

# Advent

DEVOTIONAL





# *Introduction: A Season to Draw Near*

*At Christ Community we're so blessed to have many godly, talented teachers in our midst. One such teacher is Daniel Ritchie. Daniel has graciously allowed us to publish an Advent devotional that he wrote. The word advent simply means "coming" or "arrival". As we await the arrival of Christmas, we would encourage you to make these short devotions a part of your daily routine. We're praying it would draw you nearer to Jesus as we await His second coming.*

Now that we have all had our fill of turkey and moved out of the Thanksgiving season, the hearts and minds of many have turned to Christmas and all it brings. There's decorating, parties, presents, and performances that begin to fill our lives from top to bottom. In a season meant to celebrate the coming Christ, many of us become bogged down with the race to get to Christmas.

While remembering the "reason for the season" is something that has become little more than a trite phrase in the American church, it is a relevant reminder for all of us. We need to find ourselves becoming reacquainted and refreshed by the biblical account of the promised and coming Messiah who spans the whole of Scripture. It is only when we soak in the truths of Advent that are laid out in the Bible that we can we grasp the true reason and power of the coming Christ.

Starting with December 1 and carrying through December 25, we'll be going through a short daily Advent devotional that will share Scripture, devotional thoughts, and prayer prompts so that we all can focus on the birth of our Savior. We'd encourage you to take a few minutes every day in an already busy season to join us on this Advent journey.

Over the next 25 days we will be taking a few minutes out of our crammed Christmas schedules to look into the coming of Christ as we see revealed in Scripture. Over the first eight days we will focus on the need for a Savior and God's promise of His arrival. In the following 8 days we'll look at the life of the newborn King and the good news that His birth, life, death, and resurrection means for all the world. With a day of pause placed at day 17, we'll spend the last eight days looking at what the life of Christ means for the lives of those who rest in Him as Savior and Lord.

In all of these devotions, my heart is that we can all see God's Son and God's gospel in a more beautiful way.

In Christ,  
Daniel Ritchie

*Day 1*  
*The Need for a Rescuer*

*“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”*

Genesis 6:5-8

There aren't many other more brutal pictures of God's sorrow over the sin and wicked actions of man. The post-Fall world was one that was almost completely set against God, His holiness and His design for man. Verse 6 tells us that "the Lord regretted He had made man." The Creator who had, just a few chapters before, pronounced His pleasure with what He had made in man was now deeply saddened by his blatant idolatry.

From the Garden to here in Genesis 6 to 21st century life – man has strayed from the design of our Creator. It is design that was intended to reflect the character of a holy and loving God:

*"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." - Genesis 1:27*

Man was made to reflect the image of God to the entire created order, but in the span of two chapters of Genesis man goes from a beautiful image bearer to a son and daughter of disobedience. Children who were cast out of the Garden and God's presence for their disobedience. Though they were created to love God, man had chosen to love himself.

In just a few generations, man was desperately in love with himself. He has become infatuated with setting his own rules, chasing his own lust, and determining his own purpose. The Lord was grieved because the creation that he loved had betrayed him. It was a betrayal that God did not take lightly in the Garden and it is something that He was set to deal with swiftly here in Genesis 6.

Yet in an act of loving justice, God chooses to wipe the planet clean with a global flood and purge the land of man's wickedness. He had every right to hit the reset button on humanity, but He didn't. God, in an act of sovereign grace, chose to spare Noah, his family, and ultimately the human race by allowing them to escape the flood waters. Salvation had come to those who didn't deserve it.

That's what Advent is all about. It is about the horrible wickedness and betrayal of man that is met with an overpowering act of grace and love. It is about a race of people who deserve to be blotted out but who instead receive an unearned salvation. Instead of a flood to wipe out the earth, God was sending His Son to blot out the sins of humanity.

As much as you and I want to think we are nothing like the picture of humanity in Genesis 6... we are. There are times when we try to love and obey God, but we still choose to love ourselves. There are times when we act from a pure heart, but there are still the times when we are motivated by a sin-charred heart. We are all hopelessly wicked and bound by the love of ourselves.

A wicked man needs rescuing, but the great news is that the Rescuer was already promised before Noah walked the Earth. While wickedness reigned, hope was hanging in the sky.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to ask God to help you see the acts of betrayal and love of self that you need to deal with. Ask for the help of the Spirit to put this disobedience to death that you may love God with a heart of obedience in this Advent season.*

*Day 2*  
*A Glimmer of Light in The Darkest Night*

*"The Lord God said to the serpent,  
'Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all livestock  
and above all beasts of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.*

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

Genesis 3:15

For all the wickedness of man that we saw yesterday in Genesis 6, it has its beginning point here in Genesis 3. In an act of defiant sin, Adam and Eve chose to trust themselves above trusting God. No longer did they want to follow their Sovereign Creator, but they sought to be sovereign themselves.

