

Teaching

Our Children

the Story

of Christmas

A free, easy to read resource to enable parents to explain to the children how the whole Bible is one long story that prepares us for the birth of Jesus Christ.

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Devotional to Read to Kids at Christmas

Children are valued by God and therefore are valued at Redeemer Church. We hope this free resource is a blessing to you and your family. If we can ever be a help to you in any way, please do not hesitate to reach out or stop by. You can connect with us at RedeemerEvans.org

The goal of this booklet is to provide parents with a resource that will help their children better understand the person and work of Jesus Christ. These devotionals will only take a matter of minutes to read and could easily be done around a meal or perhaps before bedtime. Our conviction is that the Bible, though filled with many stories, is actually tied together in such a way that it is ultimately about one story. That one story is of a God who sent His Son to save His people.

December 1
Jesus will come through the seed of the woman.

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.”*

The joy-filled story of Christmas starts with the sad story of the book of Genesis, chapter 3. Adam and Eve had been given all that they ever needed. God had richly provided for them, walking with them in the Garden of Eden. But in the third chapter of the Bible all that became ruined because they disobeyed God. The results were devastating. What was once perfect is now dilapidated.

Imagine it like your room, once perfectly clean, now turned into a complete mess, with clothes thrown all over the floors. Or imagine it was like a beautiful park, but now trees are lying on the ground dead, the playground is knocked over. What was beautiful is now damaged.

The damage in Genesis 3 came in part because Adam and Eve were tempted by an evil being. That being appeared in the form of a snake, but the Bible will tell us it was an evil angel in the form of a snake. It was an angel whose name is Lucifer. We call him the Devil. Adam and Eve chose to take his advice. They chose to be on the Devil's side. We might conclude that they are now on the Devil's team.

What a joy to hear these words in Genesis 3:15! They are words from God to the Devil. God is making a promise to

divide this new team. God is promising to put opposition between His people and the Devil. He intends to bring them back to God's side.

To accomplish this mission, one of the descendants of Adam and Eve will have to come and do battle with the Devil. A spiritual fight will occur and the result of that fight will be that the descendant of Adam and Eve will be harmed, but the injury to the Devil will be much greater.

The rest of the Bible unfolds like a great mystery. Who is this descendant of Adam and Eve? How will he be harmed? How will he harm the Devil and therefore win back the people of God.

At this point, we know that God has made a promise. We will learn that God always keeps His promises! But this story will take time to develop. It will be what we now call "Christmas" before we begin to more fully understand who will be the means to save God's people.

December 2
Jesus will come through the line of Abraham.

Genesis 12:3

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.”

As this story of God saving His people begins to develop, we learn in Genesis 12 that a key figure in the story will be a man named Abraham. God will speak to Abraham. God will call him to the promised land and God will make this precious promise to Abraham that we read in Genesis 12:3. In the wisdom of God, God will work through Abraham and his descendants, that is, his children and grandchildren and so forth.

Families are very important to God. He created the first two humans, a man and woman, and joined them as a husband and wife at the end of Genesis 2. In Genesis 4 we find they start having children. By the time we get to the days of Abraham, there are perhaps thousands of families upon the earth. In the wisdom of God, He singles out Abraham to be the father of a great nation. He will work through one family to reach “all the families of the earth.”

When you study Abraham’s life, you find that he made many mistakes. God’s plan is not undone by our mistakes. In fact, the God who knows all things is the God who also uses all things to accomplish His plan. This does not give us an excuse to do things that are wrong. However, we learn that God takes even actions meant for evil and uses them for the good of His people.

Abraham will have two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac is the rightful recipient of the promises of God and therefore these blessings flow from Abraham to Isaac, and then from Isaac to Isaac's son Jacob. God loves to work down through family lines.

Part of the joy of Christmas is that this story is so good and so powerful that even people who are not direct descendants of Abraham can also receive the blessings of God. From Genesis 12:3, however, we learn that the blessings of God will come through one of Abraham's descendants. So we must follow this story carefully all the way to Christmas morning!

December 3

Jesus will come through the line of Judah (Gen 49:9-10).

Genesis 49:9–10

“Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”

As the story of Christmas unfolds, we have seen that God will send someone to undo the work of the Devil. What has been destroyed will be made right! And we have seen that God has made a promise to Abraham of how God will work through Abraham’s descendants so that all the families of the earth will be blessed. We now find a promise made to Abraham’s great grandson Judah. Judah’s father was Jacob. In Genesis 49 Jacob is pronouncing a blessing on each of his twelve sons.

