



the
Coming
King

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

Brian Frost



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PROVIDENCE
BAPTIST CHURCH

Raleigh, North Carolina

The Coming King: Advent Devotional

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Introduction



I love Christmas. I also love the expectation that swells before Christmas. As a kid, I don't think I could have defined Advent, but I remember growing up loving what it was. Advent, which means *coming*, is the annual season of anticipation and celebration in preparation for Christmas Day. The Advent season is all about preparing to celebrate Jesus, the coming King.

Christians celebrate Advent in many different ways. Some light candles. Some hang lights. Some enjoy singing carols. Some enjoy watching holiday movies. Some enjoy special foods. Some hang wreaths. Some decorate trees. Some give gifts. However you choose to prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ let me encourage you to be intentional. For, as evidenced by the millions who do many of these same things with no intent to worship or even acknowledge Jesus, there are many ways to fill Advent that can leave us empty and distant from Christ on December 25.

The lights and gifts and parties and foods all have their place, but we want to celebrate Jesus. Don't let Christmas Day find you spiritually and emotionally unprepared. Your joy, and the joy of your family and friends, will be fuller if you are ready. This devotional guide, drawn from many different Christmas passages in the Bible, has been written to help you prepare. Here are a few suggestions before you begin reading.

Be on lookout for Jesus. Every person in the Christmas story has their arm outstretched, pointing our attention to Jesus. Don't get distracted. Look where they are pointing.

Give yourself time to examine your heart. We love to sing, "Let every heart prepare him room," but rarely give ourselves margins during December to do so. Take a little time each day to examine your heart under the light of God's Word. When the light reveals sin, confess it quickly. A forgiven heart is a really happy heart.

Aim to build expectancy for Jesus in your home—especially around children. Force your imagination to make the wonder of the King's arrival visible to you and your family. Don't let the one person in your home who is bored with Advent be you!

Look to share the truth of Christmas with someone this month. Our joy in anything is maximized when we get to talk about it with others. This is especially true with Jesus. So take some of what you read here and share it with others.

DECEMBER 1

The Promised One



“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Genesis 3:15

The Christmas story begins in the Garden of Eden. Out of the dust God created a man in His image. Soon there was another, different by design, but equal in dignity. This man and woman lived in perfect peace, enjoying God and each other. Their love was pure. Their worship was undefiled. Their laughter was full. Their meals were delicious. Their work was satisfying. Their sleep was sweet. This was God’s design.

Then one day Satan tempted them and they chose to eat the only fruit God had forbidden. Suddenly, they felt naked, guilty, and vulnerable. Never before had they felt the need to hide at God’s arrival. But when God entered the garden, they were each found hiding alone.

The consequences were staggering. They were driven from God’s presence. They would have to work a hard ground in order to eat. Their relationship would become more contentious as each vied for prominence in their home. Their children, born in pain, would inherit a sin nature that would guarantee more sin. In the end, mankind would die and face permanent separation from God because of their sin.

In the bleakness of this moment, God promised a rescue! One day, a special man would be born of woman. He would live without sin. His heel would be bruised, but He would bruise (crush) the head of Satan. This special man would bring redemption and freedom for those pinned under the condemnation of God's law.

The New Testament removes all doubt in declaring that Jesus Christ was this man. "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus, the Son of God, arrived on earth through the womb of a woman. This is the coming we celebrate! He lived a sinless life before crushing evil with His death and resurrection. For all who believe in Him, God gives the gift of forgiveness.

As you prepare to celebrate Christmas, know for certain that Jesus is the Promised One. He came. He accomplished what was promised. He will come again to restore all things!

Questions to Consider

- » What do you think motivated God to promise a rescue just moments after He had been personally offended by the man and woman He created?

- » Why did Adam and Eve hide? What is it that leads us to think we need to hide? Is there any sin in your life that if you confessed it to God and received forgiveness, you could stop hiding this Advent?

- » Who do you know that needs to hear the good news of Jesus' birth this Christmas?

DECEMBER 2

God Drew Near



“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Isaiah 7:14

King Ahaz was a mess. Unlike his godly grandfather, father, and son, the Bible tells us that Ahaz “did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 28). This may be one of the Bible’s greatest understatements. His story is one of total disregard for God, human life, family, community, and integrity. The highlight reel of his sin includes making idols and stationing them throughout the land, burning his own sons to death in worship of these idols, and closing the doors to the Temple in an attempt to keep the people from worshipping God. Ahaz was a sinner in need of a Savior.

So one day as Ahaz was shaking in fear because his land was about to be invaded, God sent a prophet named Isaiah with a message (prophets were people sent by God with a message). God told Ahaz not to be afraid because He was going to protect His people. With two enemy armies on the horizon, God knew Ahaz needed a sign to give him hope. So without being asked for one, the Lord Himself gave a sign. What was the sign God used to inspire hope? A promise that a virgin would give birth to a son. His name would be Immanuel, which means *God with us!*

If you are weighed down today with sin and guilt, there is hope. We know this to be true because the very first man to hear the Christmas promise of a virgin birth was one of the most ungodly men in biblical history. This means there is hope for us, our family, and our friends. There is hope because Jesus' arrival meant that God is with us. Jesus, the ultimate prophet, came to reveal God to us. He came to heal us, forgive us, cleanse us, and lead us to repentance through His kindness.

As you prepare for Christmas morning, be assured that your sin is no match for God's grace. There is hope for all of us because Jesus came to be with us!

