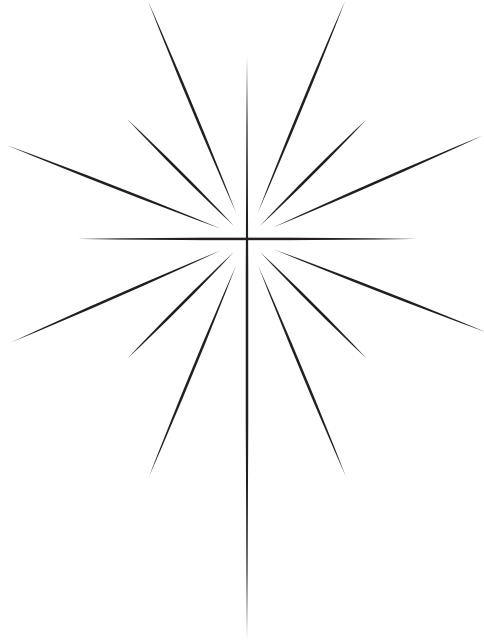




# ADVENT

A GUIDE



# ADVENT

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*A Guide*

## Redeemer Baptist Church Advent Guide

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# Introduction

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## ADVENT

Comes from a Latin word meaning “coming” or “arrival.”

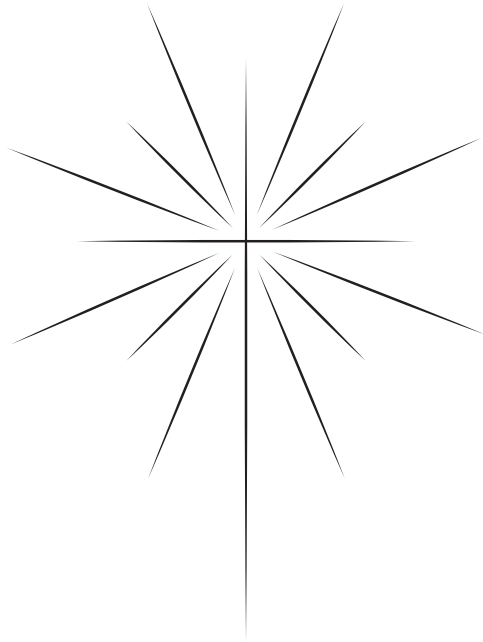
Therein lies the heart of our celebration of Christmas:

*the coming of Jesus.*

Our desire for this guide is twofold. First of all, we want your affection and your attention to be focused on Christ throughout this season. Christmas is a wonderful and beautiful season, but it's also a season in which it is easy to be distracted. Our prayer is that this guide would help you and your family focus on what is truly important about Christmas, and that you would be moved to worship Jesus because of who he is and what he's done.

In addition, we wanted to draw your attention to the overarching message of the Scripture. Often times we mistakenly view the Bible as a series of stories that speak to us about who we are and how we should live, when it is actually one story that speaks to us about who Jesus is and what he's done for us. The passages in this guide were carefully chosen so that you would get a glimpse of the redemptive-historical narrative, a term relating to how the Bible speaks of Christ from Genesis to Revelation. He is the thread that runs throughout the Scripture.

May Christ be your focus during this season, may you see the glory of his coming in a new light, and may you eagerly await his coming again.



# DECEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>

## Genesis 1:27-31

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

---

What better place to start than the beginning?

From darkness, light. From emptiness, everything.

Sun, moon, stars. Mountains, valleys, forests.

And life: swimming in seas, soaring through skies, bounding over open plains.

The glory of the Creator overflowed into creation. And out of all of the

wonder of that creation, his glory was best reflected in us. While the whole of creation was good, it was "very good" once man and woman were created. And in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve walked with God, and talked with God, and cared for his good work in perfect fellowship and harmony with him.

Just like Adam and Eve, we were created to be with God, glorifying him in a surprisingly simple way: by enjoying his presence and his glorious creation.