Lions are powerful and majestic creatures. They are commonly called the king of the jungle. Here, Judah is called the lion's cub. The promise to him is that the scepter will not depart from Judah. A scepter is a fancy staff carried by royalty, by kings and those who rule. Therefore, this pronouncement is very significant. Israel had no king in those days. We are learning that a king is coming and that the king will belong to Judah’s family.

So long before we get to the story of Jesus, a baby born in a manger who will be visited by wise men from the East, when learn that in God's plan, He will send a king born in Abraham's family through his great-grandson Judah. The

Bible will be filled with kings. Some of them will be really bad and some of them will be really good. Yet, all of them will fall short of perfectly reflecting the character of God Himself. Those Old Testament kings will leave us longing for a better king. They will long for a king who is powerful, yet filled with grace.

Judah himself lived a sinful life. He was jealous of his brother Joseph, which led to Joseph being sold into slavery. He would get caught up in other immoral acts. It is important to remember these facts as the Bible never paints the picture that certain people earned the right to be used of God. Instead, the work of God is an act of His grace from start to finish.

December 4
Jesus will come through the line of Jesse.

Isaiah 11:1

*“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”*

As you read through the Old Testament, it would not be hard at times to be discouraged. God is good to His people and they regularly fail to honor Him, submit to Him, follow Him. In that way, the Old Testament continually leaves us with a feeling of looking for something more, something greater. And the great encouragement is that from time to time we get a clear sense that God is not simply addressing some issue of the day, but rather is pointing back to the great story of Christmas. God has made the promise to overturn the work of the Devil. God has promised to work through the family of Abraham. God has promised to work specifically through Abraham’s great grandson Judah such that a king will be born as one of his descendants. God is always at work in the greater story of saving His people!

The story here focuses on a man named Jesse. Not a whole lot is known about him. We do know he descended from Abraham. We also know that Jesse’s grandmother was a woman named Ruth. The story of Ruth is a beautiful story in the Bible. Ruth is not an Israelite, but she is welcomed into the people of God as a member of God’s covenant people when she married Boaz. Boaz is a man who in many ways saved Ruth. He is a redeemer of sorts. And when they married and had children one of the children was named Obed. Obed is the father of Jesse.

As we prepare for Christmas and the story of God saving His people, this promise in Isaiah 11 helps us to understand that the God of the Bible works in one family (descendants of Abraham), but His intention is for people from all over the globe to be brought into His family. God loves Israelites and Ruth, a lady from Moab. Indeed, God loves people from every tongue and tribe and people and nation.

And because of that great love, Jesse became a part of God's story. Jesse will have eight sons. The youngest of those sons is named David, who will one day be the king of Israel. And that crucial piece of the story of Christmas will be the main theme tomorrow!

December 5
Jesus will come through the line of David.

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.

[13] He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

In the unfolding story of Christmas, we now come to King David. He was the second king of Israel. He had won great battles. He had established peace in the land. And yet he showed himself to be a sinner. At a crucial moment in his rule, he was guilty of several actions that violated the Ten Commandments. We should both appreciate all that David did and all that David was, and at the same time realize that the true hero of David's story is God Himself.

You see, God is the one who worked in David's life to bring David to pursue God. God was the one who saved him in battle and gave him the wisdom to rule. God was at work in David's story here in 2 Samuel 7 where God will promise that one of David's descendants will always be upon the throne of David. Think of it—a king that will rule for ever and ever. A king who could bring stability and peace. What a joyful thought!

Some of the promises in 2 Samuel 7 do involve David's son Solomon, who will be the temple for God and His people. But the ultimate fulfillment of these promises is in Jesus Himself. He will be the temple in which God will

dwell. He will be David's greater son. God will say of Jesus, "*You are my son, in whom I am well pleased.*" It can only be said of Jesus that "*of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.*"

Therefore, as we walk through the Old Testament and read of the promises of God, we must realize that the house of David will play a prominent role. God intends to both rule His people and save His people. God intends to send a righteous King whose rule over His people will be for their good and their joy!

December 6
Jesus will come from the town of Bethlehem.

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.

God prepares us for Christmas by not only by directing our attention to the family of Abraham and his descendants, but also to a specific town. The prophet Micah tells us that a ruler is coming from the town Bethlehem. In the days of the New Testament, Bethlehem was a humble little town. It did not have that many people, nor was it a very honorable place. However, even small towns have significance in the eyes of God. This reminds us that bigger is always better. In this unfolding story of Christmas, God will use little people in little places to accomplish matters of eternal significance.

The name *Bethlehem* means “House of Bread,” probably because of its nearness to abundant fields nearby. How fitting it is that the one who will be called the “Bread of Life” is born in the “house of bread. Jesus will teach us that He alone is able to fill our hearts with spiritual food that will last.