Questions to Consider

- » Why do you think God gift-wrapped the promise of Immanuel (God with us) to such an ungodly man?

- » If you feel far from God, spend some time asking God to forgive you, draw you in, and fill you with hope.

- » Who in your life is far from God and might be feeling empty or hopeless this Christmas? Pray that God would help them to see the hope offered in Jesus. Now make a plan to demonstrate God's kindness to them in some practical way this Christmas.

DECEMBER 3

To Us A Son Is Given



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.

Isaiah 9:6-7

God has ensured that there is a gift under the tree for you! Did you see how Isaiah's prophecy began? To you! You. God gave you a gift. Nobody is left out at Christmas. God's gift is His Son, and each of His names explain how amazing this gift really is.

Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor, which means we are not alone in the decisions of life. As a counselor, Jesus is full of wonder. He is perfectly wise. When life decisions are placed before us that exceed the capacity of our wisdom or comfort, we can remember that Jesus drew near to us to give us counsel. As the Designer of it all, His counsel is wonderful!

Jesus is our Mighty God, which means we have strong help with the challenges of life. Jesus was not just a good man. He was the God-man. Jesus is mighty. When we find ourselves out of strength, Jesus is present to give us all the strength we need to live as He has called us to live.

Jesus is an Everlasting Father, which means we have an eternal protector of the destiny of our life. Jesus is everlasting, which means He has no beginning and no end. Those who trust in Him not only find a perfect Father who is strong to save, but also an eternal home in which to live forever.

Finally, Jesus is the Prince of Peace, which means we can enjoy rest even in the unsettling anxieties of life. Life is full of stress. Jesus is full of peace. Jesus is able to keep in perfect peace, those whose minds are fixed upon Him (Isaiah 26:3).

As you prepare for Christmas, remember that any gift you may be hoping to receive pales in comparison to what God has already given by sending Jesus to earth!

Questions to Consider

- » Which of Jesus' attributes in Isaiah's prophecy are you most in need of right now? Counsel? Strength? Protection? Peace?

- » Consider this past year. Can you remember a time when Jesus provided you with counsel, strength, protection, or peace? Take time to give thanks.

- » Who do you know who is in need of the gifts that Jesus provides? Consider how you could share this passage or devotion with them.

DECEMBER 4

The Willingness of Mary



“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” . . . Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

Luke 1:31, 34-38

Have you ever thought about what Mary’s plans were for her life? She had plans, dreams, and aspirations. We all do. As a young woman, Mary had a life that she dreamt about. Then suddenly, an angel is sent from God with the news that would change all of her plans.

The news that she would give birth to the Son of God had to send her joys and fears soaring. “Praise the Lord, God is sending the Promised One! *Wait, what will Joseph think of me? Will he still marry me? What if he abandons me? Will this bring shame to his good name?* Oh, how can I not praise the Lord? God has looked upon me with favor. *Wait, how will people look upon my family and me?*”

Will they laugh? Will they scoff at what they think is unfaithfulness? Will they throw stones? Oh, I must praise God, for the Promised One is coming to save us from our sins!"

What happens next is stunning. Mary simply responds, "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Total submission. Complete trust. She willingly exchanged her life aspirations for God's aspirations for her life.

As you prepare for Christmas, consider Mary's willingness to bend her heart around God's will. Her attitude should be our attitude in presenting ourselves to God as instruments to be used however He desires. Consider Mary's trust in God's ability to provide and protect her. Consider the kindness of God to reward her faith with the privilege of kissing the cheek of His Son!

Questions to Consider

- » How would you describe Mary's response to the angel's news?

- » What do you think Mary had to know and believe about God's character to respond in this way?

- » As far as you can discern it, are you willingly bending your heart around God's will for your life even when it's frightening? If you are struggling with this, take some time to pray for courage and faith.

DECEMBER 5

Joseph's Great Faith



Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." . . . When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

Matthew 1:18-21, 24

Have you ever noticed how Joseph seems to fade into the background of the Christmas story? The Bible doesn't use many words to describe Joseph, but what it says is worthy of our attention.

Joseph was a "just" man. In other words, he was honest, kind, and fair. He was the kind of guy who did what he said he would do. You could trust him. He was also engaged to Mary. Just as they were preparing to be married, Mary told Joseph she was pregnant with the Son of God. As you can imagine, this was hard for Joseph to process.

So an angel from God came to Joseph in a dream and told him that the baby was indeed the Son of God. The angel then told him take Mary as his wife. What happens next is important. Joseph believed God and married Mary. Joseph stood by her and stood up for her in what was likely an extremely difficult social situation. He treated her with love and respect. He provided for her. And when the baby was born, he treated Jesus as his own child.

Since God is for us, obedience is always in our best interest. How was obedience in the best interest of Joseph? While he likely faced gossip and speculation when he married a pregnant Mary, Joseph's obedience allowed him to hold Jesus, the Savior of the world!

As you prepare for Christmas, consider Joseph's remarkable obedience and moral strength. Consider how blessed Mary was to have Joseph as her protector. Imagine the impact in our city if all the men treated women with similar depths of love. Finally, consider God's gift to Joseph in being able to look His Perfect Savior in the eyes.

Questions to Consider

- » What did Joseph need to believe about God to be obedient to His instructions?

- » What obstacles do you face this Christmas in obeying God with similar sincerity?

- » Who do you know who is in need of a loyal friend this Christmas? How could you stand up for them? How could you stand with them in order to show the love of Christ?