*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

*Psalm 16:11*

# DECEMBER 2<sup>nd</sup>

## Genesis 3:15

*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.”*

---

It all started with a promise.

Before eggnog and Ebenezer Scrooge, before carols and candlelight services, there they stood, ashamed and afraid, the first transgressors reeling from the first transgression. They had enjoyed creation as it was intended, a peaceful and perfect world. But everything changed so quickly. They'd been deceived by a cunning enemy, and the stain of sin began to spread like an infection, corrupting the heart of man and the whole of creation.

Sickness, disease, war, famine. And death.

But amidst the thorns of consequence, a blossom of promise: there will be a child, born of a woman, who will crush the deceiver once and for all. But not without cost.

And so the waiting began. Amidst man's struggle with sin and the broken world in which he lived was the expectation that one day, everything that was wrong would once again be made right, an expectation that would find its fulfillment in an old trough filled with swaddling cloth.

*Come, Desire of nations, come!  
Fix in us Thy humble home;  
Rise, the woman's conqu'ring Seed,  
Bruise in us the serpent's head.  
Adam's likeness now effaced,  
Shine thine in the dimmest place;  
Second Adam from above,  
Reinstate us in Thy love!*

*- Hark the Herald Angels Sing*

# DECEMBER 3<sup>rd</sup>

## Genesis 12:1-3

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

---

God's plan would continue to unfold through promise. He revealed that a great nation would descend from Abraham. From one, a multitude. But there was an even greater promise in this covenant: the promise that through this nation, every family on earth would be blessed.

From America to Afghanistan. From Canada to Columbia. From the Netherlands to New Zealand.

God gave a national promise with international significance, understanding that one day in nations all around the world, families would gather together to celebrate a child born into Abraham's nation, a child who would make a multitude one, who would erase borders and barriers, through whom there would be neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free.

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*

*Galatians 3:13-14*



# DECEMBER 4<sup>th</sup>

## Deuteronomy 18:18-19

*I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.*

In the midst of giving laws pertaining to Israel's leaders, God reveals that he will raise up another leader, a prophet who will be like Moses. This must have been encouraging to God's people.

After all, Moses was an incredible leader. He spoke on behalf of God. He interceded on behalf of the people. He delivered them from bondage to the Egyptians. He was leading them to the Promised Land.

But Moses wasn't perfect. His own sin and disobedience would keep him from leading the people into Canaan—the Promised Land—and instead they wandered through the wilderness for 40 years.

But God promises to send another leader, a prophet who would not succumb to sin or disobedience. A prophet who would speak directly on behalf of God. A prophet who would intercede on behalf of his people. A prophet who would deliver them from the bondage of sin. A prophet who would lead them to a promised eternity with him.

Moses was an incredible leader. But there was an even greater leader to come.

*Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.*

*Hebrews 3:1-3*

# DECEMBER 5<sup>th</sup>

## 2 Samuel 7:12-13

*When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*

Moses was the leader Israel never expected, but David was the king for which they begged. He was a man of courage, faith, and compassion, a fearless leader who sought to honor the Lord above all else. David loved the Lord, and Israel loved David.

But just like Moses, David was a flawed man. He fell into sin, committing adultery with Bathsheba and having her husband killed. When the prophet Nathan confronted David about his sin, the king was broken, repenting and begging forgiveness from God. He remained king, but the consequences of his sin eventually tore his kingdom apart.

And so Israel continued to wait for the Promised King, the one whose kingdom would last forever.

But who would have imagined that their king would be born in a manger? That he would be raised as a carpenter? That his battles would not be against rival nations, but against oppression, injustice, self-righteousness, and sin? That he would wash the feet of those he led? That he would give his own life for his people? Yes, the promised king did come...but not as anyone had expected.

