

# God with Us



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

# IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

**SERIES: CHRISTMAS**

**LESSON: INCARNATION**

**TITUS 3:3-4**

**11/29/20**

## MAIN POINT

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The goodness and loving kindness of God appeared

## CONTEXT

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Titus was a traveling companion of Paul's (Gal. 2:1). In a helpful way to Paul, Titus was a Gentile who came to faith in Christ (Gal. 2:3) and delivered letters to the Corinthians and reported to Paul their responses (1 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:13-16).

Paul's letter to Titus instructs him what to do in Crete (Titus 1:5). Paul left Titus in Crete to put things in order by appointing qualified elders who were humble, self-controlled, above reproach, disciplined, and able to teach sound doctrine. The situation in Crete was one where Jews were disturbing sound doctrine through lying and deception (1:10). Titus is to establish elders who teach sound doctrine as well as establish older mature men and women who can teach younger men and women (2:1-10).

In his appeal to Titus, Paul wants him to remind Christians in Crete to be Christ-like. He reminds them that our Savior appeared with goodness and loving kindness to save us from a lifestyle of sin. They are to avoid quarreling over foolish controversies. Since Christ appeared on earth in order to save us, we are empowered to live Christ-like.

## INTRODUCTION

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As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Christians especially, but to some extent secular culture even, view the Christmas season as a season of goodwill and a time to express kindness. Why do you think that is?**

**On a scale from 1-10, how volatile would you rate our country, Little Rock, and your neighborhood?**

Our Scripture verses today will reflect on our Savior appearing in order to save us. What stands out about our passage is how our Savior appears to those who were volatile. Christ came to those who were hardened in their sinful ways.

## **EXPLANATION // ...believe Jesus is the Christ...**

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Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ TITUS 3:3**

**How many sinful descriptions are there in this one verse?**

**As you read through the list, to you, does there seem to be common denominator between the sinful items listed?**

The list of sinful items communicates several things. First, the descriptions communicate a *universal* aspect of sin. By universal, I mean that Paul can say the *entire* Cretan Christian community were once sinful in these ways. He communicates this by using the plural “we ourselves.” Paul implies that we were all sinners in need of a Savior.

Second, Paul’s list of sins also communicates that people *actively* choose to sin but are also *passively* enslaved to sin. In the active sense, Paul says we were foolish, disobedient, malicious and envious and hating others. In the passive sense, we were also enslaved to sin. Paul’s list includes a passive element when it lists being led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, and being hated by others. A brief conclusion is that we are steeped in sin. We actively choose to sin, we are sinned against, and we are enslaved to sin.

Third, these sins are not just characteristics for a brief season or particular stage of life. Paul seems to communicate that we continue to sin without any real movement of change. He says we were “*passing our days* in malice and envy.” This implies that as time goes by, we seem accustomed to sin, our days of sin look familiar, and it’s our default norm.

**In your view, rank this list of sins in terms of how prominent they are today?**

Do you see these sins prominent in Christian circles just as much or less than in secular circles?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ TITUS 3:4-5

Let's return to "grammar school" for a moment. Verses 4 and 5 are one sentence. Can you identify the *main* clause and its subject and verb? The ESV reads, "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit," (A: He saved)

In response to the previous sinfulness of the Cretan Christian community, God saved them. It is clear from the later phrases of verse 5, that God saved them not because of their own righteousness, but because of his own mercy. "We *ourselves* were once" (v. 3) sinful, yet "His *own* mercy" (v. 5) is able to save. Despite we are sinful, God is abundant in mercy. Our natures are sinful; His nature embodies mercy.

The main point we want to emphasize for the sake of this lesson (and Christmas season) is that in order for God to save us, he needed to first appear. Several aspects of his appearing are worth emphasizing from this verse.

First, He appeared out of His goodness and loving kindness. It is clear that the goodness and loving kindness of God is in contrast to the malice, envy and hatred that people exhibit in their sin. And while we were passing our days in such sinful practices, God entered into our days. Because we are completely dead in our sins, we need someone outside of us, that is God, to appear before us.

Second, verse 4 says that *God* appeared. In Jesus, God appeared in flesh. Colossians 2:9 states the concept plainly: "For in the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." Jesus was God in flesh. Hebrews 1:3 adds, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power..."

Third, Jesus is *our Savior*. In fact, the meaning of the name *Jesus* is to deliver or rescue. In Matthew 1:21, Gabriel told Mary that she would have a son and that she was to name him *Jesus*. Gabriel explained, "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, *for he will save his people from their sins*. Apart from Jesus' appearing there was no other way for us to be saved from our sins.

Can you remember an age or reason when Christmas became to you less about Santa and gifts and became more about Christ or showing goodness and loving kindness?

For the past two months, our church has been studying the Gospel of John on Sunday mornings. Can you recall anything that we have learned thus far in John that describes Jesus as God? (A: John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. John 1:18 – No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known. John 2:19 – Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.)

## **APPLICATION // ...have life in His name.**

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Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are some simple ways to show goodness and loving kindness during the Christmas season?

Christ appeared to *save us* (Titus 3:5). Do you think non-Christians are more receptive to hear about Jesus during Christmas season than other seasons? If so, why? How can you seize the opportunity to tell someone about Jesus?

Titus 3:4-5 are great verses to memorize for the Christmas season and verses to say when sharing Christ. In the verses, it explains that Christ appeared, he saved us, not by our works but by his mercy. Can you memorize these verses this week? Write it on your Christmas cards? Send a note to a friend who needs a reminder of Christ during this season?

## **PRAYER**

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Close in prayer, asking God to press this truth that was studied.

## **COMMENTARY / RESOURCES**

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Put Resources that could benefit the teacher: videos, podcasts, sermons, etc.

## VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY

3:3 – Notice the past tense of verse 3: “You *were once* foolish.” Before Christ our identifies are found in our sin.

3:4 – “Loving kindness” is literally in Greek, “love for people” (*philanthropia*). You likely will notice the connection with our modern day word, *philanthropy*.

## INTRODUCTION OF TITUS

Overview: Titus – Youtube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUEYCVXJM3k>