DECEMBER 6

God's Grace to the Humble



And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

Luke 1:46-55

People are never so empty as when they are full of themselves. This is likely why Mary and Elizabeth were able to respond to all God was doing with such fullness and freedom. Both women lived in relative obscurity. Elizabeth was old and barren. Mary was young and a virgin. Yet both became pregnant because of the mercy and power of God.

Consider their responses. When Elizabeth saw Mary approaching she replied, "Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43). Elizabeth was amazed and grateful. Then as Mary contemplated the mercy of God growing in

her womb, she broke out in a song known today as the “Magnificat.” She sang, “He has looked on the humble estate of his servant...He who is mighty has done great things for me.” Mary, too, was amazed and grateful.

Proud people struggle to be in awe of grace because they are in awe of themselves. They are rarely grateful because they are convinced of their merit and assume that others feel the same. But the humble are surprised at grace. They are grateful. The humble are free to rejoice in the mercy of God, recognizing every good thing as an undeserved gift.

As you prepare for Christmas, remember that only those who are humble can truly feel the wonder and mercy of Jesus’ birth. Only those who are overwhelmed by the humility of the Son of God to give us grace can sing in harmony with Mary’s full heart.

Questions to Consider

- » Why do you think having a proud heart hinders our worship of God?

- » What is it about a humble heart that fuels our gratitude towards God?

- » As far as you can see, do you, like Mary, feel a sense of amazement and gratitude at the thought of being given a gift? If not, take a moment to pray for grace, humility, and a thankful heart.

DECEMBER 7

The Bright Legacy of Believing



“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;”

Luke 1:68–71

Most of us think about where we are headed in life and how we will be remembered. For Zechariah, the two events that most clearly shape his legacy center on his faith in the Word of God.

Nine months before Zechariah spoke these words praising God for visiting his people, he was serving the temple as a priest. The angel, Gabriel, came to him and told him that Elizabeth, his wife, would give birth to a son in their old age. This son, John the Baptist, would “make ready for the Lord a people prepared” (Luke 1:17). For whatever reason, Zechariah couldn’t allow his faith to expand beyond his age and his wife’s inability to get pregnant. He just couldn’t believe God. So God gave Zechariah a mute tongue for nine months to consider his unbelief.

Sure enough Zechariah and his wife conceived and gave birth to a son. They named him John. Now, filled with the Holy Spirit and able to speak again, Zechariah is so certain about God’s grace in

the coming Savior that he declares God's redemption in the past tense as if it's already happened! "For he [God] **has** visited and redeemed his people and **has** raised up a horn of salvation for us!" (Luke 1:68-69).

As you prepare for Christmas, remember that God loves faith. Indeed, God rewards faith (Hebrews 11:6). Faith means simply believing what God has said and beginning to live as though God's promises are absolutely going to come to pass. We can cultivate a godly legacy of faith in our own lives and in our families. Take a moment to think about where you're headed and adjust course if necessary. God was faithful to His promises to Zechariah. God will be faithful to His promises to you!

Questions to Consider

- » Why do you think it was so difficult for Zechariah to believe that God would give them a son? What do you think happened in his heart that led him to grow in his faith?

- » What promise of God are you struggling to believe right now?

- » Can you think of another Christian who is struggling to believe God's promises to them? How can you encourage them today?

DECEMBER 8

O Little Town of Bethlehem



In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered...and all went to be registered, each to his own town.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Luke 2:1-5

Bethlehem. Have you ever considered how amazing it is that God chose and then announced through the prophet Micah, that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the Promised One? Even the Bible is amazed! “But you, O Bethlehem...who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days” (Micah 5:2).

Have you ever thought about the fact that in order to fulfill His promise to get Mary and Joseph from their home in Nazareth all the way to Bethlehem at the perfect time for delivery, God put it in the heart of Caesar Augustus that the entire Roman world should be registered each to his own town? This reminds me of Solomon’s proverb. “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will” (Proverbs 21:1).

Every now and then, the size of the universe, the pace of life, and the number of people on earth leaves us feeling small. If you have ever felt like your life is insignificant, don't be disheartened. All people and places matter to our God! God has not forgotten you. He is accounting for everyone and everything. For what Bethlehem and Caesar's census tell us is that God is directing all things to fulfill His promises for the good of ordinary people just like you and me.

Think about this. At the perfect time, God directed Caesar's thoughts like a stream of water in order to get two ordinary people to Bethlehem to have their baby. God did all this because He made a promise that His Son would be born there.

As you prepare for Christmas, don't think that your pain or obscurity means that God has forgotten you. For God's love has led Him to make promises. His faithfulness will bring them to pass!

Questions to Consider

- » What promises has God made in Scripture that you find yourself struggling to believe?

- » If you find yourself feeling forgotten, take some time to rehearse the gospel to yourself. Remember where Christ found you. Remember what Christ did for you. Remember what Christ has made available to you because of His coming.

- » Who in your life needs to be reminded that God will fulfill His promises?

DECEMBER 9

No Room in the Inn



*And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.
And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in
swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was
no place for them in the inn.*

Luke 2:6-7

We have all seen a children's Christmas production. For some reason, seeing a dressed up child with a fake beard saying, "there is no room in the inn," brings a smile to our face. But think about this reality for a moment. There was **no** room in the inn. How could this be?