*But of the Son he says,  
"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."*

*Hebrews 1:8-9*

# DECEMBER 6<sup>th</sup>

## Psalm 89:1-4

*I will sing of the Lord's great love forever;  
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known  
through all generations.*

*I will declare that your love stands firm forever,  
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.*

*You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant,*

*I will establish your line forever  
and make your throne firm through all generations.' Selah*

And so the Israelites waited. They waited for the promise to be fulfilled. For the prophet like Moses. For the king whose reign would be unending. They waited through failure and strife. They waited through sorrow, through war, and through exile. They held closely to the promise of God because at times, that promise was all they had.

Even in the midst of their struggles, when the world was crumbling around them, when the consequences of their sins overwhelmed them, they

could sing of this promise, of the goodness of a loving God who was faithful enough to deliver them.

And that's why we still sing today. Even in the midst of immense suffering and pain. Even when our foes outnumber our friends. Even when the weight of our sin threatens to crush us underneath, we can still sing of the loving God who is faithful enough to deliver us, not by a king in a palace surrounded by servants, but by a child in a manger surrounded by shepherds.

*O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

*- O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

# DECEMBER 7<sup>th</sup>

## Isaiah 7:14

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

---

Shadows of glory, whispers of grace. Isaiah offered Israel glimpses of the coming Messiah, continuing the tapestry that began with a single thread in Genesis. The very nature of his coming would be inherently miraculous and specifically identifiable.

It had already been promised that a woman's son would crush the serpent's head, and now the curtain was pulled back a little further.

He would be born of a virgin, but not of worldly royalty. His rule and reign would not be passed down from an earthly father, but from a heavenly ruler.

And then there was his name. Immanuel. God with us. Israel had experienced God's presence in fire and lightning and thunder. They had heard his word through his prophets. He had dwelt among them in the tabernacle and the temple. But this was something wholly different: the proclamation that the Messiah would be God himself, come to earth to live among his people.

*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 the point of death, even death on a cross.*

*Philippians 2:5-8*

# DECEMBER 8<sup>th</sup>

## Isaiah 9:6-7

*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,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

Peace: a term foreign to the Israelites. They lived in a world thrown into constant turmoil because of sin. Peace was the dream, the ideal that Adam had experienced in the garden before his sin brought with it ruin.

And so it is with us. Our knowledge expands. Our technology advances. Our culture is enlightened. And yet wars still rage on. Battles of the will abroad and at home, physical and ideological, conflict in our homes and in our hearts.

Just as creation groans for redemption, we long for the peace of the garden, for the peace of a world without pain or hardship or hurting. And as believers, we have hope that the peace we know and feel in part will one day rule and reign in every home and every heart on earth. So much like Israel, we long for the coming of the one who will bring that peace in all of its incomparable glory.

*His Name shall be the Prince of Peace,  
Forevermore adorned,  
The Wonderful, the Counselor,  
The great and mighty Lord.*

*His pow'r, increasing, still shall spread,  
His reign no end shall know,  
Justice shall guard His throne above,  
And peace abound below.*

*-To Us a Child of Hope is Born*

# DECEMBER 9<sup>th</sup>

## Isaiah 40:10-11

*Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him;  
behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.*

*He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he  
will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.*

---

He will come, both mighty and gentle, a conquering king and a compassionate shepherd. These were the marks of the Messiah to come, the Messiah Israel longed for.

The Israelites sights were set on their immediate plight: their captivity in Babylon. They longed for deliverance from their present circumstances, but they needed deliverance from their sin. They sought earthly relief when they needed eternal redemption.

But God, in his grace, knew exactly what their true needs were. And his promise was greater than they could possibly imagine.

In the same way, we are often overwhelmed by dire situations. We too seek immediate relief rather than eternal reward. But God, in his grace, knows exactly what our true needs are as well. And his promise continues to be greater than we could possibly imagine: a conquering King, a compassionate Shepherd, and a glorious Savior.