It was in Bethlehem that David was born and therefore this town became a symbol of David’s dynasty. As we shall see in the days ahead, God will work through a government census, a counting of people, to get Mary and Joseph to their hometown of Bethlehem for Jesus to be

born. We realize that God controls and overrules even government officials to bring about the fulfillment of His promises.

So in the kindness of God, if we are reading the story of the Bible for the first time, as we look for the seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3, we are realizing that every moment has been planned. We realize each day and each person has a part to play. And while all of them will be required to act, it will ultimately be God who will make all these pieces of the puzzle fit together so that, in the fullness of time, God will send His Son, born of a woman, but under the law, to save His people from their sins.

December 7
Jesus will be born of a virgin.

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.

The Old Testament is filled with great hardship. God has been good to His people but they have, over and over again, turned to other gods. It is a challenge that faces every generation. We tend to lack patience and we tend to crave earthly pleasures. The God of the Bible works carefully and methodically. The God of the Bible is eager to meet our greatest needs. He even withholds some of the things we think we want when those things actually harm us.

In the middle of Israel's struggle in the days of the prophet Isaiah, God makes the promise of a sign that will be very hard to believe. He says that a virgin will conceive and bear a son. That is not the way it usually works. Ordinarily a man and woman get married and then have children. The God who made our bodies ordinarily uses normal means for children to be conceived and born. Yet, here is the promise of something supernatural occurring. That means God works outside the normal natural means to produce an amazing result, namely a woman becoming pregnant.

This truth is difficult for many to believe. However, if we believe Genesis 1 in which God spoke and all things came into existence, then Isaiah 7:14 is not hard to believe. The

God who has creative power simply in His voice can create all things, even life in a womb. God is not limited by natural forces. God is free to work without, above, and against those natural forces, at His pleasure.

But you may wonder, why would God cause Jesus to be born by a virgin birth? What does it accomplish? The answer is very instructive for us. Because Adam and Eve sinned against God, their children would not only look like their mom and dad, but they would also share in their parents sinful desires. Their children were born with a sinful nature. For God to save His people, He would need someone without a sinful nature to live and die in their place. So who can be born without a sinful nature? Only God Himself, through the power of the Holy Spirit, could cause a virgin to conceive and bear a son.

This promise had to be made and it would have to be fulfilled for the plan of salvation to start to be accomplished at that first Christmas!

December 8
Jesus will be called “Immanuel.”

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.

Sometimes a child is given a name simply because the parents love the sound of the name. Other times a child is given a name because of the meaning of the name. In the same verse that we read of Jesus being conceived by a virgin, we also learn a name or a title that will be placed upon Him. His name shall be called Immanuel.

The Hebrew meaning of Immanuel is “God with us.” This is a wonderful and beautiful title for this incarnation of God Himself. Incarnation literally means “in the flesh.” What we are learning, as we march towards the story of Christmas is that in the plan of God to make all things new, is that God Himself will come to fix the problem. He will work in different seasons through prophets and priests and kings. But in the fullness of time, God Himself will come as a human being, born to a virgin, to be with us!

The God of the Bible is a God that draws near to His people. He is not content to merely send others to help. Even in the Old Testament we are taught that God would meet with his people in a special tent, called the Tabernacle. Israelites built and used the tabernacle at Mount Sinai. Then during their time of wandering, the Israelites carried the tabernacle with them as they traveled

for forty years. This is where the people of God met with God. In this way, the tabernacle was a mobile temple. Solomon would build the temple in Jerusalem where the people could gather with God.

Isaiah now tells us how God will be with His people in the future. God will be with us in the sending of His Son.

The apostle John describes the fulfillment of this prophecy when he wrote, *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”* ([John 1:14](#)). The word “dwelt” could be translated “tabernacled”. Just as God was with his people through the tabernacle in the Old Testament, so God is with His people in Jesus.

And part of the beauty of this verse is that God stays with us. He will tell us that He will never leave us or forsake us. He will tell us that He will be with us always, even to the end of the age. We can live in the joy of knowing that our God is with us. When we are afraid, or nervous, or lonely, may we remember this truth promised in Isaiah 7:14, fulfilled in Matthew 1. The baby born to the virgin Mary is God with us!

This baby promised in Isaiah 7, as incredible as it seems, will be God Himself. That Baby is God with us. It is not just a title, but a truth to love and embrace.

December 9
Jesus will come as a child and a son.

Isaiah 9:6

[6] 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.

There is a wonderful mystery in this verse. To say “*or to us a child is born*” is perfectly normal. However, the phrase “to us a son is given” might cause some confusion.