Their horrible choice led to disastrous consequences for themselves, the serpent, and all of humanity. The snake was to spend the rest of his days slithering around on his belly. The woman was cursed to have pain in childbirth. The man was set to toil for the rest of his days to put food on the table. Beyond all of that is the reality we see in Romans 5:12:

*“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned”*

In his disobedience, Adam brought about the one thing that is man’s greatest fear: death. The promise of death now hung over every single person in what is the darkest day in human history. It’s the day that man chose self over God. It’s the day that God would no longer walk side by side with man in the Garden. It is the day that the enemy could begin to wield the fear of death as a weapon in his arsenal.

But even before the curse was entirely handed out, we see a glimmer of hope tucked away in the midst of the consequence. There in verse 15 we see the promise, *“He will bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel.”* The seed of the woman would one day wreck the work of the serpent and the sin of man.

In what many call the first gospel, we see the promise of the coming Messiah even before the full brunt of sin’s effect is felt. Christ was on the way to heal the land through a quick strike of His own heel. This serpent crusher would be one who was coming to conquer the enemy and rescue His bride. As Hebrews 2:14-15 says:

*“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”*

Though fear was real that day and consequences were dealt out – hope remained. God’s glorious plan was to rescue a race who had no way to climb out of his sin-soaked, impending death. God’s grace was to be something that Adam and Eve trusted in, that their children trusted in, that every patriarch trusted in, and that every believer who has ever walked the earth will trust in.

It is a hope that shines even when the darkness tries to swallow it up. It is a hope that frees us from the bondage of sin, death, and fear. Though creation began to groan under the weight of the Fall - the promised snake crusher was set to come.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to pray that God will give you the strength to focus on His gospel and grace even when your sin and shame is seeking to drag you down.*

## Day 3

# Promises Made & Promises Kept

*"When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."*

Genesis 17:1-8

As man finds himself flipping between disobedience and faithfulness we come across a man named Abram. He was a man that had everything materially that one could crave, but he was still lacking. Abram had yet to conceive a child with his wife Sarai. But God had a plan and multiple promises for Abram.

First, in Genesis 12 we see God call Abram into a land yet to be seen. So Abram got up, took all he had and he went to the land God had promised. Then in Genesis 15, God promises Abram a son who was to be an heir. Genesis 15:6 says:

*“And he believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness.”*

God had promised Abram some remarkable things – things that God had faithfully delivered or would soon deliver. Though Abram would struggle with disbelief (see Hagar), he trusted God. This wasn't some wobbly, emotive decision but one which Abram staked his life and his family's life on. It was this faith, even before Christ's blood was spilt, that saved him.

As we come to Genesis 17, we see a promise-fulfilling God come to Abram with yet another gracious promise. It is no accident we see God reveal His name as El Shaddai (the ESV reads “I am God Almighty”). While it is somewhat unclear what El Shaddai truly means, we do see that it is clearly tied to a God who keeps His promises. Promises that He stands by, even when men like Abram stumble.

God makes an everlasting covenant with Abram. A covenant so sweeping that Abram has his name changed to Abraham – “father of a multitude” – as he was set to be the father of many nations, kings and people. It was a promise that the promise-keeping God was certain to fulfill, just not in the way that Abraham may have imagined.

For from the line of Abraham (Matthew 1:2) would come THE KING who would be worshipped by those from every tribe, tongue and nation (Revelation 7:9) and who everyone will bow before one day (Philippians 2:10). The promise was one that is still being won today. It is a promise that Abraham clung to and one that we should take notice of.

God's promise never fails, even when we do. No enemy can foil it, no sin will spoil it. What He says always has come to be and will always be. El Shaddai has never failed to deliver on His promises and He will never fail to do so.

May we be faithful to believe the One who never fails to do as He says.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to ask God to help you to rest in Him. Even when it hurts, even when you fail and even when it seems impossible – seek to trust in our promise-keeping Father.*

*Day 4*  
*Changed Plans are the Best Plans*

*"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. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."* In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David. Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?"

