

Youth Teaching Resources

December 2, 2018



Advent: Someone's Coming (December 2-23)

Luke 21:25-36 – “Coming to Reign”

Malachi 3:1-4 – “Coming to Judge”

Isaiah 12:1-6 (RCL 12:2-6) – “Coming to Save”

Hebrews 10:1-10 (RCL 10:5-10) – “Coming to Sanctify”

Christmas (December 30)

Colossians 3:1-17 – “All in the Name of Jesus”

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

Coming to Reign

Luke 21:25-36

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

Advent is a time to prepare for the realization of Jesus, the Son of God, in our world. How will you prepare your household for Christmas? How will you manage all the stuff that is packed into the season of Advent? How will you know when to stop? What if you put signs along the way to help you to know when to stop? Find an Advent devotional and do it as a family? Light the candle of the Advent wreath together? Use these as sign-posts along the way to slow you down. Then you might not only be ready for family on Christmas morning, but you will be ready for the realization of Jesus Christ in our world.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip “The Signs of the Deathly Hallows” from *Harry Potter & the Deathly Hallows*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

What are the three things that make up the sign of the Deathly Hallows?

What do each of these three things represent by themselves? What do they represent together?

How are these signs of what they are supposed to do next? How does this change the quest for Ron, Hermione, and Harry?

What signs do you have in your faith?

How do these signs help you point to how you should be living out your faith?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Luke 21:25-36. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What does Jesus say will happen before the return of Jesus? Are we to take these literally or figuratively?
- 2) How is our redemption both present and something to be fulfilled later?
- 3) What is the meaning of the parable of the fig tree in the middle of this mini-apocalypse from Luke?
- 4) What generation does Jesus speak of that "will not pass away" before his return? Does Jesus mean the people alive then? Does Jesus mean the church? Explain.
- 5) What should a passage like this cause us to do today?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) How are the synoptic gospels similar and different in telling this story?
- 2) What does Luke say we need to avoid in this passage?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": Was Jesus born on December 25?

Transformation

During the season of Advent, use this time of transformation to prepare for the realization of Jesus Christ in our world by lighting the candle(s) of an Advent wreath. Light the appropriate candle(s) for the week, say something like the following words in italics, and then lead your group through the spiritual practice of *Lectio Divina* focusing on each week's theme. After you have lead the group through *Lectio Divina*, allow the group to share how they heard "hope" in the passage. To get the group started, say something like the following:

"Each week, during Advent, we will light a candle to represent the theme of Advent for the week. Each theme will be part of the larger theme of Advent: preparing our lives for the realization of Jesus Christ in our world. This week our theme is hope. As we listen to the reading of our scripture passage, what is God revealing to you about hope in this passage."

Close with a prayer thanking God for the hope that we receive, not only during this season of Advent, but throughout the year.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Jesus as Messiah—The gospels preserve a story about the baby Jesus being presented at the temple, where an old man named Simeon took the child in his arms and declared that he had seen in a vision that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah (Luke 2:29-32).

Together, and not—Even a surface reading shows that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are quite similar at many points. For this reason they are called the “synoptic gospels” (“synoptic” is from a Greek word that means “seen together”). The Fourth Gospel is obviously quite different from the first three.

A few scholars have argued that Matthew was written first, and that Mark and Luke abbreviated what was found there. Most scholars, however, agree that Mark, the shortest of the gospels, was written first. Part of the evidence for this is that when Matthew and Luke include stories that follow the same order, it is those sections that they have in common with Mark.

A tradition holds that the gospel of Mark reflects the memories of the Apostle Peter, with whom Mark worked. The author of Matthew might possibly have been the apostle, but was more likely someone writing in his name. We know Luke as the author of both Luke and Acts. He was a Gentile physician who had come to know Christ and sought to gain as much information as he could before writing his books, which were addressed to “Theophilus,” which means “lover of God.”