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

*Titus 2:11-14*

# DECEMBER 10<sup>th</sup>

## Isaiah 61:1-2

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.*

---

Isaiah promised that the Messiah would be the anointed one, the bringer of good news, the mender of broken hearts, the liberator of captives, the breaker of chains, the proclaimer of truth and justice, and the comforter of those who mourn.

The coming one would be a savior, a defender of the poor and the weak, a protector of the downtrodden and afflicted. His rule and reign would be greater than any who had come before. It would also be markedly different. Israel waited for a prince, for the royal heir who would inherit the throne and bring all that had been promised.

Around 700 years later in Nazareth, a crowd would gather at the synagogue as they did every Sabbath. The carpenter was there, as usual. But something was very different this time. Something that would change everything. He rose and took the scroll, and as every eye rested upon him, he read aloud these words from Isaiah. As he took his seat, he looked intently at the crowd and spoke: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

*Truly He taught us to love one another  
His law is love and His gospel is peace  
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother  
And in His name all oppression shall cease*

- O Holy Night

# DECEMBER 11<sup>th</sup>

## Jeremiah 23:5-6

*“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’”*

---

Our own righteousness is one of our biggest problems. Because we do good things, we think we are good. And when we do good things, we feel good about ourselves and believe others should think better of us for it.

But our own righteousness is nothing to God. Our best efforts are filthy rags. Because without God, all of our straining and striving, all of our works and deeds are rooted in self. Whatever our expressed reason for doing good, there is actually a hidden selfish motive. Perhaps we want affirmation from others, or maybe we think we’re earning God’s favor. Whatever the case, the righteousness of our best day is still stained by a sinful heart.

We are in desperate need of a righteousness that is not our own, an unadulterated righteousness that is

unfailing. And by his grace, the Lord promises just that.

The Lord spoke through Jeremiah, promising that the one to come would not only be righteous himself, but that he would also be the people’s righteousness. He is the one who would perfectly fulfill the law, whose works and deeds would be rooted in selflessness. He is the one who would endure temptation, who would suffer a fate worse than death, not for himself, but for us.

And when we trust in him, he becomes our righteousness. We no longer have to rely on what we can do, but we can rest in what he has done. No longer do we do good things in order to be seen as good, but as a result of experiencing his goodness.

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*



# DECEMBER 12<sup>th</sup>

## **Micah 5:2**

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
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.*

---

In their darkest days, Israel had pleaded with God for a king. And God had granted them exactly what they wanted: a king that they had deemed worthy. A king who was strong, handsome, and charismatic. Israel adored Saul for all that he was, and ignored all that he wasn't.

But God had a greater plan in mind. He selected a new king. One that none of the Israelites would have chosen, but one that he had deemed worthy. He was only a shepherd boy from Bethlehem, a small village of

no consequence on the outskirts of Jerusalem. He was the smallest of his brothers, but David's heart belonged to God. Israel wanted Saul, but they found that David was far better than what they had wanted.

In Micah's day, Israel again longed for a king, for the one that God had promised would be like David. And again, God's chosen king would come from Bethlehem. And again, he would be far better than they could have imagined, far greater than anyone had dared to dream.

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he,  
humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

*Zechariah 9:9*

# DECEMBER 13<sup>th</sup>

## Zephaniah 3:14-17

*Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel!*

*Rejoice and exult with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem!*

*The Lord has taken away the judgments against you;*

*he has cleared away your enemies.*

*The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.*

*On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:*

*“Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.*

*The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save;*

*he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love;*

*he will exult over you with loud singing.*

---

“Fear not” is easier said than done, especially for the Israelites. After everything they’d been through, everything they’d faced, fear was a part of their lives. They had rejected God over and over again, spurning him for selfish desire and worshiping idols in his place. The consequences of their rebellion overwhelmed them, and many of their fears were grounded in God’s judgment.

But God wanted something different for them. Rather than being filled with fear, he wanted them to be filled with hope.

Hope that their past sin and rebellion could be forgiven, that their judgments would be cleared.

