29169 —(803) 794-4478

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If you would like to be added to the church cleaning list for 2021, please contact Chris Waddell at (803) 447-8257.

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We are excited to announce that Justin Peters will be with us in February for a 4-day conference. Dates are confirmed: February 14-17. Begin spreading the word and inviting others to come. This will be a very important conference on discerning truth in these troubled times.

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November and December are the months in which we recognize all that we are thankful for: our nation, our veterans, and the Bible. As the spiritual war for truth rages on in our country and around the world, we need to equip our active duty service members and veterans with the life-giving truth of God's Word in a format they can truly engage: Military BibleSticks. Every \$25.00 gift provides a valuable service member or veteran with a Military BibleStick and more... Your generosity will also equip others—those living in the outermost areas of the world who have little or no access to truth—with the vital weaponry of Audio Scriptures. Thank you for reaching out to bless our troops, veterans and their families in a practical way by providing God's Word through Military BibleSticks. \$25 sponsors one service member and their family. Please make checks payable to Covenant Baptist Church and indicate it is for Bible Sticks.

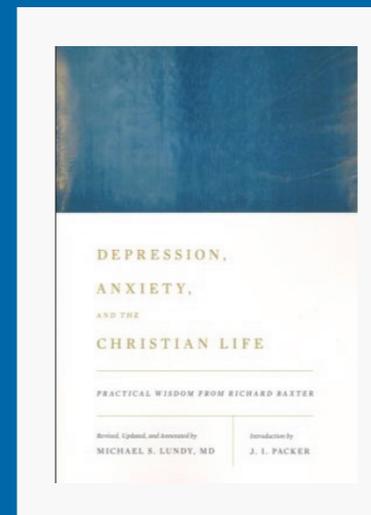
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For those who would like to participate, we will be offering a Christmas Card Exchange this year. Drop off your Christmas cards in the fellowship hall in the designated card drop box. Each week leading up to Christmas, you can drop off cards and pick up cards from our temporary mailboxes in the kitchen area.

Book of the Week: Depression, Anxiety, and the Christian Life, by Richard Baxter

Practical wisdom for dealing with depression: Depression—whether circumstantial and fleeting or persistent and long term—impacts most people at some point in their lives. Puritan pastor Richard Baxter spent most of his ministry caring for depressed and discouraged souls, and his timeless counsel still speaks to us today. In this book, psychiatrist Michael S. Lundy and theologian J. I. Packer present Baxter's writings in order to comfort, instruct, and strengthen all who struggle with depression.

Purchase at:

<https://www.amazon.com/Depression-Anxiety-Christian-Life-Practical/dp/1433542064>



Covenant Baptist Church Events

Greek Class—*On hold*

Biblical Counseling Class—*On hold*

Second Sunday Dinner—*January 10th. Please plan to bring a dish to share and stay for the fellowship. Also remember that we usually have visitors who stay for the meal, and you are encouraged to bring more than a small side dish so that there is plenty to go around.*

Other Events:

Truth: Answers for Women, March 27-28 2020—*(Williamstown, KY)*

DELAYED UNTIL 2021

More at: <https://answersingenesis.org/outreach/event/answers-for-women-2020/>

2021 National Conference | Ligonier Ministries, March 18-20—*(Orlando, FL)*

More at: <https://www.ligonier.org/events/2021-national-conference/>



Separation, Purity, and Christmas

—by Jeremiah Johnson

Persecution may be a foreign experience for most of us, but it has been the norm for most Christians throughout church history. In a culture that seems increasingly hostile to the biblical worldview, we should not fear or panic. We can find the joy, comfort, and courage that God has provided for us in His Word. This series, first published in October, 2015, works to that end. —ed.

Christmas is a study in contrasts.

Snow is one of the prominent themes of the holiday, but most of the world doesn't get snow in December, so people decorate with inflatable snowmen and twinkle lights meant to imitate icicles.

Christmas is hailed as a time of joy, love, and peace, but many feel profound sadness and strife due to lost loved ones and broken families. And in spite of it being a season of giving, the majority of advertisements and sales focus on fulfilling selfish, materialistic desires.

On TV, the contrasts are unmistakable. One channel broadcasts the nativity story while the next airs a debate over whether Jesus was anyone worth celebrating. And

a parade of politicians and talking heads fight over where and when it is appropriate to celebrate Christmas, while others work overtime to celebrate every religion's traditions.

But perhaps the most puzzling contrast is between believers—between those who celebrate the birth of Christ and those who argue that Christians should have no part in such a “pagan” holiday. In fact, some Christians oppose Christmas with as much (or more!) vigor as those who celebrate it.

The arguments are the same every year: Jesus wasn't born on December 25; Jeremiah 10 condemns Christmas trees; Christmas is a Catholic mass created to syncretize with a Roman pagan feast; Christmas is a man-made feast while the biblical feasts are ignored. You've probably received some chain emails to that effect already this season.