2 Samuel 7:12-18

All through the Old Testament we continue to see a promise-fulfilling, covenant-keeping God shower grace on frail men who are resting on those promises. Here in 2 Samuel 7 we see David who is a man who went from the runt of his family to God using him for great things. God used David to slay the giant Goliath, to build up the kingdom of Israel, and to pen many of the Psalms that we treasure today.

Earlier in chapter 7 we see that in the midst of peace in the kingdom of Israel, David wanting to accomplish one more thing before he died – he wanted to build a temple for the Lord. God’s prophet Nathan heartily agrees with the king that the temple should be constructed immediately. However, God had other plans.

As great of an idea David had, God had a much better plan. God’s promise here is that there would be One who would come after David and would dwarf all that David had ever done. This King would suffer greatly but the Father’s love would never leave Him. He would build an everlasting kingdom that was not dependent on the plans of man or the works of his hands. It would be a house that was entirely built on the name and the power of the Father. It would be a promise to be fulfilled only through the King of all kings who is yet to come:

*“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*

This had to be a bit of a sobering moment for David. He had marvelous plans to serve the God who had been so remarkably gracious to him, even in the midst of his own sin and shortcomings. Yet, God took David’s grand plans and blueprints and shoved them to the side. With all of the dreaming, planning and hard work that David probably had put into all of this, he has such a beautiful response to the plans and promise of God. He utters his “Amen” as he sits before the Lord.

David had good plans. God had the best plans. As David had his imagination and dreams captured by his grand plan, God had captured David’s heart. This love for the Father was only strengthened knowing that God was building something even greater than David’s hands would ever build.

Many of us have tasted the same cup. We have grand plans of the things that we want to do for God – only for God to change them. So how do we respond? Do we pout? Do we shut down?

David sets a great example for us: he sits still to worship and admire God’s great plan. Take time today to admire God’s great plan in your life. See all the twists and turns in your life knowing that He is working in all of it – even the hurt. Take note of God’s great gospel plan with the full knowledge that it is a plan that is flourishing and that one day will see all men sitting before the Father in worship. Be still before the Lord and His great gospel plan today.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to be still before the Lord. Note His grace and working in your life. Take time to see the beauty of the gospel spreading all across our planet. Now take a few minutes to pray that God would give you the strength to trust His plans, even when those aren’t your plans.*

## Day 5

# The Promise of Relationship

*“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

Jeremiah 31:31-34

In the past two days we've been looking at God's covenants that He's given to a single man with each of those covenants speaking of a great inheritance to come. Here in Jeremiah 31 we see a covenant that God has made with His people of Israel and the grace that is to come. This humanity-altering covenant is what we have come to know as the New Covenant.

This passage is one of the most significant in the entire Old Testament. We see the New Covenant come up later on in Scripture as it is quoted in the New Testament in places like Hebrews 8:8-13 and Hebrews 10:15-17. Beyond the direct quotes of the Covenant itself are allusions to or partial quotes of the New Covenant that are scattered all through New Testament in places like 2 Corinthians 3:3:

*"And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."*

The weight of the New Covenant is unmistakable. It is no longer marked with words on stone but by God's Word inscribed on the hearts of man. No longer will God be solely "known" in the intellectual sense of the word. Through work of God, man may "know" Him in the most deep and relational sense possible. The sacrificial blood of Jesus is what makes this remarkable relationship possible:

*"When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." - John 17:1-3*

The high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17 echoes back to the New Covenant in Jeremiah. Christ had come that those who abide in the Son will truly know God and have eternal life. This abiding in Christ means that we believe in Him, trust Him, and obey Him in response to His grace.

The beauty of this salvation is that God is making men new through regeneration and wiping their sins clean through His justifying work. That promise is such a beautiful reality of being placed here in Jeremiah. He gives this promise of the remission of sin to a Jewish people who were so disobedient that God led them into the Babylonian captivity because of their sin.

Yet to those wicked people, God gave the promise of the New Covenant. That He will put His law in them. That they shall be His people. That they shall know Him. That He will remember their sin no more. The disobedient people of Israel still received gospel promise.

So, on this day, on the other side of the cross – know the same is true for you. In Christ, your sin has been wiped away. All the guilt and all the shame – GONE. As Romans 8:1 reminds us that there is *"no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Celebrate that today!