God seemingly had accounted for everything. He orchestrated the promises, the prophets, the angels, a mother and father, a star, even a census that would bring Mary and Joseph to the chosen city of Bethlehem. Surely God could have planned a vacancy in the most spacious, comfortable room in the inn, but He didn't. God could have placed Jesus into a royal family, but He didn't. Jesus could have authorized His power to make his stay on earth more comfortable, but He didn't. The inn was fully occupied not because of God's inability to reserve a room, but because of God's decision not to.

God chose for Jesus' birth to resemble the rest of His life and ministry. Do you remember what Jesus said when the man asked if he could follow Him? Jesus said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). Even as a grown man He had no place to lay His head.

Why would the omnipotent Creator and Owner of the Universe determine to be born and to live this way? Here is why: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus could have determined to have a vacant room at the inn. But His plan was to tread through discomfort on His way to a cross in order to bring spiritual riches to those who were spiritually poor. The inn was full because God was preparing a home for those who believe!

Questions to Consider

- » Why is it so hard for us to imagine a king choosing to live in poverty for any length of time?

- » Do you believe that Jesus came to earth to save us from our sin? Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior and been totally forgiven?

- » Who do you know today that is in need of hearing the gospel and responding in faith? Take a moment to pray for them.

DECEMBER 10

All Are Welcome



When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Luke 2:15-20

Imagine a nativity scene without shepherds. I know...this is impossible. Shepherds are part of the package. The Christmas story without shepherds is like a puzzle that is missing lots of pieces. But for a Jewish person living 2,000 years ago, inviting shepherds to the birth of a King would have been absolutely unthinkable. They just didn't fit.

Shepherds were generally poor and uneducated. They lived with, and smelled like, animals. Shepherds were religious outsiders. They lived on the fringe of society. Wherever you drew the line between the 'in' crowd and the 'out' crowd, shepherds always landed outside the line.

Yet in God's mercy, when His Son was born in Bethlehem, not only did He draw the lines to include shepherds, He invited them first! That's right; shepherds were placed at the top of the invite list of the most important birthday in history. The ministry of Jesus that saw Him reaching down to help the broken confirms this was no accident.

Throughout the biblical story, God reveals Himself to the most unassuming people. He delights in working in the margins of society through marginalized people. Jesus ate with sinners and social outcasts. Jesus touched blind men and lepers. Jesus rescued the immoral and the irreligious. He chose an inner circle of followers that were not the who's who of Israel.

The shepherds were not socially polished. They did not have costly gifts. They had nothing to bring but themselves. That is what Jesus wanted then, and what He still wants today. As you prepare for Christmas, rejoice in God's invitation to the shepherds, because they were invited to give us hope that we too are invited to the party.

Questions to Consider

- » Luke says that when the shepherds saw Jesus, in addition to glorifying and praising God, "they made known the saying that had been told them concerning the child." Why is this important?

- » Who are the social outsiders in our community that need to know they are invited to believe in Jesus?

- » What are some practical ways for you to reach out to some of these people this Christmas season?

DECEMBER 11

An Army Built For An Announcement



And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Luke 2:8-14

Have you ever noticed how angels depicted in our culture are soft and cuddly, but in the Bible they are absolutely terrifying? In fact, every time an angel appears in the Christmas story, they start their announcement by telling people not to fear. When an angel of the Lord appeared to these hardened shepherds, they were "filled with great fear." Why were they so afraid?

The rest of Scripture answers this question. Whenever angels appear to people in the Bible, they are on a mission to bring either a message from God or a judgment from God. Frequently, some type of destruction follows their arrival. So imagine what must have been going through the minds of these shepherds after hearing the news of Jesus' birth from one angel, to then suddenly seeing a multitude of angels appear.

Sometimes we picture a "host" of angels like a church choir. White robes. Harps. Harmony. The word "host" literally means an army of soldiers. So what we have here is an army of angels. Think swords and battle armor! Yet this army did not come to fight. Instead they came to announce that the Savior had arrived and the rescue mission for humanity had begun. This baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger would grow up to resist temptation, die for sin, and rise from the dead in order to bring us peace.

As you prepare for Christmas, take comfort in God's good news of great joy. Be amazed that God the Father commissioned an angelic army to tell poor shepherds that the Conquering Hero had been born!

Questions to Consider

- » Describe what you envision it must have been like to see an army of angels praising God.

- » How does this passage give you comfort this Christmas season?
Spend some time thanking God for directing His strength to bring us good.

DECEMBER 12

My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation



Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

Luke 2:25-32

When I was a boy, the longest night of the year seemed to be Christmas Eve. I would toss about for what felt like hours only to look up at the clock and see five minutes of progress. There is a strange misery to having to wait when you are excited. That being the case, imagine Simeon.

Simeon was a righteous man who had a reputation for being upright, patient, and godly. At a particular moment in his life, God promised him he would not die until he had seen the Messiah with his own eyes. Hope was birthed.

Days passed...then years...then decades. Imagine his struggle in waiting.

So one day, Simeon, did what he always did. He entered the temple, but on this day his path crossed with Mary and Joseph. Simeon looked down at their baby and saw His salvation. Nobody else saw. Nobody else noticed. They were all too busy. But Simeon noticed. Simeon saw with his eyes what his heart had been seeing for years. Hope was no longer deferred.

Without even asking, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and proclaimed himself at peace. His waiting was now complete. His Savior had been born. Then looking at the face of God in the frailty of his aging arms, Simeon began talking like a missionary. “My eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of *all* peoples” (Luke 2:30-31). Like any sinner who has found peace with God, Simeon wanted Jesus’ name to be spread to the whole world, Jews and Gentiles alike.