Isaiah 9:6 was written by a prophet of Israel about 700 years before Jesus was born. Israel is now split in half, with the northern Kingdom ruled by a series of ungodly kings. It was a very low moment in the history of Israel. It was in this moment that God wanted to enable His people to get their eyes off of their current struggles and back onto the greater story of how God had made promises to make all things new. Yes, God will have to allow the consequences of their actions to fall upon them for a season, but a day is coming when a child will be born who will be the king they desperately need.

It is common to say, “a child is born.” It happens every day. If you have younger siblings, you may remember the day it happened in your family. But this child is not like other children. The prophecy is that a son is given. This is much more than merely stating that Jesus was born. Here is being communicated that the one who already existed has now arrived. Here is being communicated that the Son of God, who has always existed, is now

entering into time and space as a child. The Apostle John will write in his gospel about this one who was with God in the beginning, through whom all things were created. John referred to him as the “Word.” We learn that Word was no impersonal force but a full person, alongside God the Father. The Word was both *with* God and *was* God. And then in John 1:14, *“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.”*

This promise in Isaiah 9 that is fulfilled in John 1 tells us that this is not just any child! The child is God’s eternally existing Son that He will give to them. This is an amazing prophecy of God entering the world as a child, and while remaining the eternal Son of God. The joy for us is that God is marching us along ever closer to the story of Christmas morning.

December 10
Jesus will bear multiple titles.

Isaiah 9:6

[6] 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.

This child who will come at Christmas will be something quite amazing. In fact, we learn four names or four titles that each begin to enable us to understand the breadth and depth of His greatness. Each of these titles should not only instruct us but also encourage us, as He will use His greatness for our good.

First, he shall be called the “Wonderful Counselor.” How incredibly encouraging that this King who has come to do battle with the Devil is not simply a brutal fighter or soldier, but also a counselor. He is one who gives advice and care to those in need. And he is a wonderful counselor. He is the one you really want to see when times get hard and decisions have to be made.

Second, he shall be called a “Mighty God.” There are lots of kings, but none like this one. The language points us to a deliverer, a God who is able to bring His people out of their current bondage and into a joy filled freedom. There is no one as mighty as he!

Third, he shall be called the “Everlasting Father.” This “son” that is given is not to be confused with His Father. Many kings have been referred to as the father of their people. However, this king's fatherhood is

everlasting. This king's rule will not end. He will continue as Father and provider to one generation after another and then to all generations of His people for eternity.

Finally, he is the "Prince of Peace." So often one king goes and conquers a nation and his rule over that nation is more like an ongoing bloody battle. The people do not want this new ruler. But in the case of Jesus, He will conquer our sinful hearts and make peace with us. His rule shall be a delight to our souls. And there will be peace in the land.

As we get closer and closer to Christmas, may our hearts grow ever eager to know and be known by this Jesus!

December 11
Jesus will come in humility.

Zechariah 9:9

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.

This ongoing story of a world wrecked by sin has some really hard seasons. The people of God had sinned against God to the point that He disciplined them by allowing a foreign nation to come and both destroy the temple and take them into exile. In time, God brought His people back to Israel. The prophet Zechariah lived in this time period and challenged and motivated the people to rebuild the temple and look for the fulfillment of God's promises.

This verse in Zechariah 9:9 is a bright spot in the story. Here the prophet speaks not simply of the present needs, but of a future promise.

“Behold, your king is coming to you!” What wonderful news. This is indeed news that they should rejoice about.

This is news to shout aloud concerning. The kings of Israel so far have been a mixed bag at best. Some good, but they had flaws. Some were really bad. But this king will be righteous, which is to say He will rule in a way that is right and godly. He brings the salvation that the people of God have always longed for!

However, the manner in which this king brings salvation is entirely unexpected. Most kings establish their reign by power and force. Most kings dominate and rule. Most

kings come on large horses and beautiful chariots. This king will show up on a donkey. A donkey is not an animal of war, but rather an animal of the farm, of service. Only the most humble would ride on a donkey.

So we learn this king will be humble. He will be a help. He has come not to be served, but to serve. What a wonderful blend of attributes! Jesus will be a righteous king who is a humble servant. He will do whatever it takes to save His people.

This story of Christmas is filled with great surprise and great joy!

December 12
Jesus will serve as a prophet in Israel.

Deuteronomy 18:15, 18

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen...[18] 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.”

Kids love stories. Kids have wonderful imaginations. At the same time, they have a longing in their hearts to know the truth. In the wisdom of God, God raised up prophets.

