

The Church Connected
Presents
Celebrating The Birth Of Christ
The Beginning Of The End

Welcome to session three, the end of the Christmas 2021 Celebration Bible Study, "Celebrating The Birth of Christ: The Beginning of the End"

Let's start with the announcement of the angels to the shepherds.

The Earthly Beginning: And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2: 8-14)

The Earthly Ending: "The Son of Man will come again with divine greatness, and all his angels will come with him. He will sit as king on his great and glorious throne. All the people of the world will be gathered before Him. (Matthew 25:31-34)

In the same way, the angels were with Christ when He was born and when He was resurrected, they will also be with Him when He returns.

In sessions one and two, we looked at the Beginning and saw **that Christ:**

- ✓ **Was born according to prophecy,**
- ✓ **Was born into a religiously oppressive and corrupt Jewish system**
- ✓ **Had to come at an optimal time in governmental history**
- 1) **Made it possible for us to be Reborn and Adopted into God's family (something that's irreversible)**
- ✓ **Made it possible for us to have a honored position eternally in God's family, which includes an allotment of God's creation**

In session three, we'll look at the End in connection with the Beginning. This will allow us to see how the Birth of Christ was the Beginning of the End. In this part of the journey, we'll see that the End is everything Jesus Christ came on earth to free us from and free us for.

- ✓ So He [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read... “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me (the Messiah), Because He has anointed [set Me apart] Me to formally preach the good news to the helpless and poor. He has sent Me to announce the release (pardon, forgiveness) to those held captive, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed (downtrodden, bruised, crushed by tragedy), to proclaim the accepted year of the Lord [the day when salvation and the favor of God abound greatly].” Then He rolled up the scroll [having stopped in the middle of the verse], gave it back to the attendant and sat down [to teach]; and the eyes of all those in the synagogue were [attentively] fixed on Him. He began speaking to them: “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing and in your presence.” (Luke 4: 16-21)
- ✓ And in Him [Christ] you have been made complete [achieving spiritual stature through Christ], and He is the head over all rule and authority [of every angelic and earthly power]. In Him you were also circumcised [consecrated and converted] with a circumcision not made with hands, but by the [spiritual] circumcision of Christ in the stripping off of the body of the flesh [the sinful carnal nature], having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him [to a new life] through [your] faith in the working of God, [as displayed] when He raised Christ from the dead... God made you alive together with Christ, having [freely] forgiven us all our sins, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of legal demands [which were in force] against us and which were hostile to us. And this certificate He has set aside and completely removed by nailing it to the cross... (Colossians 2: 10-15 AMP)

Seeing the End with the Beginning in Mind

In order to look at the End, we have to realize that there was a middle - the life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The beginning and middle caused:

1) An end to new prophecies regarding Christ. There is no need for additional prophecy

a. God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. (Hebrews 1: 1-14 [1-4])

2) An end to forced acceptance into legalistic and/or oppressive religious systems to gain love and approval by God. Religiously legalistic and/or corrupt systems are only entered into by choice through ignorance or deception.

a. So do not let anyone make rules for [or criticize; judge; or condemn] you about eating and drinking or about a religious feast [festival], a New Moon Festival [2 Kin. 4:23; Neh. 10:33], or a Sabbath day [religious observances that false teachers pressured the Colossians to keep]. These things were like [are] a shadow of what was to come. But what is true and real has come and is found in Christ [or the reality/substance belongs to Christ; the body (is) of Christ]. Do not let anyone disqualify you by insisting on [or delighting in]

self-denial [asceticism; or false humility] and worship of angels. Such people enter into [or talk endlessly about; or pin their hopes on] visions, which fill them [puff them up] with foolish pride [or empty notions] because of their human way of thinking [unspiritual/worldly/carnal minds; mind of the flesh]. They do not hold tightly [or have no connection] to the head [Christ]. It is from him that all the parts of the body are cared for [supported] and held together through its joints and ligaments. So it grows in the way God wants [or causes] it to grow. (Colossians 2: 16-19)

3) An end to earthly and governmental systems that were in place for Christ's birth. Both the earth and the governmental system are moving toward ultimate control under God's Kingdom.

a. Everything God made [For the creation] was changed to become useless [subjected to futility/meaninglessness; Gen. 3; Eccl. 1:2], not by its own wish but because God wanted [subjected] it and because all along there was this hope [yet with the hope...]: that everything God made [the creation itself] would be set free from ruin [inevitable decay; the slavery of decay] to have the freedom and glory [or glorious freedom] that belong to God's children. We know that everything God made [all creation] has been waiting until now in pain, like a woman ready to give birth [groaning with labor pains until now]. (Romans 8: 20-22 EXB)

a. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes (nations) of the earth will mourn over Him [realizing their sin and guilt, and anticipating the coming wrath]. So it is to be. Amen. (Revelation 1:7 AMP)

4) An end to estrangement from God and His family. We are no longer and never will be separated from God's family and God's love. (For those who are born again)

- a. *The sheep that are My own hear My voice and listen to Me; I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they will never, ever [by any means] perish; and no one will ever snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater and mightier than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are One [in essence and nature].” (John 10: 27-30 AMP)*
- b. *Who will separate us from Christ's love? Will we be separated by trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, We are being put to death all day long for your sake. We are treated like sheep for slaughter. But in all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us. I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height or depth, or any other thing that is created. (Romans 8: 35-39 CEB)*

5) An end to our position of shame and inferiority. We are now in a position as friends of Jesus, priests in God's kingdom and the residence of the Holy Spirit.