Hope that their present circumstances wouldn’t last forever, that God was using their trials to mold and shape them into his image.

Hope that their future was secure, that he would not abandon them, that he had a plan for them.

And he did. It was a plan that had been set in motion in the garden, a plan that would be fulfilled through a cradle, a cross, and a tomb.

*knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

# DECEMBER 14<sup>th</sup>

## **Zechariah 6:12-13**

*And say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."*

---

God's people had returned from exile intent on rebuilding Jerusalem and their most treasured structure, the temple. The temple was the very dwelling place of God's presence among his people, and the Israelites had longed for its restoration ever since its destruction at the hands of the Babylonians. After 46 painstaking years, the temple was completed.

But there was coming another temple, a temple through which God would not dwell among his people in brick or stone but in flesh and bone. This temple too would be destroyed. And while men toiled for decades to rebuild their temple, God raised his in just three days. And this temple would stand forever.

The eternal reign of the Messiah was not an empty promise, but a divine guarantee sealed by a bloodstained cross and an empty tomb.

*So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.*

*John 2:18-22*

# DECEMBER 15<sup>th</sup>

## John 1:1-5

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

---

The Word. He was the one who fashioned the heavens and the earth from nothing, who crafted stunning works of beauty beyond compare, unimaginable in scope, both infinite and infinitesimal, from planets orbiting suns in the largest solar systems to electrons orbiting protons and neutrons in the smallest atoms.

He was the one who molded the earth as a potter molds his clay, who separated land and sea, who carved out valleys and sculpted mountains. He was the one who breathed life into Adam and Eve. The same life he breathes into each of us.

And on that night in Bethlehem, that very breath gave him life. And with that first breath, light was born into the world, a hushed guarantee that darkness would never prevail.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

*1 Corinthians 1:15-17*

# DECEMBER 16<sup>th</sup>

## John 1:9-14

*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And 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.*

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Such simple words with such incredible implications. From the very beginning, he had always been there. But now he was here. The author of life born into creation.

But Israel would not recognize this royalty. They were looking for an earthly king who would occupy his throne and liberate his people. They weren't expecting a heavenly king who would relinquish his throne to live among his people.

Their king would overthrow the Romans and lift Israel up, a picture of God's blessing and favor. This king would overthrow tables and be himself lifted up, a picture of God's justice and grace.

Their king would be born to lead.

But this king was born to die.

*Word of the Father,  
now in flesh appearing;  
O Come, let us adore him,  
O Come, let us adore him,  
O Come, let us adore him,  
Christ, the Lord!*

- O Come All Ye Faithful

# DECEMBER 17<sup>th</sup>

## Luke 1:26-33

*In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And 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, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

Immanuel. God with us. Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. The LORD is our righteousness. The Word.

Jesus.

He had been promised from the beginning, prophesied of throughout history, and now he had a name.

Jesus.

Not just any name. The name above all names. The name that carries with it all of the glory and honor that could ever be ascribed.

Jesus.

The only name with the power to save, spoken in tongues across the globe, from the heights of the Himalayas to the depths of the Amazon basin.

Grace giver. Sin bearer. Grave robber. Death defeater. Serpent crusher.

Savior. King. Lord.

*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.*

# DECEMBER 18<sup>th</sup>

## Matthew 1:18-23

*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." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).*

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It's easy for us to get caught up in the excitement of the Christmas season. There are lights to hang, trees to decorate, gifts to buy, and friends, family, and food to enjoy. But what we truly celebrate in this time is an unimaginable truth: the very same God who created us to be with him came to earth in order to be with us. He didn't just create us; he lived as one of us.

The Son of God was also the son of Joseph and Mary. The friend of sinners was a friend to many. The same hands that created the world continued to build and to sculpt as a carpenter. He laughed and he cried. He was the object of great

admiration and great opposition. He faced incomparable temptation and insurmountable trials.