In the face of such opposition, how should the rest of the church respond? Should we even bother to celebrate such a widely-contested holiday?

In a video blog last year, we asked John MacArthur that very question. As usual, his response cut right to the heart of the issue, pushing past the smaller matters that so often trip us up. He said: I

n my view, any opportunity that we can have to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to grasp that opportunity. We would do well to celebrate His birth every single day. We would do well to proclaim His virgin birth, as God in human flesh, every day. But if the world wants to give us a day and a season in which the whole of humanity focuses on the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, we would be foolish not to capitalize on that.

We waste such an opportunity when we contend with a godless culture for the traditional trappings of the holiday. It's pointless to debate over seasonal terminology or fight to keep nativity scenes in front of government buildings. And it's profoundly vain to complain about whether or not a popular coffee shop's cups are decorated with vague allusions to the season—especially when that coffee shop has a history of promoting and supporting immoral causes.

I want to be abundantly clear on this point—Christmas should not be about encouraging the world to go through the motions of the holiday and pay vague lip service to the Lord in the midst of their materialistic self-indulgence. Frankly, the less the world mimics the celebration of Christ's birth, the more opportunities we

have to be bold and clear with the gospel through our own celebrations.

However, believers can likewise go overboard with separation from the world's celebration of Christmas, to the point that we forfeit any voice in the matter at all. I understand why some believers have strong misgivings about traditions that seem to serve no purpose other than to perpetuate childhood memories—especially when those traditions have questionable origins. But does the wholesale rejection of the holiday improve the testimony of God's people and adorn the truth of His gospel? Or is it merely a pious stiff arm to one of the church's best annual opportunities for evangelizing the lost world?

The truth is, when you consider the paganism of Roman society, there is not much we inherited from them that was not in some way associated with their religious practices. That point was well-made recently by Ryan Reeves on the Reformation 21 blog:

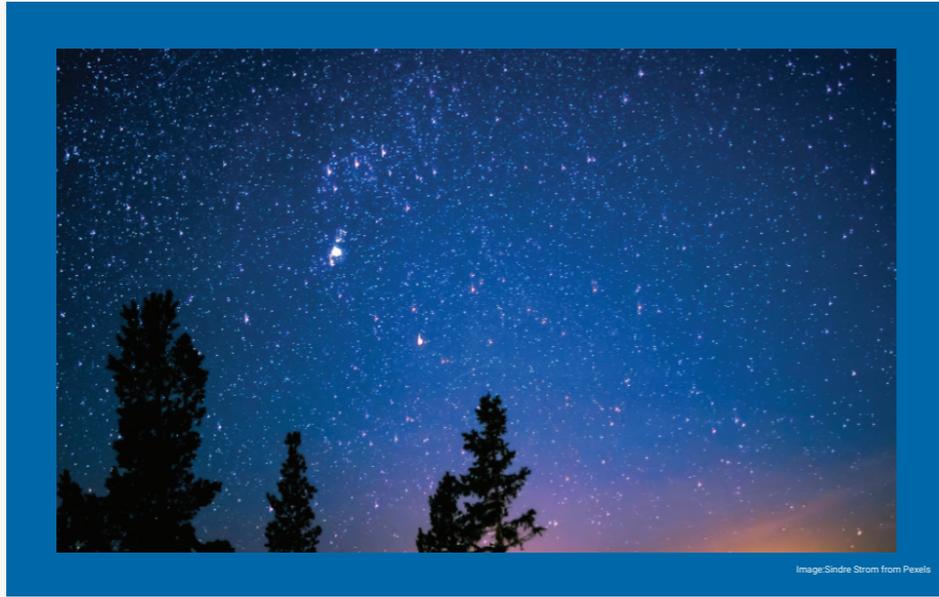
The Romans certainly had feasting on December 25th, as it was the darkest day of the year, and if you live in a world where the days are dark by 5pm, the thought of Spring on the horizon was reason enough to party. Think of it as a Roman 4th of July, only barbeque was not yet invented. It is true that Romans sacrificed to the gods on this day, but they did that as often as they could: at the table, before an arena match, and even at public urinals. For Christians to utterly do away with celebrations that coincide with Roman holidays would be to reinvent the calendar itself. In the end, the church felt that feasting on a day that looked from darkness towards light was an appropriate time to celebrate the coming of the Light of the World.

The simple fact is the vast majority of the world doesn't associate modern Christmas traditions with ancient Roman paganism, so shirking the former doesn't necessarily equate to disavowing the latter. And arguing that we shouldn't celebrate the birth of our Lord leaves little room for expressing the wonder of the incarnation, which is at the heart of the gospel. Such heavy-handedness doesn't adorn or explain the gospel nearly as much as it plays into the holier-than-thou stereotype for Christians.

All the traditions of Christmas are just that—traditions. Inasmuch as they foster loving relationships, generosity, and worship of the Savior, they are commendable. But if they cause us to be self-focused and distracted from what really matters, they should be set aside.