It seems evident that the authors of both Matthew and Luke, probably written during the late 80s CE, had access to Mark’s gospel, which was probably written during the 60s. They included much of Mark’s material in their books, often in a slightly abbreviated form, or shaped to emphasize their personal interests. Some believe Matthew was writing mainly to a Jewish audience, while Luke wrote with attention to other Gentiles. Luke’s gospel also gives extra attention to the role of women and to those who are sick or poor.

Matthew and Luke also have in common a number of Jesus’ teachings that are not in Mark. This material is often attributed to an otherwise unknown collection of Jesus’ “sayings” that scholars call “Q” (from “Quelle,” a German word meaning “source”).

In addition, both Matthew and Luke incorporate unique materials not included elsewhere, notably their separate narratives about the birth and infancy of Jesus: Matthew has more to say about Joseph’s place in the story, while Luke focuses more on Mary. Both Matthew and Luke sometimes mix and match their various materials in different ways.

Thus, Matthew is thought to consist mainly of material from Mark, Q, and Matthew’s distinctive source, while Luke consists of material from Mark, Q, and Luke’s separate source.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Falling stars—Mark’s version of the “Little Apocalypse,” in which he has Jesus say the sun and moon would be darkened and the stars fall from the sky, is a reminder that this story is told from the ancient perspective of the universe in which the sun, moon, and stars were small bodies that inhabited a dome-like heaven above the earth.

We now know that each of the stars are actually suns, most much bigger than ours. Stars may collide or explode near the end of their life cycles, but they don’t fall from the sky. The writer’s perspective imagines that the stars would fall from the sky onto the earth. A planet might conceivably be drawn by gravity into a star, but a star could hardly fall onto a planet.

Fruiting fig trees—The reader may note a peculiarity of the parable about the fig tree: we would expect a metaphor related to *harvest* fruit, but the leafing of the fig tree takes place long before the harvest. Interpreters often point to Amos 8:1-2 as a possible background for the parable. There God showed Amos a basket of summer fruit and asked what he saw. Through a play on words, God replied that the summer fruit (*qayit*) was a harbinger of the end (*qēts*). The parable of the fig tree also points to the summer time, when the signs are clear that the end is near.

Things to avoid—Luke warns that we are to be on guard against three things: dissipation, drunkenness, and the worries of this life. The word translated “dissipation” was used by Greek medical writers to describe the nausea that results from eating or drinking too much. Drunkenness is not only a waste of time and money, but also a source of much pain and suffering. The Bible includes several warnings against it (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18). The warning about the “worries of life” recalls Luke 10:41 and 12:22-31, as well as the parable of the sower and the seed, where the seed falling among thorns is choked out by the cares and pleasures of life (Luke 8:14).

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Was Jesus born on December 25?

Matthew and Luke tell stories about Jesus birth, but neither gives any real clues as to the date. Some have argued that the reference to flocks of sheep being in the field suggests a date in springtime, but there's no reason sheep could not have been grazing in fields near Bethlehem.

It has often been said that December 25 was chosen for celebrating Jesus' birthday in an attempt to displace the ribald Roman feast of Saturnalia, held on the same day, but there is no direct evidence of this.

As early as 236 BCE, a commentary on Daniel by the church father Hippolytus of Rome put Jesus' birthdate at December 25, 2 BCE. The actual year was more likely 4 BCE, but his choice of December 25 is intriguing, and a number of other church fathers accepted it, especially in the western tradition.

The Armenian church, along with some other Orthodox churches, believe Jesus' birthdate was January 6, the date observed in Roman Catholic tradition as Epiphany.

Whether the date of December 25 was chosen to try and overshadow Saturnalia is unclear. The earliest known date of Christmas being celebrated in Rome on December 25 is 336, the year before Emperor Constantine's death. (For more on this, among others see Ben Witherington III, *Matthew*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary [Smyth & Helwys, 2006], 59).