

Study Guide – “It’s A Boy 3”, from 12-17-2017

Warming Up

In early fall, as you think ahead about the upcoming Christmas season, are your thoughts centered more about the joy of commemorating the birth of Christ, or about the hustle and bustle of completing Christmas gift lists, the shopping that it requires, and decorating for it? A recent survey showed that 45% of people surveyed dread the Christmas season. How do you feel about it? Do you have any conflicting thoughts?

Takeaway # 1 – He Came to Bring Joy

In Luke 2:10, the angels told the shepherds that the good news about the birth of Jesus was that it would bring “great joy which will be to all people.” List some ways that the coming of Jesus to earth benefits “all people”, even those who do not have faith in Him.

Many people pray for things that they want or need in this life, but Romans 14:17 tells us clearly that “the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking (*physical things*), but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Every Christian is part of the kingdom of God. When the world looks at us, do they see people who are consumed with the things of this world like everyone else, or a people whose lives reflect righteousness, peace, and a joy that surpasses understanding? Do you think most Christians are conscious of what the kingdom of God should look like in everyday life? Are there misconceptions about it? Discuss.

Takeaway # 2 - Joy in His Presence While Here on Earth

Although we are not yet with God in heaven, and do not see Him physically in this world, our faith leads us to rejoice exceedingly for what we have and will have. 1 Peter 1:8 reads, “Though now you do not see Him, **yet believing**, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.” Although the world is infected with sin, should we not have exceeding joy because of the reality that is the true, eternal, spiritual truth of our condition? How hard is it to overcome the distractions of the imperfect world and enter into the joy that is our eternal reality?

In Psalm 16:11, the psalmist expresses what God will give him here in this life. “You will show me the path of life; **In Your presence is fullness of joy**; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” In John 15:11, Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” With these scriptures in mind, don’t you think that God wants us to have joy in this life? What are practical keys to finding this joy?

Pastor Bobby said, “You don’t have to get OUT of trials, but INTO the presence of God.” List some ways that you can get INTO the presence of God while you are in the middle of the busyness of life. List some distractions that work against us even when we are in a quiet place attempting to enter into God’s presence during a time of prayer.

There was a popular country song that came out decades ago called, “Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places.” Could it be that we are looking for joy in all the wrong places? As Pastor Bobby pointed out, God’s presence is where true joy resides. Why do you think it is so difficult for Christians to spend a lot of time consciously in the presence of God? List some ways to change this – to modify priorities, overcome Satan’s distractions.

Takeaway # 3 – He Came for Eternal Life, Not Death

The death of a loved one is a sorrowful event, and mourning that loss is an acceptable response. However, physical death is not the end. Pastor Bobby said that the lost are born once, and die twice, and the saved are born twice but die only once. Of course, this explanation addresses both physical and spiritual birth and death, and is certainly true.

Why are so many Christians troubled about their own death, knowing that Jesus made them this promise in John 14:1-4, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know”?

Jesus asked Martha a serious question when Lazarus died. In John 11:25-26, He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” We all believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus, but how hard is it to enter in to a joyful expectation of the reality after death. What are the conflicts here?

In Philippians 1:21-23, Paul boldly said, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean **fruit from my labor**; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

Do you think that most Christians could say that the only reason they do not want to die right now and be with Jesus is because their life is so fruitful to God’s kingdom? Perhaps Paul’s ministry was truly exceptional, but what do you think of the idea that God has a purpose for you before He takes you home? Are you asking Him what it is?

Conclusion

There is a song that children often sing. It goes, “I have a joy, joy, joy down in my heart...” Jesus said that unless we become as little children, we will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3)

Capital One asks, “What’s in your wallet?” God asks, “What’s in your heart?”

Joy to the world, the Lord has come!