As you prepare for Christmas, consider Simeon’s endurance of hope. Consider his immense joy when he saw Jesus and his waiting was complete. Consider also his passion to spread the peace he found to the corners of the earth!

Questions to Consider

- » Why do you think that only Simeon took notice of baby Jesus at the Temple?

- » How do you position yourself to see Jesus in the ordinary parts of life?

- » Why do you think seeing Jesus made him think about the nations worshipping Him? Take a moment to pray that God would use you to get the news of Jesus to the nations.

DECEMBER 13

Giving Thanks Like Anna



And there was a prophetess, Anna...she was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Luke 22:36-38

Everyone experiences pain. Even with the very little information that we have about Anna, it is clear that she was familiar with disappointment. She had lost her husband of seven years at a very early age and she had no children. She was now an older woman.

Instead of granting herself a license to be bitter and sorrowful, Anna developed a beautiful reputation as a woman who was relentless in worship, fasting, and prayer. Even in the profound disappointments of life, Anna did not allow her regrets to define her. She refused to play the victim because she was too busy hoping in God's promise of a Messiah. So she dedicated her whole life to immersing herself in worship, prayer, and ministering to others.

Now this is really important. She could have woken that day in a selfish fit, called it a "me day," and stayed in bed with a good novel. She didn't. One mark of maturity is found in how we handle adversity.

Anna's hope in God, her love for worship, and her willingness to minister to others got her out of bed and into the temple on that special day.

So Anna was there when Simeon held Jesus and proclaimed himself at peace. She was there when Simeon declared Jesus to be light of the world. She was there when Simeon told Mary that Jesus would cause the rising and falling of many in Israel. But she was no mere bystander. For once Anna had the opportunity, she gave thanks to God and then spoke of Jesus to all the faithful people who were at the temple that day praying for the Messiah to come.

As you prepare for Christmas, give your disappointments and regrets to God. Don't wallow in them. Look to God. Take hope in His promise. Give yourself to prayer, worship, and ministering to others. You may just see a miracle!

Questions to Consider

- » How do you think Anna endured her difficulties with such hope? What does her life teach us about enduring faith in difficult times?

- » Who do you know that has endured a difficult year that may need some special encouragement this Christmas? Pray for them. Find a practical way to encourage them.

DECEMBER 14

Determined to Worship



After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

Matthew 2:1-2

We don’t know how many wise men came to Jerusalem. We don’t know how far they traveled. Nor do we know how they learned that a baby had been born king of the Jews. What we do know is absolutely stunning. These educated, wealthy wise men traveled a great distance, sacrificing considerable time and resources, to come and worship a baby. A baby!

What is equally stunning is that Matthew, who wrote primarily to convince Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, is telling us that some of the first worshippers of the Son of God were men not from Israel, but from the East—perhaps from Babylon. They were Gentiles. Unclean. A different race. The *other* people. This is precisely what Isaiah predicted of the Messiah. “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:3). Prophecy was being fulfilled when these foreign wise men drew near to worship Jesus.

Somehow these wise men knew the “King of the Jews” was the promised “Messiah,” for when they asked Herod (Matthew 2:4), an inquiry into the birthplace of the “Messiah” was initiated. These wise men weren’t merely looking for Herod’s human successor. They were looking for the promised Messiah, the King of all Kings!

At the end of Matthew’s Gospel, we read Jesus’ words: “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:18-19). So Matthew portrays Jesus at the beginning and ending of his Gospel as a universal Messiah for the nations, not just for the Jews.

As you prepare for Christmas, consider the faith of these wise men. They traveled and sacrificed in order to bow before the Messiah who would save them from their sin. They did not come to see, or to observe, or to evaluate. They came to worship!

Questions to Consider

- » Have you come to the place in your life where you trust Christ and worship Him alone? If not, what is causing your hesitation?

- » Why is it so important that God ordained both Jewish shepherds and Gentile wise men to attend the birth of Christ?

- » What role do you have in going and making disciples of all the nations? Pray that God would give wisdom and an opportunity to share the gospel today.

DECEMBER 15

Master of My Fate



After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet..."

Matthew 2:1-5

All people, to some degree, want to control their own lives. Herod certainly did. Believing himself to be the protector of his power, Herod lived every day looking over his shoulder. Whenever he sensed a rival to his throne, people died. So, as the wise men came asking where the King of the Jews had been born, trouble flooded Herod's heart. So much so that in the days that followed, Herod schemed, lied, and committed mass murder just to get rid of a baby named Jesus.

There is another group in this passage who saw themselves as the masters of their fate. These were the priests who believed they were earning their way to God. Their reaction, though opposite of Herod, is equally surprising. When Herod inquired as to where the Messiah was to be born, they gave him the answer, and that was that. They went back to business as usual. Nobody went to check in Bethlehem!

The Christmas story reveals three typical reactions to Jesus. Some are *hostile* to Jesus like Herod and they don't want anyone interfering with their kingdom. Some are *indifferent* to Jesus like the priests and they don't see Jesus' life, His claims, or His resurrection as being consequential to their lives. Christmas is business as usual. Some *bow and worship* like every other character in the Christmas story. They see Jesus, worship Him, and welcome His Lordship over their lives.

As you prepare for Christmas, pray for the hostile, exhort the indifferent, and join those who bow the knee and worship Jesus.

Questions to Consider

- » What do you believe contributed to Herod's fear in the birth of a single baby boy?

- » Why do you think the priests were so indifferent to the possibility of the Messiah's birth?