The responsibility of a prophet was to speak the truth about God and for God. They would reveal the character and promises of God. They would direct the people of God to know Him and follow Him. Early in the history of Israel, God raised up the prophet Moses. He was in some ways a regular man who was not a gifted speaker and was not especially courageous. However, God was his strength and God used him in mighty ways to deliver the people of God from slavery in the land of Egypt. That would require Moses to stand up before the Pharaoh of Egypt. It was an unbelievable scene.

And God would use Moses to stand before His people once they were delivered from Egypt. Moses would meet with God and reveal the ten commandments on Mount Sinai. And when the people failed to follow God, God would use Moses to call the people back to Himself. We can easily conclude that at the time of Moses' death, he was regarded as the greatest prophet.

As we prepare for Christmas and look with great expectation about what God has promised in the Old Testament, we have this glorious promise in Deuteronomy 18 that God will raise up a prophet like Moses. How eager the initial readers of this book would have been to think “Another prophet like Moses is coming!!”

The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us explicitly that Jesus was that prophet. In fact, Jesus was even greater than Moses. Hebrews 3:3, “*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.*” The nation of Israel saw Moses as the one who revealed the truth of God. Jesus is greater in that He was the Truth of God, for He was God in the flesh.

How crucial it is at Christmas to not only read the truth about Jesus, but to listen to Jesus, for Jesus is the revelation of the truth of God.

December 13
Jesus will bring good news to the afflicted.

Isaiah 61:1–3

[1] 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; [2] to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; [3] to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

Good news! The story of Christmas is good news. And that good news is far more than toys that you might enjoy for a few weeks or good food that you might enjoy for a few hours. This good news is good for many reasons.

It is good news because of who the news is for, namely the poor, the brokenhearted, and the captives. These refer to those who feel the full weight of the impact of what happened all the way back in Genesis 3. By poor, this promise is for those who are spiritually poor. It is for those who cannot stand before God in their own worth or by their own record of good deeds. They are spiritually bankrupt. By brokenhearted are people who are weakened or crushed in spirit. It describes those who feel spiritually needy, and helpless. The captives are those who are held hostage by their sinful nature. They are like

a prisoner who cannot get out of jail. And this promise in Isaiah 61 is really good news!

Specifically, it is good news for what it accomplishes. Those that were brokenhearted will be encouraged. Those that are captive are set free. This One upon whom the Spirit of the Lord will rest will begin to overturn the effects of the sin that have so wrecked this world.

The fruit of this work is that God is working to build up His people that they may be like a mighty oak tree planted by God Himself. His people will be comforted, they will be truly glad and they will wear the garment of praise. All of this is good news indeed.

December 14
Jesus will wash away the guilt of sinners.

Isaiah 4:2–4

In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. [3] And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, [4] when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.”

This promise through the prophet Isaiah brings us to consider specifically what needs to happen to undo the sin of Adam and Eve. We are told of the work of the Lord to “wash away the filth” and to “cleanse the bloodstains”. We can picture a child wearing a perfectly white outfit, but going out to play in the mud. It would not take long before the child’s hands are completely covered in mud and so is his outfit. He is quickly filthy. It will take a lot of work for his parents to get the child and his outfit clean again.

The work that God must do is to wash away the guilt of the sin of His people. If a young child cannot clean himself and his own clothes, how much more unable is a sinner able to clean himself from his filth and guilt. Imagine that little child using filthy hands to try and wipe off a filthy face. It can never work. In the same way, sinners trying to get clean only make matters worse. Any attempt to measure up to God’s standards

will not work. Any attempt to change God's standards are only an offense to Him.

The wonderful news from Isaiah 4 is that God Himself will do the work of washing away filth and cleansing bloodstains. God alone has the clean hands to do the work. God alone has the power to complete the task. The love of God is at work to save His people.

December 15

Jesus will be rejected by man and crushed by God the Father

Isaiah 53:3–4

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. [4] Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”

One of the great mysteries of the Old Testament is how exactly God will make right what Adam and Eve did wrong. In those first two chapters of Genesis, they walked with God, but because of their sin they and all mankind are separated from Him. Because our God is a God of justice, there has to be a payment for the sins committed. Someone has to pay the price of that payment.

So as we walk through the Bible moving closer and closer to the story of Jesus, we learn lots of names of people and families that God will work through. However, all of them have their faults. All of them have their limitations. The promise of this one who will be born to a virgin gives us great hope that somehow there will be One who is able to fulfill what Adam failed to do, and at the same time pay the penalty that sinners must pay. Isaiah, in chapter 53, will begin to reveal to us the future of the one we will call the suffering servant.