## **PRAYER**

*Take time to pray over the sins that plague your life. Pray that you would put to death the deeds of the flesh and that you would no longer wallow in shame of your sin any longer. Celebrate the fact that you can know your Heavenly Father in a way that wasn't possible before the coming of our King.*

*Day 6*  
*An Established Throne*

*"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.*

*You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.*

*For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder,  
the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.*

*For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood  
will be burned as fuel for the fire.*

*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."*

*Isaiah 9:2-7*

Isaiah is a man that God allowed to see much of who He is while Isaiah was still alive. The first few chapters of Isaiah are full of visions and accounts of the impending judgement that God will pour out on His people. In Isaiah 1 we see the unfaithful city and the vengeance it is due. Isaiah 2 is the picture of the soul shaking power seen in the day of the Lord's judgement. Isaiah 3 describes the punishment that is coming to both Judah and Jerusalem. Isaiah 5 is a set of warnings that God lays out for those who disobey Him.

Yet in Isaiah 6 we see a bit of a tone change from the wrath of God. In that chapter we see Isaiah getting a glimpse of the Lord being worshipped by angels in the throne room of heaven. If for just a second, all of us get a glimpse of God in all of His holiness. It is that holiness that Isaiah is privileged to get a front row seat to in this heavenly vision.

God also gives Isaiah quite a few glimpses into what the Messiah's character would be like and what He would do. In the Scripture we just read we got a glimpse of the One who would bring light and joy to Israel and to the outermost reaches of the world. It is this light that announces His coming in the gospel of John:

*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. - John 1:9*

The character of His divine identity is something that unfolds here in Isaiah 9 and then is reinforced in Christ's life and ministry as revealed early on in the New Testament. As the Wonderful Counselor He is the great high priest who is able to sympathize with us with us in our weakness (Hebrews 4:15). As our mighty God He is One who makes the blind to see, lame to walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf to hear and He calls the dead to life. As the Everlasting Father Christ is the walking picture of the Heavenly Father to us (John 14:6). As the Prince of Peace Christ is our peace who tears down the dividing wall between a holy God and a sinful man (Ephesians 2:14).

The four Gospels are the announcement that this wonderful King has come. He's established a kingdom that is not of this world and will never fail. It is a kingdom whose subjects are marked by love, peace, kindness and self-control. As He establishes His kingdom, the waiting world can do nothing else but to sing of the King.

May we look to see the King as He's revealed Himself in the pages of Scripture. May we know Christ as the reigning King who knows the hurt of His people, who rules over every part of our life, who is constantly revealing the glory of the Father and the King who is pleading our behalf. May we praise the King who has come and is coming again!

## **PRAYER**

*Take some time to pray to God in complete recognition of who Christ is and what He has done. Give thanks for the Son in a time of prayer built on thanksgiving.*

*Day 7*  
*A Light for The Nations*

*"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.  
He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,  
or make it heard in the street;  
a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.  
He will not grow faint or be discouraged[a]  
till he has established justice in the earth;  
and the coastlands wait for his law.*

*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:  
"I am the Lord; I have called you[b] 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, to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.*

*I am the Lord; that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to carved idols.  
Behold, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth  
I tell you of them."*

We're a week into our Advent study and we will continue to look at God's promise of the coming Messiah through tomorrow. God's Messianic prophecies continue to pop up through the text that Isaiah has penned. This passage in Isaiah 42 allows us to see another facet of beauty of the King that is coming to us.

The picture that many people have of any king is one of grace, wisdom, strength and unbridled power. Christ certainly is every bit of that. His grace is unmatched, His wisdom is that which only comes from above, His strength is able to withstand the full fury of God's wrath and His power will be on full display as He returns at the Second Coming. In every way, Christ as King is as true of a picture as one could get.

While the imagery of the Messiah was one of regal strength, God paints a picture of the Messiah that unfolds a part of Jesus that is unmistakable – it is seeing Him as a servant. Not only do we see a servant but one who is set to suffer. He's one who will be bruised (Genesis 3 anyone?) but will not fail until He has brought justice across the face of the planet.

God's suffering servant will suffer on behalf of many of the people who God had promised judgement on earlier in Isaiah's prophecies. To the wicked, God brings hope and salvation. To the nations that God has rendered a verdict against, the Judge will take on the punishment. God's grief over sin was met with a willingness to send His Chosen One to establish justice on the earth by His death, life and resurrection for a world of rebels.

*"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." - Genesis 12:3*

Our conquering King will conquer sin and death through the act of suffering. God's warrior is breaking the strongholds of darkness by bringing light into blind eyes. The light of the world was coming to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." God Servant was coming to bring His light and salvation to a dark and broken world.

