

Orlando Bible Students Newsletter

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Called to Rejoice

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”—Luke 2:11

These familiar words should gladden our hearts. The prophecy of the birth of the Messiah had now been fulfilled. “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me one that is to be ruler in Israel.” (Mic. 5:2) God chose this city because it was the city of David, Israel’s beloved king. However, few children in Judea or even the entire world were born in humbler circumstances. Due to the crowded conditions caused by many coming to pay their taxes, Jesus was born in a cattle stall. (Luke 2:1-7) But from these simple beginnings, the son of God would go on to complete his mission as the world’s Savior.

The birth of our Lord Jesus, to be properly understood, must be considered as a gift of divine love. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) God, through the life and sacrifice of Jesus, provided for the salvation of the entire world. Through the Father’s plan, Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit so that after he died as a ransom for Adam, he could be raised from the dead to be the high priest to bring mankind back to God in his earthly kingdom. Jesus would make it possible to recover all that was lost by disobedience in Eden—everlasting life, perfection and fellowship with God and his son. As the effects of Adam’s disobedience were inherited by his descendants, so the results of Christ’s obedient life will be shared by all.

The announcement delivered to the shepherds was sent to those who were humble, and trustworthy. The message of good tidings was an inspired one, and in harmony with the promise that God made to Abraham. (Gen. 28:14) While they were “keeping watch” and guarding their flocks, the shepherds became “sore afraid.” (Luke 2:8,9) This reveals that mankind generally does not view God as being gracious and loving, but God is a God of grace, love, and the father of mercies. (2 Cor. 1:3) The angels told the shepherds to “fear not,” for a message of “good tidings of great joy” was being proclaimed to them.— Luke 2:10

The order of the message is important. First, “good tidings,” then “great joy,” and finally, the crowning feature—it is “to all people.” The message declared a Savior had been born—the anointed one. God carefully declared he was sending his only begotten son to be man’s redeemer, “that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth.”—Rom. 3:26

Luke 2:14 adds a grand chorus of angelic voices to the message singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:14) This was a declaration of the wonderful character and power of God concerning the work by which this babe just born would bring glory and honor to his Father everlastingly.

To learn more, see our offer for the free booklet *The Light of the World* on the back page of this newsletter. ■

Elisha

Elijah had been a faithful prophet of God. After exposing the false prophets of Baal, demonstrating that Jehovah was God, the Lord had more work for him to do. We read in 1 Kings 19:15-21 that he was to anoint kings, and also to anoint Elisha to succeed him as the prophet to Israel. When Elijah first met Elisha, Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen indicating he came from a family of wealth. Elisha's family served the Lord and was not affected by the idolatry of the day. This is shown by his name, Elisha, signifying "God is deliverer."

Elijah approached and indicated Elisha's call to a special service by laying his mantle upon Elisha. His call was not to a place of ease, but to become a servant of the prophet. Elisha accepted the service joyfully and sacrificed his oxen. He humbly became Elijah's servant, learning from him. Here is a lesson for us as Christians. If we are called to a service for the Lord, do we accept the invitation? Are we as quick to follow as Elisha?

Continuing in 2 Kings 2, Elijah asked Elisha what blessing he would desire before their separation. Elisha requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit. This does not signify his desire to have twice as much as Elijah enjoyed, but rather was the familiar way of expressing an elder son's double portion. Elijah responded his request would be granted, if Elisha would see Elijah at the time of their separation. Circumstances would tend to separate the two, and if they were separated for any reason, Elisha would not receive the blessing. The Lord led Elijah on a circuitous route. At various stopping places, he suggested that Elisha tarry. Instead, Elisha clung closely to the Prophet, allowing nothing to hinder being with Elijah to the very end. He stayed with Elijah until Elijah was separated by the chariot of fire and the whirlwind.