- » Which reaction most reflects your response to Jesus today?

DECEMBER 16

Bethlehem's Star



Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying, "Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." ...After listening to [Herod], they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

Matthew 2:1-2, 9

Think about the stars for a moment. Even though they are so far from us, they fill the night sky with incredible beauty. Have you ever thought about Jesus' star? That is what the wise men called it. They said, "We saw *his star* in the east." A star is a huge sphere of very hot, burning gas that produces light and energy. Jesus had one for His birth.

This star worked like a GPS, guiding the wise men to Jerusalem. Once they arrived and Herod inquired as to where the Christ was to be born, they took the five-mile journey to Bethlehem. What role did the star have? Matthew records that this ball of burning gas led the wise men from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and stopped over Jesus' location. How did this happen?

Many people have speculated that this star was a comet, or an alignment of planets, or some kind of miraculous light. Since the Bible tells us little about the inner-workings of this star, that must not be the point. What is clear about this star is that it was doing something stars cannot do and will not do on their own. God was orchestrating a ball of burning gas around the sky to guide Gentile wise men to worship His Son. And the star was obedient!

God's aim is for people in every nation to worship His Son. Everything is at His disposal. Stars. Me. You. As you prepare for Christmas, pray that God would use you to get the good news of Jesus to the world so that they too can worship Him.

Questions to Consider

- » Do you believe that God has authority over everything to accomplish His will?

- » Are you open to the possibility that God could use your life to show His love to someone in need today?

- » Would you be willing to be used by God to take the good news of Jesus to people in the world who have never heard?

DECEMBER 17

Gifts Fit for a King



When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Matthew 2:10-11

It's that time of year again...time for gift buying, gift wrapping, and gift exchanging. I love this part of Christmas. There is something exciting about giving a thoughtful gift. In the last few devotions we have looked at the wise men's determination to worship Jesus, Herod's resistance, and God's assistance through the means of a star. But what can we learn about their gifts?

Gifts say a lot about our hearts. For these wise men, their hearts were full...like flowing over the brim kind of full. Matthew could have told us they were happy, but that wouldn't have done the condition of their hearts justice. So instead, he strung these pearls together: "*they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*" Think about each of those words and how they add emphasis. When their full hearts reacted with the sight of Jesus, they fell down, worshipped, and gave gifts. So the first thing we learn is that their material gifts represented the overflow of exceptionally full hearts.

The wise men brought three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold was a gift given to a king. Frankincense, a fragrance used in the making of incense, was a gift given to a priest. Myrrh, an embalming agent, was a gift for someone who was going to die. These were odd gifts to give to a baby...unless that baby was unlike any other baby!

Indeed, Jesus was a unique baby. For even as a baby, Jesus was the King of Kings. Even as a baby, Jesus came as our High Priest to bring us to God. And as even as a baby, Jesus was our Redeemer who came to give His life as a ransom for many. There never has been, nor ever will be, a greater Gift given at Christmas.

As you prepare to celebrate Christmas, consider the heart and the gifts of these wise men. They gave gifts because God first gave *the* Gift. Let their generosity help you navigate this Christmas season.

Questions to Consider

- » Could it be said of you that you are rejoicing exceedingly with great joy? If not, consider taking some time to fix your eyes on Christ by reading the entire Christmas story. Ask the Lord to restore your joy.

- » Have you accepted God's gift of His Son, Jesus?*

- » Just as your gift giving is an indication of how you feel about your friends and family, so God's gift of Jesus to be your Savior tells us about God's heart as well. How should God's generosity shape and inform your generosity this Christmas season?

*Resources available on page 57.

DECEMBER 18

Christmas from a Different Perspective



It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure."

Then I said, "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book."

Hebrews 10:5-7

Have you ever noticed how Christmas plays are always narrated through the perspective of one of the characters other than Jesus? Perhaps it is due to our sympathy with the other characters. Perhaps it is due to the fact that Jesus was a baby, and babies don't typically narrate stories.

But Christ was and is unique. As the Son of God, Christ is eternal. Christ created all things. He sustains all things. Christ was reigning in heaven until He came to earth as a baby. So as the first Christmas was happening, Christ was both the baby in the manger and the narrator telling us what was happening. This is what it means when the author of Hebrews says, "When Christ came into the world, he said..." So what did He say?

First, Jesus told us that Christmas is about Him taking on a human body so that He could be a perfect sacrifice for sin. The blood of animals was insufficient to take away sin. People whom He loved very much were in spiritual peril. Christ came to take on a body so that His body could be broken for all who were spiritually broken.

Second, Jesus told us that Christmas is about His absolute delight in obeying the Father. The Father's pleasure was Christ's passion. The Father's will was for Christ to come, so Christ came to earth to do His Father's will.

Third, Jesus told us that Christmas is about Him fulfilling the Bible's promise to rescue us and restore all that sin had devoured. Christ came to this broken world to fulfill His promises found in the scroll of the book (Old Testament)! This is what Christmas is all about.

As you prepare to celebrate Christmas, spend some time in prayer, thanking Jesus for fulfilling His promised mission. Listen to what He is saying and respond in obedience.

Questions to Consider

- » Why was Jesus' body and blood able to do what the blood of animals could not do?

- » Why do you think Jesus has such a passion to please the Father? Do you have a similar passion?

- » When you read Jesus' words in this passage, do you sense the depth of His love for you? Is there anyone you know that needs to hear this good news of God's love?