This servant will be “*despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*” What a hard path he must walk. And he will be stricken and smitten. He will bear our griefs and carry the sorrows that we should bear. And in all of this we learn that the One behind it all is not simply the Jewish leaders or the Roman government, or even Satan, but God Himself. He will be “*stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*”

Isaiah is revealing for us that in the life of this suffering servant the love of God and the justice of God will meet. He loves us enough to have the payment for our sins paid by another, and yet they must be paid by the death sentence being carried out. God, the Judge, will carry out the sentence by pouring out His wrath on this servant.

We would expect a righteous judge to make sure that criminals pay their debts to society. God, the ultimate righteous judge, will execute justice upon the suffering servant. This story must be in our minds as we consider the birth of the Son of God. He has come even though He knows these things will take place.

December 16

Jesus will die as a substitutionary sacrifice for guilty sinners to provide forgiveness and salvation.

Isaiah 53:5-6

[5] But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. [6] All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

As we think of the story of that first Christmas morning in which of a baby being born, it is such a sweet scene. The angels will rejoice and the shepherds out in the fields will join them in their joy. However, Isaiah will not only speak of the birth of this child who is to come, he will speak of His death as well. This suffering servant will not merely be despised and rejected. He will be pierced and crushed.

Years before this prophecy in the book of Isaiah, there an occasion when God's people were slaves in Egypt. One particular night the people of God were told that judgment was going to fall upon the firstborn child in every house. The only way to escape that judgment was for an innocent lamb to be killed and for the blood of that lamb to be smeared over the door frame of the house. God would send out an angel to bring judgment, but if the angel saw that the blood of the innocent lamb had been shed, the angel would pass over that house. God was teaching us the principle of substitution. Rather than a

person having to pay the penalty of their own sin, a substitute could pay it for them.

That substitute, however, would need to be innocent and willing to endure being pierced and crushed. The beauty of Christmas is that Jesus, the one born from a virgin, would be innocent. And that one will have been born for the purpose of dying.

Jesus will not simply lay in a manger. The Lord will, in time, lay upon him the sins of all God's people. It is a beautiful truth to celebrate at Christmas!

December 17
Jesus will be resurrected from the dead.

Psalm 16:10

“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.”

The prophecy in Isaiah 53 could lead us a bit frightful and saddened by what this coming suffering servant will have to endure. And indeed, to be pierced and crushed will be a tremendous cost to pay in order to redeem the people of God. But the story will not end on a sad note. Here in Psalm 16 we read that though the promised one will die, he will not be abandoned to Sheol.

In the Old Testament, the most common way of describing Sheol is as the house of death. It is the realm of the dead, where all the dead go. So while this passage is saying that one promised will die, the prophecy is that he will not stay dead. In fact, the prophecy is that the promised one will not “see corruption.” We understand this to mean that he will not even start the normal process of a lifeless body decomposing.

Somehow, in the power of God, the one who will die will rise again. This promise is almost beyond the ability for a person in the psalmist day to understand. Even now, some 3000 years later, this just does not happen. But the promise is clear: This one will not stay dead.

The beauty of the Old Testament is that we are learning more and more about God. He is progressively revealing more of His character and more of His plans, especially as

they relate to how He would save His people. As we get closer to Christmas, our hearts and attention are focused on the coming of the Son of God, who will be born to the Virgin Mary. And He, Jesus, will live and one day die, but be raised from the dead. All of this to save His people from their sins.

December 18

Jesus will reign in perfect peace, justice, and righteousness as King over the entire earth.

Psalm 2:6–8

“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” [7] I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me,

“You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

[8] Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.”

On Christmas morning we will read about a baby lying in a manger. Just as you were frail and needy as a baby, so will Jesus be in that moment. And yet, this baby will be different. Jesus will be a human baby, and yet be God in the flesh. He will have the very hard path of being stricken and smitten. He will be pierced and crushed. At the same time, we learn from Psalm 2 that Jesus is the King who will reign on God’s holy hill.

Psalm 2 begins with the question “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?” The next two verses make it clear that their plotting against God is futile. What all nations and indeed, all peoples, have to understand is that God has set his King in Zion. And that King, according to verse 7, will be His own Son. So earthly kings and powers will be up against a divine King!

The biblical terms such "Father" and "Son," are used to describe God and Jesus. They are human terms that help us understand the relationship between the different Persons of the Trinity. If you can understand the relationship between a human father and a human son,

then you can understand, in part, the relationship between the First and Second Persons of the Trinity. The analogy breaks down if you try to take it too far and teach that God made Jesus. Here, the term 'begotten' emphasizes Jesus' unique relationship with the Father, affirming His divine nature. There is no one of His kind. He shares the same divine nature of God and is therefore equal with God.