- a. *No one has greater love [nor stronger commitment] than to lay down his own life for his friends. You are my friends if you keep on doing what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you [My] friends, because I have revealed to you everything that I have heard from My Father.*

You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and I have appointed and placed and purposefully planted you, so that you would go and bear fruit and keep on bearing, and that your fruit will remain and be lasting, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name [as My representative] He may give to you. This [is what] I command you: that you love and unselfishly seek the best for one another. (John 15: 13-17 AMP)

b. ...Grace and peace to you from the One who is and was and is coming, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ. Jesus is the faithful witness. He is first among those raised from death. He is the ruler of the kings of the earth. He is the One who loves us. And he is the One who made us free from our sins with the blood of his death. He made us to be a kingdom of priests who serve God his Father. To Jesus Christ be glory and power forever and ever! Amen. (Revelation 1: 14-6 ICB)

The Birth of Jesus Christ was beginning of God on earth. His life, death, burial, resurrection and eventual return is the ending of God on earth. However, there is still a lot that will occur until His return.

The fact that Christ was born, set into motion things that lead to a glorious ending. And, this is a reason to celebrate the Birth of Christ all year long.

BEING IN THE FAMILY & GROWING IN THE FAMILY

However, to genuinely Celebrate the Birth Of Christ in it's fullness, you must be a member of God's family. You must be born again and adopted back into God's family as His son or daughter.

- ✓ *Jesus answered him, "I assure you and most solemnly say to you, unless a person is born again [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, sanctified], he cannot [ever] see and experience the kingdom of God... I assure you and most solemnly say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot [ever] enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh [the physical is merely physical], and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3: 1-7 [3, 5-6])*
- ✓ *...if you acknowledge and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord [recognizing His power, authority, and majesty as God], and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart a person believes [in Christ as Savior] resulting in his justification [that is, being made righteous—being freed of the guilt of sin and made acceptable to God]; and with the mouth he acknowledges and confesses [his faith openly], resulting in and confirming [his] salvation.*

You can do this by praying/asking Christ to come into your heart as your Lord and Savior. Acknowledge that you need to be born again, believe that Jesus was born, lived, died, was buried, rose again and will return.

Let somebody know that you've asked Jesus to come into your heart, are born again and are part of God's family as His son or daughter.

If you asked Jesus to make you a part of His family, contact us so we can help you grow in your relationship with Christ. Text "I'm reborn!" at 5132405471 or email us at rbradley@thechurchconnected.org with the subject, "I'm reborn"

Now A Little Surprise!

I hope you remember that this is a bible study. And, with most studies there are quizzes. This study is no different.

In the first two sessions, there was something mistitled.

Can you guess what it was? Have you figured it out? Well, it wouldn't be fair not to give you a hint. Well have you figured it out yet? But, it would be more fun, in keeping with the Christmas Season, to just tell you the answer. The title "Announcement Of The Angels To The Shepherds" was mistitled. It could have been named, "The Birth Of Christ According To Paul" or "Paul's Description Of The Birth Of Christ".

The title "Announcement Of The Angels To The Shepherds" was misnamed. It could have been named, "The Birth Of Christ According To Paul" or "Paul's Description Of The Birth Of Christ", etc. because it is part of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

The Birth Of Christ According To Paul

But when the proper time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born subject to the regulations of the Law, To purchase the freedom of (to ransom, to redeem, to atone for) those who were subject to the Law, that we might be adopted and have sonship conferred upon us and be recognized as God's sons. (Galatians 4: 4-5 AMP)

But when the right time came, God sent His Son, who was born from a woman, and lived under the law. God did this so that He could buy the freedom of those who were under the law. God's purpose was to make us His children. (Galatians 4: 4-5 ERV)

Let me let you in on a little secret. This was done purposely. As we saw in this week's session, we are freed from legalistic and/or oppressive religious systems, so it's okay to question and check religious teaching no matter where it comes from. So, go back through the study. Have fun!

Thank You

In Celebrating the Birth of Christ this Christmas, and throughout the year, I encourage you to be like the Bereans....

“That same night the believers [brothers] sent Paul and Silas to Berea [a Macedonian city to the south] where [upon arriving] they went to the synagogue [of the Jews]. These people were more willing to listen [open-minded; fair-minded; noble in character] than the people in Thessalonica. The Bereans were eager to hear what Paul and Silas said [eagerly received the word/message] and studied [examined] the Scriptures every day to find out if these things were true [to confirm Paul’s teaching was in line with Scripture].” (Acts 17:10-11 EXB).

So in the spirit of the Christmas 2021 Bible Study, go back through the study. Have fun!

It is my hope and prayer that as you study, you will be mindful, by asking yourself:

- ✓ Is God the Father honored by leading me to be thankful and grateful to Him*
- ✓ Are you getting to know Jesus better by growing in His character*
- ✓ Are you listening to the Holy Spirit by learning to live better through His leading*
- ✓ Are you being shown how to love yourself and others by word and action*

Well, the Christmas 2021 - Celebrating The Birth Of Christ: The Beginning Of The End is finished.

We hope you enjoyed the journey and got a glimpse into why we should celebrate the Birth of Christ this year and all year long. We certainly did. And, we have you to thank.

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Have A Very Merry Christmas!