DECEMBER 19

Christmas Destruction



The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:8

Imagine for a moment a perfect world, designed by a perfect Architect; a world where peace was unbroken, love was undefiled, and worship was unhindered. Picture a world where relationships never experienced strife, human bodies never experienced sickness, and every created thing functioned together in harmony to maximize joy and glorify the Architect. Full laughter. Delicious meals. Satisfying work. Sweet sleep. This was the world that God designed in Genesis 1 and 2. This is how life was supposed to be.

Then things fell apart. Faced with Satan's temptation, we sinned against God. Our sin brought a flood of brokenness over God's design. Nothing was spared. Worship went awry. Relationships fractured. Bodies died. Creation trembled. Everything broke. Do you know who didn't grieve? Satan. The first rebel delighted in what happened. With iron chains of deceit, Satan tied up the world to keep it broken. We needed a remedy.

Christmas is all about that remedy. The Son of God appeared on earth in flesh and blood to destroy the works of the devil. "Since therefore the children [us] share in flesh and blood, he himself [Jesus] likewise partook of the same things, that through death he

might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Hebrews 2:14-15). Jesus came to do what we could not do for ourselves.

Christmas is all about Jesus substituting Himself for us. He was born a baby. He lived a righteous life. He took our sin and shame on His shoulders to a cross. He died, and three days later He rose! When He rose, Satan’s chains were busted. Satan’s works were destroyed. And we were given the gift of deliverance!

Simply hearing this good news is not enough. We must admit our sinful brokenness and stop trusting in ourselves. We need to be rescued. Jesus rescued us by trading places with us. We must ask God to forgive us—turning from sin to trust only in Jesus. For those who do, God restores our relationship, and we begin to recover what was lost.

As you prepare to celebrate Christmas, rejoice that the chains have been broken, the enemy has been defeated, and recovery is possible for all who believe in Christ!

Questions to Consider

- » How would you describe the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world?

- » If Satan has been defeated and His works have been destroyed, why is there still so much brokenness in the world today? When will it all be restored and recovered?

- » Have you trusted Christ as your Savior?*

*Resources available on page 57.

DECEMBER 20

Peace On Earth



“You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

Luke 2:12–14

Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, human beings have longed for peace. Our sin separated us from God, leaving our soul stranded like a small child who has lost her mom at the mall. Our sin also causes friction in our relationships with each other. We are so used to fear and strife, it is hard to imagine what life would be like with perfect peace. But the day of peace is coming.

Christmas is assurance that peace will reign. When Jesus arrived, He came with peace. Even the angels sang about it! But did you see who would enjoy Jesus’ peace? “Peace among those with whom he is pleased.” These eight words are glorious and sobering. Jesus’ peace comes to those with whom He is pleased. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). So Christmas does not bring peace to all—just to those who place their faith in Him.

When Simeon looked at Jesus, he promised Mary that “this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34). In other words, not everyone will enjoy Jesus’ peace this Christmas.

Many will set up a tree and take it back down without a trace of peace in their hearts. Why? Because it was only to His disciples that Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you” (John 14:27).

The key that opens the door of God’s peace is faith in the promises of God. This is why Paul prayed, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing” (Romans 15:13). As you prepare to celebrate Christmas, consider some of God’s promises and believe, for peace comes to those who believe.

Questions to Consider

- » What are some of the promises God has made in His Word that bring you comfort?

- » What are some of God’s promises that you struggle to believe?

- » Spend some time thanking God for fulfilling each of His promises when He sent His Son. Spend some time imagining heaven, when perfect peace fills our hearts and relationships like the water covers the sea.

DECEMBER 21

He Came to Speak



Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

John 18:37

This doesn't look much like a Christmas text, but it is. Just hours before His death, Jesus was talking about the purpose of His birth. Jesus said to Pilate, “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth.” Jesus came to earth to reveal truth about Himself!

Have you ever played the game *Two Truths and a Lie*? Each person shares three things about themselves and the others have to guess which one is not true. Strangely, this is supposed to help us get to know each other. Sometimes I imagine God in heaven listening to all the things on earth being said about Him. Christmas is God's declaration that He doesn't want us guessing.

Just as we use words to describe things so people can understand, God the Father sent God the Son as His final Word. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The Word refers to Jesus. All that God wanted us to know about Him was summed up in what Jesus said, who Jesus was, and what Jesus did.

To make sure we could see and hear, Jesus came on Christmas and dwelt (literally, “set up a tent”) among us. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Now if a man were to move into your neighborhood and build a 20-foot wall around his house, it would say something about his desire to interact with you. God didn’t build a wall. God set up a tent in our backyard so that we could see His glory, know His truth, and experience His grace.

As you prepare to celebrate Christmas, rejoice that we were not left in the dark about God. God wants us to know Him. He moved in close and set up His tent next to ours so that we could know Him and know how to live in His world.

Questions to Consider

- » Why do you think there are so many inaccurate thoughts and statements about God?

- » Now that Jesus has ascended into heaven, how are we to see Jesus’ glory and listen to His voice?

- » Do you have a plan to regularly read and expose yourself to God’s Word? If not, let me encourage you to make it a goal to read through the New Testament in the coming year.

DECEMBER 22

A Good Name



An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Matthew 1:20-21

The thrilling news of pregnancy inevitably leads parents down a path of picking a name. Family names, biblical names, favorite names, the meaning of names, and alternative spellings are all considered when selecting a name. What parents typically don't consider is a name synonymous with their child's future life purpose, because that future remains unknown. That is, unless the baby is Jesus.

