

# Youth Teaching Resources

December 20, 2020



## Christmas Letters

2 Peter 3:1-15a (RCL 3:8-15)—“Patience and Peace”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24—“A Sanctified Season”

**Romans 16:25-27—“A Christmas Benediction”**

Galatians 4:4-7—“Children of the Child”

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

# “A Christmas Benediction”

*Romans 16:25-27*

## YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, 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.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGE

*Throughout the season of Advent, the social media challenge will be centered around the weekly themes of Advent.*

On Sunday, post a picture of three purple candle and one pink candle that are lit. On Monday, post the word “Love.” On Tuesday through Saturday, post images or phrases that reveal love.

## TEACHING THE LESSON

### Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip “Irish Blessing” from *Artemis Fowl*. 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:

- 1) Why would his dad had read him a blessing at night or when he was to leave?
- 2) What is this blessing promising?
- 3) How can a blessing help or prepare you for a journey?
- 4) Do you know any blessings? What do they mean to you? When do you typically say them?
- 5) What blessings does your faith provide to you?

### Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Romans 16:25-27. 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) Why have a benediction as the passage of scripture for the Sunday before Christmas?
- 2) Who was Paul writing to? How are these people similar to us?
- 3) Where does Paul find strength? How was that strength found in Jesus?
- 4) Who is to be given the glory? Who, or what, do we usually give the glory to?
- 5) How is the glory of God revealed at Christmas?

## Information *continued*

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) What other blessings do you know?
- 2) What do the prophets have to say about the messiah?
- 3) How is Christmas ultimately about glory?

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”: Did Paul write today’s text?

## Transformation

Conclude your time together by introducing the social media challenge for the week:

On Sunday, post a picture of three purple candles and one pink candle that are lit. On Monday, post the word “Love.” On Tuesday through Saturday, post images or phrases that reveal love.

Allow the students time to share things that reveal love to them.

Close with a prayer of thanksgiving to God for being love and all the love that is provided to us.

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, 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.

**Benediction**—The English word “benediction” is derived from the Latin adjective *bene*, meaning “well,” and the verb *dicere*, meaning “to speak” or “to say.” Together the words suggest verbally wishing someone well.

**Blessings**—A popular Irish blessing goes like this: “May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.”

Many other blessings, often in Trinitarian form, can be found in prayer books, ministerial handbooks, or on websites such as this one: <https://www.faithandworship.com/blessings-and-benedictions.html#gsc.tab=0>.

**Prophets**—Both the Old and New Testaments include prophecies of God’s salvation for all people. In 2 Samuel 7, the prophet Nathan told David that God had promised that his descendants would rule forever.

When the kingdoms of Israel and Judah fell and no son of David was on the throne, Israel could have deemed the promise false, but later prophets held to the hope that “a shoot from the stump of Jesse” (David’s father) would arise to rule with righteousness (Isa. 11:1-5). Isaiah described the coming ruler as one who would reach out to all nations: “On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious” (Isa. 11:10). The exilic prophet known as Second Isaiah spoke of the coming one as a “light to the nations” (Isa. 42:6).

Prophecies such as these led to the hope of a coming messiah who would be descended of David, and are echoed in a number of New Testament references. Matthew in particular often quoted scriptures that he deemed prophetic of Jesus’ birth. Matthew 12:17-21 contains several quotations to Isaiah 42. Allusions to the Christ as the promised “light to the nations” are also found in Luke 2:27-32. The Fourth Gospel has Jesus describe himself as “the light of the world” (John 8:12).

Prophecies enter the Christmas story, as well. Luke’s account of the annunciation to Mary draws directly on the promise from 2 Samuel 7 that a descendant of David would rule forever. As Luke relates it, the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would bear a son who would receive “the throne of his ancestor David” and would “reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:26-38).

**Glory in Romans**—In writing to the Romans, Paul speaks of glory as an attribute of God in 3:7, 23; 6:4; and 9:23. He speaks of humans giving glory to God in 4:20; 11:36; 15:6, 7, and 9. And, Paul even looks forward to the day when humans may somehow share in God’s glory (2:7, 10; 5:2; 8:18; 9:23).

## Digging Deeper *continued*

**Christmas glory**—The lesson mentions several Christmas hymns that speak of God’s glory. To those we could add “O Come All You Faithful,” as the second verse concludes with the line “Glory to God, all glory in the highest.”

Can you think of other favorite Christmas songs that include the words “glory” or “gloria”?

## The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, 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.

### Did Paul write today's text?

Many scholars believe that Paul originally concluded Romans after 14:23 and others think Paul's words end with chapter 15. Some believe Paul later penned Romans 16 and appended it to the letter in order to send a copy to a different church, while others believe it was added by an anonymous author.

As evidence, some note that Paul names no less than 26 individuals at Rome – far more personal references than in any other letter – yet Paul had not been to Rome. How would he know so many people there? Perhaps this could indicate that the individuals named were not in Rome, but in another church, such as Ephesus, where Paul spent several years. This would suggest that chapter 16 could be an appendix Paul added before sending it to a different church. Or, it could suggest that the chapter was added by a later author who knew the people mentioned and may have overdone it in trying to make it sound like Paul knew them, too.

On the other hand, Paul would have met many people on his journeys, including believers like Priscilla and Aquilla who had been expelled from Rome by emperor Claudius in 49 CE, but were later allowed to return. Since Paul had not visited the church in Rome, he may have wanted to emphasize how many members he had met in other contexts, but who had made their way back to Rome.

One can make a good argument for different positions, but though the syntax of the benediction is unlike Paul's typical style, it does reflect his thinking, especially as related to the Romans.

At the end of the day, identifying precisely who wrote the benediction or where it belongs in the text is not very important. It is the message that matters, and it is a powerful message.

Paul J. Achtemeir describes it this way:

That final benediction in Romans thus contains nothing less than the proclamation of the final victory of God's grace: the restoration of his gracious lordship over his redeemed creation. In light of those verses, the Christian's life can be a time of assured expectation, since God brings to completion what he has promised. The Christian's life can also be a time of joyful expectation, since the fulfilled promise of God is nothing less than the restoration of creation to its rightful relationship of love and devotion to its Creator and Lord. Rectified by a trust in that Lord, a trust grounded in confidence in his Word, the Christian may recall with joy that first advent of Christ and await with quiet confidence his second advent, when God's plan for his creation will become visible reality.

## The Hardest Question *continued*

That is the message to which these readings give voice and to which they invite the preacher to devote his or her proclamation, whether during Advent or at any other time during the church year. (From *Romans*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985], 240.)