

Week Seven Advent Home Study Series - The Lord has Come!

On Wednesday the feast arrives and we celebrate the Incarnation of God, Jesus Christ. This celebration is closely linked with Theophany which is celebrated on January 6th. Traditionally Theophany was the largest celebration and today they are linked by a period of celebration of the coming of Christ between December 25th and Theophany. On Christmas we celebrate the Incarnation of God and on Theophany we celebrate His public appearance as the Son of God. Both holidays have the same significance. Christ comes into the world as the Son of God for our salvation. This may help us appreciate even more the meaning of Christ coming into our own lives.

What is the meaning of Christmas? At its center is Christ Himself and only He can give us a true Christmas.

The meaning can be found simply stated in **Matthew 1:21**. Look this up and write it here.

The meaning of the name Jesus is “God saves” in Hebrew. God is the Savior! As we learn from the Gospel, Jesus is not just some wise prophet, but is true life. He showed us victory over Death and sin. He comes as fully God and fully human. He comes as part of God’s plan to rescue us from our fallen state, our condition of mortality, subject to sickness, suffering and death. It is only through God’s power that this can be overcome. On Christmas He has come!

Read Matthew 1:18-25 which is the story of the Birth of Jesus. This is read during Christmas Orthros service.

By what power was Mary going to have a baby?

What was Joseph’s initial reaction?

What did the angel tell Joseph?

What was the prophecy from Isaiah concerning the birth of Christ? (Isaiah 7:14)

Read Luke 2:1-7: This is Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Who was the Roman Emperor at the time of Jesus’s birth giving us the historical marker of this event?

Where was Jesus born and why?

What can help us remember at Christmas that Jesus comes to us not as a sweet baby, but as the Savior of the world?

How do you as an Orthodox Christian experience Christ as your Savior in Baptism, Divine Liturgy, Confession, daily prayers and others?

Read Romans 10:8-10 where Saint Paul emphasizes the confession of faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior and summarize it in your own words.

A Feast of Joy

Christmas is a feast of great joy. It offers an invitation to seek the fulfillment of our desires through Christ who as God becomes one of us and embraces us with His love. The Christmas message is one of hope: Christ is Emmanuel, God is with us! Rejoice! Heaven and earth are united! We do not have to look any further as Christ has totally united Himself with our human nature and transformed it. As Saint John the Evangelist says, *“The Word became a human being and full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw His glory!...Out of the fulness of His grace He has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another.”* (John 1:14,16)

Read Luke 2:8-20 which is the remaining part of the Gospel lesson for the Christmas Vespers.

He says, I am here with good news for you which will...?

What were the angels prizes to God?

Read Mathew 2:1-12: This is the Gospel lesson for the Christmas Divine Liturgy
When the wise men came they brought...?

What is the importance of the exchange of gifts at Christmas? What are the temptations and risks in this practice? What should our priorities be in this regard as Christians?

Is Christmas a joyful holiday for you and your family? How do you seek to experience the true Christmas Joy?

How can we help those who are lonely, suffering and depressed at Christmas?

Christmas Hymns of Joy

*All things are filled with joy today:
Christ is born of the Virgin.*
Orthros Hymn

*All the angels in heaven greatly rejoice today.
The whole creation leaps with joy,
for the Savior and Lord is born in Bethlehem.*
Vigil Hymn

*Heaven and earth are united to day, for Christ is born.
Today has God come upon earth, and man gone up to heaven.
Therefore let us give glory to Him Who has brought peace by His coming.
O Savior glory to You.
Adapted vigil Hymn*

*Come, O faithful, and let us behold where Christ is born.
Let us join the Magi, kings from the East, and follow the guiding star.
Angels sing praises there without ceasing,
and shepherds abiding in the fields offer a joyful hymn:
glory to the highest to Him who this day is born of the Virgin.
Adapted Orthros Hymn*

Sonship

On Christmas we celebrate the Son of God who came to us to make us all sons and daughters of the living God.

By virtue of His divine sonship, Christ has the power to confer on us adoption — spiritual sonship. To whomever receives Him and believes in Him, Christ gives the right to become God's child. We become God's children not by natural means, for God is our Father. (John 1:12-13)

All people are precious to God as His beloved creatures, but only those who are adopted sons and daughters, who believe in Christ and have received the Holy Spirit. *"Those who are led by God's Spirit makes you God's children, and by the Spirit's power we cry out to God, 'Father! my Father'. God's Spirit joins Himself to our spirit to declare that we are God's children"* (Rom 8:14-16).

The highest honor that one can be granted on this earth is adoption through Christ in whom we are Baptized and clothed. During Christmas Divine Liturgy we sing "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"

Read Hebrews 1:1-12: This is the Epistle reading for the Christmas Vespers. How has God spoken to us in these last days?

Reflecting the brightness of God's glory. the Son is the exact....?

What did God say about the Son?

Read Galatians 4:4-7: This is the Epistle for the Christmas Divine Liturgy When the fullness of time had come what did God do?

Why did He do this?

What else did He send?

Because we are a son or daughter what does God promise?

As a son or daughter of God what consequence follow for our daily lives?

Christmas Dismissal Hymn

*Your Nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone upon the world with the light of knowledge
For thereby they who adored the stars
through a star were taught worship you,
the Sun of righteousness,
and to know You as the Dawn from
heaven. Lord, glory to You!*

Prayer:

*Or Christ our God,
Your kingdom is eternal
and your rule is over all generations.
You became incarnate of the Holy Spirit
and were made man of the virgin Mary.
Your coming, O Christ, has enlightened us.
You filled all of creation with resplendent joy.
Everything that breathes praises You,
the express Image of the Father's glory
You are eternal God,
existing before all ages,
Who was born of the virgin.
Lord, glory to You!
Christmas Vespers Hymn*