We should be single-minded, focused solely on Christ and the tremendous blessings we enjoy through Him. And we ought to look for any opportunity to extend the blessed news of the salvation He made possible to the world around us. How do we accomplish that when we waste so much time complaining about coffee cups and trees?

This Christmas, do everything you can to make your celebration an expression of the angel's words to the shepherds on the night of Christ's birth: "Behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10-11).



Jupiter, Saturn merging in night sky, closest in centuries

—by Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Jupiter and Saturn will merge in the night sky Monday, appearing closer to one another than they have since Galileo's time in the 17th century.

Astronomers say so-called conjunctions between the two largest planets in our solar system aren't particularly rare. Jupiter passes its neighbor Saturn in their respective laps around the sun every 20 years.

But the one coming up is especially close: Jupiter and Saturn will be just one-tenth of a degree apart from our perspective or about one-fifth the width of a full moon. They should be easily visible around the world a little after sunset, weather permitting.

Toss in the winter solstice in the Northern Hemisphere, the longest night of the year — and the summer solstice in the Southern Hemisphere — and this just-in-time-for-Christmas spectacle promises to be one of the greatest of Great Conjunctions.

“What is most rare is a close conjunction that occurs in our nighttime sky,” said Vanderbilt University's David Weintraub, an astronomy professor. “I think it's fair to say that such an event typically may occur just once in any one person's lifetime, and I think ‘once in my lifetime’ is a pretty good test of whether something merits being labeled as rare or special.”

It will be the closest Jupiter-Saturn pairing since July 1623, when the two planets appeared a little nearer. This conjunction was almost impossible to see, however, because of its closeness to the sun.

Considerably closer and in plain view was the March 1226 conjunction of the two planets — when Genghis Khan was conquering Asia. Monday's conjunction will be the closest pairing that is visible since way back then.

Saturn and Jupiter have been drawing closer in the south-southwest sky for weeks. Jupiter — bigger and closer to Earth — is vastly brighter.

“I love watching them come closer and closer to each other and the fact that I can see it with my naked eyes from my back porch!” Virginia Tech astronomer Nahum Arav said in an email.

To see it, be ready shortly after sunset Monday, looking to the southwest fairly low on the horizon. Saturn will be the smaller, fainter blob at Jupiter's upper right. Binoculars will be needed to separate the two planets.

Despite appearances, Jupiter and Saturn will actually be more than 450 million miles (730 million kilometers) apart. Earth, meanwhile, will be 550 million miles (890 million kilometers) from Jupiter.

A telescope will not only capture Jupiter and Saturn in the same field of view, but even some of their brightest moons.

Their next super-close pairing: March 15, 2080.

Other News:

Salvation is of the Lord— <https://heartcrymissionary.com/mission-updates/salvation-is-of-the-lord/>

Major LGBT Group Urges Biden to Strip Accreditation of Christian Schools, Colleges— <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/major-lgbt-group-urges-biden-to-strip-accreditation-of-christian-schools-colleges.html>

Wikipedia bans editors from expressing support for traditional marriage— <https://www.christianpost.com/news/wikipedia-bans-editors-support-traditional-marriage.html>

Mississippi school forbids 3rd-grade girl from wearing “Jesus Loves Me” mask— <https://disrn.com/news/mississippi-school-forbids-third-grade-girl-from-wearing-jesus-loves-me-mask>

Quote of the Week:



*The more grace we have,
the less we shall think
of ourselves,
for grace, like light,
reveals our impurity.*

—C. H. Spurgeon

Biblical Counseling Resources

Strategies for Fighting Depression Well—by Jim Newheiser
<https://biblicalcounseling.com/fighting-depression-well/>

Identity Language in Counseling—by Martha Peace
<https://biblicalcounseling.com/identity-language-in-counseling/>

The Pursuit of Peace—by Sam Stephens
<https://biblicalcounseling.com/the-pursuit-of-peace/>

Defeating Despair—by Tim Pasma
<https://biblicalcounseling.com/defeating-despair/>

Gracious Words Amid Sword Thrusts—by Jim Koerber
<https://biblicalcounseling.com/gracious-words-amid-sword-thrusts/>

You Can Please God—by Kyle Gangel
<https://biblicalcounseling.com/you-can-please-god/>

Crafting Temptation and Repentance Plans to Help Addicts—by Keith Palmer
<https://biblicalcounseling.com/crafting-temptation-and-repentance-plans-to-help-addicts/>

Covenant Baptist Biblical Counseling Class:

A Biblical Counseling class started February 13th at 7 PM here at the church. If you would be interested in participating, please let the pastor know. We are going to livestream the class. Just go to the website at <https://covenantbaptistsc.org> and click the livestream button on home page at 7pm Thursdays.

Biblical counseling class on hold while teacher recovers from surgery.



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3535 Delree Street

West Columbia, SC 29170

<https://covenantbaptistsc.org>

Location:



*If you are interested in joining our church, please speak to one of our elders or deacons.
They will be happy to give you the information you need.*