He felt the pierce of thorn and nail and spear. He endured the crushing weight of his own body hanging upon the cross, and he suffered the overwhelming weight of our sin, bearing the punishment we deserved. But death was only part of the plan, and the tomb proved no match for Immanuel.

He lived as one of us, only better. He died as one of us, only worse. And he rose again, as only one who has power over life and death could. God with us.

*Nails, spear shall pierce him through,  
The cross be borne for me, for you;  
Hail, hail the word made flesh,  
The babe, the son of Mary!*

- *What Child is This*

# DECEMBER 19<sup>th</sup>

## Luke 2:1-7

*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.*

The burden must have been tremendous. In accordance with the census that had been decreed, Joseph would have to travel to his ancestral home along with Mary, his betrothed. The journey would have been difficult, especially considering the fact that Mary was so far along in her pregnancy.

They would have travelled for days, finally arriving in Bethlehem only to find that there was no room available at the inn. Joseph and Mary must have been exhausted, disheartened, and unsure of what was to come. And in the midst of all of this, it began.

Through great trial, great discouragement, and great uncertainty, God was working, bringing into the world the very gift that would right all the wrongs, that would restore the world to the way it was intended to be.

That night, hope was born into the world. Born in the city of Bethlehem. Born in the lineage of David. Born to a virgin. Born to rule and reign, to bring truth and grace, to break the chains of doubt, despair, misery, and sin. And after years of waiting, here he was, fulfilling the first of many promises.

*For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.*

*2 Corinthians 1:20*



# DECEMBER 20<sup>th</sup>

## Luke 2:8-14

*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!"*

Bathed in the light of the stars and the glory of the Lord, the angel proclaimed the splendor of the Gospel to this group of shepherds. And that, in itself, is part of the Gospel's beauty. The Savior's arrival was not announced to princes and priests, but to herdsmen tending their flock.

Salvation holds no beauty for those who have no need. But for those who recognize the poverty of their spirit, there is no more glorious news.

And the news was unimaginable: the Christ, the Messiah long foretold, had finally arrived. And this child was not just a Savior, not just the Messiah; he was the Lord God himself. Serenaded by a heavenly choir, it was only fitting that shepherds were the first to receive the magnificent news of the Chief Shepherd's arrival.

*"Fear not then," said the Angel, "Let nothing you affright,  
This day is born a Savior Of a pure Virgin bright,  
To free all those who trust in Him From Satan's power and might."  
O tidings of comfort and joy, Comfort and joy  
O tidings of comfort and joy*

- God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

# DECEMBER 21<sup>st</sup>

## Luke 2:15-20

*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.*

What do you do with the greatest news you've ever received? You share it! There in the field they heard the word of the Lord, proclaiming the arrival of the Messiah. And there in the manger they laid eyes upon Jesus, the one who would make everything right, and the one who would save them, the one who would reign for eternity. How could they keep quiet about what the angel had told them?

And that was only the beginning. This news would spread far and wide. It wasn't just information or

knowledge; this was the life-altering, earth-shattering, world-redeeming Gospel. So the shepherds couldn't possibly keep it to themselves. The glory and praise they gave God did not end that night. Their families would know, their friends, neighbors, even strangers would have to hear this incredible news.

After all, with news like this, nothing would ever be the same again.

*Come to Bethlehem and see  
Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee  
Christ the Lord, the newborn king.*

*- Angels We Have Heard On high*

# DECEMBER 22<sup>nd</sup>

## Matthew 2:1-2

*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 when it rose and have come to worship him."*

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Born a child, and yet a King. Even these wise men from foreign lands recognized the rule of the newborn King. And so they came, not just to see him or confirm his birth; they came to worship him, to give him glory and praise.

But his own people would fail to do the same. The king they longed for would lead them to great political and military victories. His reign would garner renown around the world, as he restored Israel to its previous might.