The name Jesus means *Savior*. God chose this name and sent an angel to instruct Mary and Joseph to give their baby this name. It was given because Jesus would save his people from their sins. This was His special purpose. Jesus saves us from the guilt of sin by cleansing us with His blood. Jesus saves us from the power of sin by putting His Spirit in our hearts. Jesus saves us from the consequences of sin by bearing our guilt on the tree.

Rulers of this world have often called themselves “The Great” or “The Magnificent.” By doing this they are trying to claim significance for their lives. Jesus, the Christ, was content to be called Savior. For that is what He came to do. “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:17).

Jesus is a name that is sweet to believers. This is the name that has brought us forgiveness. This is the name that has taken away our guilt. This is the name that has brought us peace. And this is the name that has removed our condemnation. Happy is the person who trusts in Jesus!

As you prepare to celebrate Christmas, remember that the cradle cannot be separated from the cross. Jesus was born a baby. Then He grew up to save us from our sins. We have every reason to rejoice, for Jesus has made a way for us to be reconciled to God!

Questions to Consider

- » What does the name of Jesus mean to you? How does this name encourage you?

- » For those who have trusted Jesus, what name(s) does He give to us to reveal and assure us of our future?

- » Why do you think you occasionally fear speaking about the name of Jesus? Pray that God would give you boldness, wisdom, and opportunities this week to speak of His name.

DECEMBER 23

The Humble King



Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Philippians 2:5-8

Imagine the holy hush that rippled through heaven when Christ stood up from His throne. As the Son of God, Christ had been worshipped with undiluted admiration from eternity past. Christ was the King—the Great King. Suddenly God Almighty deployed archangels to specific people on the earth with a simple message: *It is time for the Messiah to come!*

It's important to know that no person or religion has ever invented a humble God. It has never happened because proud hearts don't produce humble gods. Christianity is utterly unique among all the religions of the world in that God decided to humble Himself in order to be with us. One of the reasons we worship the God of the Bible is that He is unlike anyone the world has ever known. What happened next is stunning!

Christ exchanged His kingly garments for those of a lowly servant. In the humblest act in history, He became a human baby. He chose two poor, yet to be married young adults who lived in obscurity to

raise Him. And later He would choose a motley crew of disciples to follow Him. Jesus' path of descent culminated by being willingly crucified on a tree to pay the penalty for our lust, our greed, and yes, our pride.

Our humility, if there is any, is based on our finiteness and our sinfulness. Christ, however, was anything but finite and sinful. He was perfect and pure. Christ's humility was displayed by making a decision to put Himself in a servant role for the good of others. He didn't need us to carry Him on our shoulders like human kings, because He was full and free and secure. So instead, Jesus Christ, the Son of God chose to carry us on His shoulders.

Scripture tell us to "have this mind of humility among ourselves." In other words, for those of us who follow Jesus, we have been called to join Him in making decisions to put ourselves in a servant's role for the good of others.

As you prepare to celebrate Christmas, fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him humbled Himself to endure the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

Questions to Consider

- » Describe some of the ways that Jesus humbled Himself and became a servant.

- » What is one practical way that you can make a decision today to place yourself in a servant's role for the good of others?

DECEMBER 24

The Coming King



Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

This is why Jesus, the Lion of Judah, became the Lamb of God. This is why Christ took on flesh that first Christmas morning. The Christmas birth led to a cradle. The cradle led to a cross. The cross led to an empty tomb. And the empty tomb led to a crown!

Imagine the explosion of joy that rippled through heaven when Jesus rose from the dead. Try to stretch your imagination around the heavenly roar of all the redeemed and all the hosts of angels as they shouted and exulted in the Lamb who had overcome! The curse of sin was broken. Death was defeated. The devil was de-fanged.

Jesus Christ, the Conquering Hero, was given the name that is above every name: “the King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16). Christ’s exaltation as the King had been long since promised. The angel told Mary, “Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the *throne* of his father David” (Luke 1:31-32).

Jesus is King! What we now see dimly in this fallen world, one day we will see face-to-face. One day we will see *every* knee bow and *every* tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Those who place their faith in Christ in this life will do so in His presence forever. Those who reject Christ in this life will do so separated from His presence forever.

Tomorrow, as you celebrate the birth of Jesus, look back in adoration at the humble coming of King Jesus and trust Him with your life. But don't stop there. Fan the flame of your joy by anticipating the day when our King will come again to make all things new. We will know it when He arrives. For written on His robe and on His thigh will be a name: "the King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16). To God alone be all glory, honor, and praise both now and forevermore!

Questions to Consider

- » What do you think it must have been like in heaven to see Jesus as a baby and lying in a cradle?

- » What do you think it must have been like in heaven when Jesus rose from the dead?

- » What do you think it will be like in heaven when Jesus returns again to make all things new?

- » Have you come to the place in your life where you are trusting in Jesus alone?*

*Resources available on page 57.

DECEMBER 25

Merry Christmas



In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Luke 2:1-14

Resources



Providence Messages

Watch or listen to messages online or on the Providence mobile app.

» www.pray.org/Messages // www.pray.org/App

The Gospel

The 3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide is an easy way of understanding why the Gospel is good news and includes how you can surrender your life to Christ.

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THE ADVENT SEASON is a unique time for Christians to prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the coming King. This 25-day devotional guide will walk you through the grand narrative of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, revealing key truths about why Jesus had to come and why that should bring us hope this Christmas.



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