Isaiah 42 is the pattern set for God's servants to follow in desiring to see captives set free and the blind gaining sight. God's light will shine across all people of all nations when those of us who are His servants seek to bring His salvation to the world. His light has brought us great good but now the responsibility falls on us to bring Him great glory.

*For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." - Acts 13:47*

Will I seek His glory above all else? Will I suffer to make Him known? Will I not grow faint until all the world knows? May God give us all the strength to do so. May we all seek to follow the path of Christ. May we go out and willingly embrace the cross of our coming and suffering King.

## **PRAYER**

*Take time to pray for God to give you a clear opportunity to share His Gospel with someone today.*

*Day 8*  
*Telling of The Coming Redeemer*

*“Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away;  
for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter.  
Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.*

*The Lord saw it, and it displeased him  
that there was no justice.  
He saw that there was no man,  
and wondered that there was no one to intercede;  
then his own arm brought him salvation,  
and his righteousness upheld him.  
He put on righteousness as a breastplate,  
and a helmet of salvation on his head;  
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,  
and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.  
According to their deeds, so will he repay,  
wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies;  
to the coastlands he will render repayment.  
So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west,  
and his glory from the rising of the sun;  
for he will come like a rushing stream,  
which the wind of the Lord drives.*

*“And a Redeemer will come to Zion,  
to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the Lord.*

*“And as for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord: “My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,” says the Lord, “from this time forth and forevermore.”*

Yesterday we saw the character of God's chosen One who was also set to suffer so that He might bring justice to all men. Today, in our last look at the Old Testament's Messianic prophecies, we will take a look at God's coming Redeemer.

Isaiah 59 is a chapter that begins with an emphasis on the wickedness of man:

*"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,  
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;  
but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,  
and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."* - Isaiah 59:1-2

The sins of man have created this gigantic separation between God and man. God's face is now hidden from a wicked people and man's hands are soaked with the blood of their guilt. Man has earned God's wrath and He has set Himself to give man what he has earned for His sin (v. 18). All men shall fear the quick and impending judgment of the Lord (v. 19).

Man has no hope in Himself – he has no uprightness, no truth and there isn't a single man who can intercede for the people. But that is where God steps in to provide the only way of redemption for helpless man. Out of God's holiness and justice comes the perfect One to bring both redemption and restoration. In justice, the Redeemer will put sin to death. In restoration, He will make those who trust in Him a ransomed son.

*And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,  
"The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";  
"and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."* - Romans 11:26-27

In making a new man, the Redeemer is sending out His redeemed children with a message to tell. It is a message centered on His gospel, glory and grace. It is one that is already inscribed on our hearts and that awaits faithful people to tell of the God who rescues wayward people.

The first portion of Isaiah that is rooted in God's judgement is just as vital as the closing chapters detailing God's glory and grace. Our response to the entirety of this text is to remind ourselves daily of our own fallen state. We deserve God's wrath as much as any wicked nation or people deserve judgement.

Yet, God has provided His suffering Servant and Redeemer. To those who trust Him, He grants eternal life. In walking in the wonder of new life, we also tell of this mysterious grace. We need to have His words trailing off our lips everyday so that all may taste and see God's goodness.

Until all the world knows, may we go and tell.

## **PRAYER**

*Take some time to meditate over a portion of Scripture that God has used in your life lately. Seek to memorize this Scripture and ask God for opportunities to share His Word with others.*

*Day 7*  
*Prepare the Way*

*"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'"*

Matthew 3:1-3

We've spent the first 8 days of this Advent devotional looking into the promises and covenant of the coming King. We've been able to see Christ as one who will crush the head of the enemy, who will make sons of many people from all over the world, who will be wounded but ultimately be victorious and who will be the hope of all the earth. This is the King that the Jewish people had waited for.

Now as we transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament we see that the King has come to earth. He comes to earth in an unexpected fashion to a lowly family from a nowhere sort of town. It is this that King has come and now His servant John is preparing the way for Him.

John came to the nation of Israel with the good news of the Messiah's coming in advance of the teaching and ministry of Jesus. John was preparing the people for their true King who had come to them to bring light and life. God's gracious plan was to not leave His people unprepared, but that His people know who their Savior is and why He had come.

As we count down the days to December 25 we have the same opportunity. In this season of Advent, don't find yourself unprepared for the coming of the Lord. Take some practical steps to prepare your heart for Christmas and the celebration of the King who has come to us.