Years later, Jesus would be surrounded by another crowd of foreigners who intended to crown him. But this crown was made of thorns. They spit on him and mocked him, shouting, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And he was led to Golgotha and crucified. As he hung from the cross, the charge against him rested above his head: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

But three days later, the King returned. He arose, triumphant over death and the grave, victorious over sin and Satan. And his reign was only beginning.

*Glorious now behold Him arise  
King and God and Sacrifice  
Alleluia, Alleluia  
Earth to heav'n replies*

*- We Three Kings of Orient Are*

# DECEMBER 23<sup>rd</sup>

## Acts 1:6-11

*So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."*

Luke alludes to the beautiful reality of God's kingdom from commencement to fulfillment. Jesus' followers did not understand that the inauguration of his kingdom began with his birth. The arrival of the King marked the beginning of his rule on earth, ushering in a heavenly kingdom and a new covenant. This kingdom instituted an economy of mercy whose only currency was grace. And when he ascended, he did not abandon us to live in a world bereft of the kingdom he established.

Instead, he sent his Spirit so that we might serve as the manifestation of his kingdom on earth, ministers of reconciliation pursuing justice and administering grace, battling sin and oppression while seeking redemption for all. His church is submissive to the one true King and exists as the city on a hill, the light shining in

the darkness, a refuge for the broken and the needy, proclaiming the Gospel to the world while contending against the powers, principalities, and personalities that would themselves seek to reign.

Finally, his second coming will mark the consummation of the kingdom. At that time the kingdom will be made perfect and complete, as the voices of heaven proclaim, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

On that day, all that was undone in the garden will be restored; everything tainted by sin will be made clean. And until that day, the King has commissioned us to declare the magnificence and splendor of his kingdom to a world seeking satisfaction in everything less.

*Glorious now behold Him arise  
King and God and Sacrifice  
Alleluia, Alleluia  
Earth to heav'n replies  
- Come Thou Long Expected Jesus*

# DECEMBER 24<sup>th</sup>

## **Romans 15:12-13**

*And again Isaiah says,*

*“The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.” May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

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Hope is often spoken of as desire. Our hopes are our dreams, the things for which we want and wish. But the word for hope used here carries with it a deeper connotation, an insinuation of expected certainty. This hope is no mere longing or aspiration; it's an inevitable assurance. This is a definite hope. And this is the hope of Christmas.

Hope that our past sins can be wiped away, that they won't haunt us forever.

Hope that our present circumstances are being used for our good and for God's glory.

Hope that our future is with him, in a world made right, with sin, shame, sickness, and death long forgotten.

Christmas should remind us of the abundance of hope that we have. And it should remind us that our hope is not in anything of this world, but in the God of inexhaustible, unconquerable hope.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

*1 Peter 1:3-5*

# DECEMBER 25<sup>th</sup>

## Revelation 21:1-5

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

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Today, we celebrate. We celebrate Christ, who came in flesh to dwell among us. And we celebrate Christ because he is going to come again to make all things new. He will restore his creation to its glorious state, and all of our suffering and strife and sin will pass away. Peace on earth and goodwill toward men will become reality, and his kingdom will know no end.

When we say "Merry Christmas," we're not just passing along a clichéd seasonal greeting. We are proclaiming to the world that a baby's birth in a Bethlehem manger some 2,000 years ago is a source of joy and celebration for all the earth.

It is also a victory cry, raining down upon the serpent and his subordinates who strive to deceive and inspire doubt, a reminder of the crushing weight of Christ's heel upon his head. Finally, "Merry Christmas" is an encouragement that he is coming again to set everything right, to consummate his eternal kingdom, to wipe away tears as every ounce of pain and sadness is overwhelmed by joy and gladness. It serves as a reminder of who he is, what he's done, and what he will do.

All glory be to Christ, for he has come and he is coming again! Merry Christmas!

*For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,  
When with the ever-circling years, Shall come the time foretold;  
When peace shall over all the earth, Its ancient splendors fling,  
And the whole world send back the song, Which now the angels sing.*

- *It Came Upon A Midnight Clear*

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