God the Father will place God the Son as the King and will give the nations to Him. Our hearts and minds must see Christmas morning as a crucial point in a long story in which God is making all things news.

December 19
Jesus will feed and protect Israel as her divine Shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:23–24

“And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. [24] And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.”

Part of the Christmas story involves shepherds out in a field watching their sheep by night. On the night in which Jesus will be born, Shepherds will play an important role in the story as they will be some of the first to hear of Jesus’ birth. When we think of shepherds, we tend to think of those who will work hard to care for the well-being of their sheep.

The term 'shepherd' can also refer to those who protect others. Good leaders protect their people in the same way a good shepherd protects their sheep. This passage in Ezekiel 34, however, starts out by accusing the shepherds of feeding themselves instead of feeding their sheep. As a result of their selfishness and poor leadership, the sheep were scattered and attacked. A sheep is not a very strong animal and is largely unable to protect itself. The sheep of Ezekiel 34 are the people of God in Israel. And they are suffering under the poor leadership of their shepherds.

However, God promises to put one shepherd over them. He calls that shepherd “my servant David.” What is fascinating about that statement is the first David, King

David, has died hundreds of years before this prophecy. We must hear that the promise is for one like David to rise up. There will be one who will come after David, a descendant of David, who will rule on David's throne and over David's people. This ruler will be a shepherd who will feed the people of God. They shall thrive under His leadership. He will cause them to lie down in green pastures. He will lead them beside still waters.

What a sweet picture of life lived under the rule of Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep.

December 20

Jesus will be appointed as a light to the nations of the earth.

Isaiah 42:1–6

[1] Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

[2] He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; [3] a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;

he will faithfully bring forth justice. [4] He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (ESV)

[5] Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: [6] “I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,”

The Bible makes much of the imagery of light and darkness. Even as a dark room might be scary to walk into, so too a dark world can be a scary place to live. When the Bible speaks of darkness, it symbolizes the spiritual condition of those separated from God and immersed in sin. The dark world is a world filled with evil. As the prophet Isaiah speaks to the people of God in Isaiah 41, he tells them they are walking in darkness by worshipping idols. They have given their hearts to other so-called gods.

Therefore, Isaiah 42 is a great joy to read as we learn that God says He will send His chosen servant. He will put His Spirit upon this servant and the servant will be a light for the nations. In the infinite wisdom of God, He will not only work to save His covenant people Israel, but will also save people from every nation. That was explicitly stated as far back as the days of Abraham in Genesis 12. Through Abraham and his descendants, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

This brings great joy to those of us who are not of Jewish descent. The chosen servant is sent to care for people from every nation. Even those bruised by the sin around them and the sin in them will not be broken. Those who in their own strength are like a candle about to be extinguished, the servant will not put out.

The chosen servant is Jesus. The apostle John will describe Jesus in this way, "*In him was life, and the life was the light of men. [5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*" (John 1:4-5) Jesus will be the one to shine the light of hope into the darkness of this world. For all those who place their faith in Jesus, this light will shine bright in their lives.

December 21

One will come before Jesus to prepare the way for Jesus.

Luke 1:16–17

“And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, [17] and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

Because the Bible is divided into an Old and New Testament, it is easy to know when the story transitions from the promises about Jesus to when Jesus will arrive. If you were alive at that time, before the New Testament was written, you would have had to have known the specific promises like the one we find in the last book of the Old Testament. In that book, God promises to send a messenger who will prepare the way of the Lord.

The story we find in Luke 1 is of a man named Zachariah who receives a message from an angel that he and his wife will have a child, and that child will be the one to “make ready for the Lord a people prepared.” The anticipation of the birth of Jesus is building. The messenger, the one who would come before Jesus, is now about to break in on the scene.

He will come in the power of Elijah. Elijah was one of the greatest Old Testament prophets. At certain points in the ministry of Elijah the rains stopped, a jug of oil never ran dry, a boy was raised from the dead, fire fell from the sky,

revival broke out, and hundreds of idolatrous prophets of Baal were executed. The same Spirit of God who worked in Elijah was about to work in Zachariah's son, John the Baptist.

The way for Jesus is about to be prepared. Christmas is indeed near.

December 22
Jesus' birth foretold to his unexpected parents

Luke 1:31

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.”

So much of what we have already considered in this series comes rushing to the surface in Luke 1. In that chapter, we are told that Joseph is a descendant of David. Our minds rush to the promise that one of David's descendants would sit on the throne forever. We are told that Mary is a virgin. Our minds run to the prophecy of Isaiah who said that a virgin shall conceive and bear a child. Could this be the moment? Could this God's chosen servant, God's own Son?