Elijah's mantle, a symbol of his authority, fell to Elisha. Elisha took off his own outer garment and tore it in two, showing his grief. He then took Elijah's mantle, along with the blessing and power of Jehovah that came with it. Elisha continued on to serve the Lord. May we also use our talents and abilities to serve the Lord with joy. ■

The Messiah

The expression "Jesus Christ" is the same as saying "Jesus the Messiah." "Messiah" means to anoint or to smear with oil. In Biblical times Kings Solomon, Saul and David were anointed as a sign that they were approved of God. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are referred to in scripture as God's anointed ones. The practice of anointing was accomplished by pouring oil on their heads. We find this expression in the 23rd Psalm: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit, following his baptism by John making him the Messiah, God's anointed savior of the world.—Matt. 3:16,17

The Bible provides insights into the Messiah's appearance, background and activities. The Prophet Isaiah said the Messiah would be anointed "To bring good news to the afflicted; ... to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners. To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD" (Isa. 61:1,2) Jesus applied this prophecy to himself in Luke 4:16-21.

(Continued on next page)

The Highway of Holiness—Isaiah 35:8

Jesus said in Matthew 7:13,14 (*NASB*) concerning our day, “The gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it, for the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” How strange! Why is the way so restricted for those who wish to follow Jesus and attain to eternal life?

There are only two ways open at this time: the narrow way and the broad way. Billions are on the broad way that leads to destruction while relatively few are on the narrow way that leads unto life. Why? Because the narrow way is a way of sacrifice and suffering in the name of Jesus and few are interested in following it. Does that leave any hope for the billions walking the broad road? Yes, because God’s plan includes a feature to bring those who walked the broad road back to life and give them the opportunity to walk a new road, the “highway of holiness,” back into harmony with God in Christ’s earthly kingdom.

This highway leads to everlasting life and will be offered to all, who when resurrected and enlightened, choose to walk on it. Isaiah 35:8-9 (*NASB*) describes this way: “A highway will be there, a roadway, And it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, But it will be for him who walks that way, And fools will not wander on it. No lion will be there, Nor will any vicious beast go up on it; These will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there.” Satan will be bound and not be able to hinder those who wish to walk on this highway. The stones of oppression, poverty and other troubles will be removed so they will not hamper man’s walking this highway. (Isa. 62:10) The highway will be made plain and Jesus as a shepherd will lead the human family up the highway. (Isa. 42:16; 40:11) There will be springs of water, picturing the blessings of God’s truth, that will be available to the travelers of the highway. (Isa. 41:18; 49:10) Mankind will be healed of the physical effects of the curse of sin and death, which will make it easier for them to walk this highway—Isa. 35:5,6; 33:24

By walking this highway, mankind “shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isa. 35:10) If obedient, those who walk this highway will regain harmony with God, perfection, and everlasting life—everything Adam lost due to sin. ■

The Messiah (*continued from previous page*)

Daniel prophesied that Messiah would come during the time when Jesus was born. When King Herod heard of Jesus’ birth, he learned that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Subsequently, Herod had all of the male children of Bethlehem, two years old and under, put to death in a futile attempt to thwart God’s plans, but God provided a way of escape for the baby Jesus—to Egypt.

Early Christians believed that the Messiah would come to do battle with their oppressors. Acts 4:26 tells us the believers prayed for courage in the face of the adversity of their day. They quoted Psalm 2:1,2: “The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.” Despite their opposition, God will set his Son, the Messiah, as a king upon his holy hill of Zion. Then, Messiah will dash the earthly kingdoms to pieces, replacing them with his kingdom which will bless all mankind—vss. 6-12 ■

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Florida Bible Students Convention

March 7-9, 2020

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(407) 851-6400

[Free admission, no collection]

For further information contact:

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Phone: (407) 247-4641

Or contact us at our website:

www.orlandobible.org

The Orlando Bible Students is a non-denominational group that meets for Bible studies and devotions on Sunday mornings at the South Seminole Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL and in area homes during the week.

For further information call: (407) 695-6815

Special Offer

We would like to send you a complimentary copy of the booklet,

The Light of the World

This booklet describes how Jesus is the light of the world to Christians now and will be the world's light in his earthly kingdom.

For your **FREE** booklet, call (407) 695-6815 and request a copy, or fill in your address below and mail this coupon to:

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