When these words in Luke 1 come to Joseph and Mary, our hearts should start to shout for joy, “The time has come!” We see that God is keeping His promise. And this long awaited Messiah is now named. *“You shall call his name Jesus.”* God chose the name Jesus for His Son because its meaning reflects His purpose on earth. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means “Jehovah (Yahweh) will save.” Jesus did not come to save the Jews from political oppression or social ills or wrong thinking. His mission in coming to earth was to save His people from their sins.

Think of the promise from long ago in Genesis 3 that that seed of the woman shall come and crush the head of the serpent. What has been ruined will now start to be restored. The Lord indeed will save His people.

To make this possible, Mary is told she will be with child. The great miracle of the virgin birth will occur. And in the fullness of time, God will send forth His Son to save His people from their sins.

December 23
**When Jesus and John meet when they were not yet
even born.**

Luke 1:41–42

And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, [42] and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”

What a joyful story! Elizabeth is the wife of Zachariah. He had been told that his son would be the one to come and prepare the way for the Lord. In this section of Luke’s gospel, Elizabeth and Mary meet during their pregnancies and the baby in Elizabeth’s womb leaped in her belly when he got near the baby in Mary’s womb. The Spirit of God made the unborn baby John aware of the unborn baby Jesus and John’s response was to leap for joy!

The word leap used here in Luke 1 is the same work used by the Greek translation of the Old Testament when Jacob and Esau were struggling in Rebecca’s womb. In that passage, it was a strong signal that something substantial was happening. And the same is true in Luke 1. This child, promised as the forerunner of Jesus, signals that something momentous is happening.

Elizabeth then greets Mary with these wonderful words,
*“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit
of your womb!”*

In this moment it is clear that she understands the promise that has been made not only about her son, but also about

the child that Mary has in her womb. By the power of the Holy Spirit, who reveals truth, she understands this Jesus will indeed be a blessing to all the world.

December 24

When Jesus' mother sings praise before His birth.

Luke 1:54–55

“He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, [55] as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Mary is a Jewish lady who would have been raised to know the books of the Bible that we call the Old Testament. Israel was her people. Their past is ultimately her past. These words are Mary's response to what Elizabeth has said to her, and what God has done in her. She is now pregnant, but rather than speaking of the challenges of pregnancy, she burst into praise about her God. And the words in these short two verses help focus our attention on the character of God.

Mary states that God *“has helped his servant Israel.”* God is the ultimate helper. His heart is to come and support His people, revive His people, save His people. God is the Helper of Israel, and the helper of all who put their trust in Him. When you need a helper, lean on this God.

Then Mary states that God has acted in remembrance of His mercy. This is a beautiful truth. God acts on the basis of mercy, not merit. The God of the Bible is not like a sports coach who says, “If you are not good enough, you will not make the team.” No, He knows that we are sinners and cannot save ourselves. Yet, He has promised to be merciful. He revealed Himself to Israel with these words, *“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious,*

slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...” (Exodus 34:6–7) What a joy to know that God acts in mercy.

And finally, Mary connects the dots of the story when she proclaims that God remembers His promises. She states, *“as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”* The wonderful promise made to father Abraham is now coming true through this baby that Mary now holds in her womb. Jesus will be the answer. Jesus will be the means whereby all the families of the earth will be blessed.

The joy of Christmas has now arrived!

December 25
Jesus is born!

Luke 2:7

“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.”

We might be tempted to think that this was such a wonderful scene. As Luke describes the events, we realize again the details promised are coming to pass. As we learned in the book of Micah, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The 'bread of heaven' is born in Bethlehem, a city whose name means 'house of bread.' But we quickly must realize that the accommodations they are staying in are neither fancy nor fit for a king. Jesus is laid in manger.

To be born in a manger is a sign of humility. This is the God who made the world and everything in it, yet He is now willingly setting aside all His power and glory by humbling Himself to be born in such a low estate. He has not come demanding we recognize His authority, but instead displaying His love to become like us and for us. He who will later be despised and rejected is here counted as a common boy who has come for all types of people.

To be born in a manger is also a sign of Jesus being accessible to everyone. The shepherds will be told Jesus is born in a manger. They would never have access to a castle if Jesus were born there. Now, even lowly

shepherds would be able to visit with this one who is God
in the flesh.

On this glorious Christmas morning, when God has kept
His word, when Jesus has come in the fullness of time, He
comes in such a way that any and all can see His love for
His people and can have access to Him if they come in
faith.

This is the story of Christmas. O come let us adore Him!