First, is to see your need of a Savior. Every single one of us is in desperate need of a Savior because of our sin (Romans 3:23). Apart from Christ I cannot do a thing to save myself. I am completely helpless to pull myself out of my sin soaked situation. Only when I see the need of a Savior do I truly appreciate His coming.

Second, I need to repent of my sin. As John, calls the people of Israel to repent of their sins, we must do the same. Ask God to search your heart for any sort of sin in your life (Psalm 139:23-24). Then as He reveals these sins to you, seek to put to death the deeds of the flesh through the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:13).

Lastly, let there be excitement and anticipation about the arrival of the Messiah. If we cannot get excited about the Advent of Jesus, our faith is dead. The King has come to take away the sins of the world!! Praise God for our great and glorious King!

## **PRAYER**

*Take time to pray over the three points we talked about. Pray to see your need for the gospel, pray that God would expose your sin and pray God would bring the joy of your salvation to the forefront of your heart.*

*Day 10*  
*A Great Message*

*"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."*

Luke 1:26-33

While taking a step back in the timeline of the Christmas story, we look at the good news of the Messiah's arrival being told to Mary. Gabriel has come to Mary to prepare her for her life as she knows it to change. Gabriel brings news that not only is she is pregnant, but she is pregnant with the Messiah Himself.

It is through the lives of Mary and Joseph that we begin to see some of the Messianic prophecies take shape. In the unmarried and virgin Mary we see Isaiah 7:14 come to life:

*"But the Lord will still show you this sign: The young woman is pregnant and will give birth to a son. She will name him Immanuel."*

Then through Joseph, of the house of David, we see the Davidic covenant coming into full view:

*"When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever."* - 1 Chronicles 17:11-14

While Mary is no doubt scared – of both the uncertainty of what was to come and of the public criticism she's going to face – she displays a childlike faith. In seeing God's promises coming true – and in hearing God's messenger – Mary embraces the plan that God is laying out. As we go one to see in v. 38, Mary is the walking example of 2 Timothy 1:7 as she shoves fear to the side and rests in God's power and love.

God's plan of redemption is one that is remarkable but for all those involved – like Mary & the virgin birth to Jesus in the garden – following God's will can be difficult. Yet, there's comfort in seeing God's track record of keeping His promises and providing for His people. Faith calls us to do God's will in light of what He has done even when we can't see what He will do.

As Christmas approaches, may we embrace God's will for our lives with an earnest, childlike faith. That may be easier said than done for some. This time of year has a way of heightening our hurt and fears whether they be a health issue, financial hardship or losing a loved one in the past year.

As we face what God has for our lives, we step forward in faith knowing that God has proven Himself faithful to His people. We have no reason to fear what may be next. Thanks be to God we have Immanuel, God with us!

## **PRAYER**

*Take time to seek God's strength for the times when your faith is challenged and fear rages. May we trust with a dependency that a child shows for their father, knowing that God has been and always will be faithful.*

*Day 11*  
*A Great God*

*"And Mary said,*

*"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.  
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.*

*And his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.*

*He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;  
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted those of humble estate;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.*

*He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his offspring forever."*

*Luke 1:46-55*

Yesterday we took a look at the faith Mary had in response to the news of her pregnancy with complete trust in the Lord and in His plan. While fear abounded, Mary rested in her faithful God.

Here in Luke 1, Mary continues to respond to God in such a beautiful way – she worships. While she is certainly overwhelmed that God has chosen her to bear the Savior of the world, we also see that she is overwhelmed with His goodness. He is beginning to fulfill all of His promises from long ago. He is bringing salvation to the world and Mary gets a front row seat to it all.

This song that she offers to God in praise is one of the most beautiful songs that we see in all of the New Testament. Her joy comes from the Lord even as she is a woman who comes from a lowly state. She exalts His holiness, His mercy and His might. She draws on Old Testament prophecies from Isaiah 59 (“shown strength with His arm”) and from Genesis 17 (Abrahamic covenant). Her humble song is one that we ought to take note of today.

Take some time today to offer praise to God. Exalt His character and works that He has revealed in Scripture. Also take time to praise His power and His presence in your life.

Days like today, and every day, are ones that we ought to praise our great God simply because of who He is.

#### **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to praise God. Maybe get time to yourself where you can, like Mary, sing your own song of praise to God. Then take time to pray that you will see God’s presence and power in your life on a daily basis.*

## Day 12

### The Savior Is Here

*"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."*

Luke 2:1-7

Prophecies have been uttered. Covenants have been sealed. Promises have been made. Messengers have been sent out. The way has been prepared and at long last the Savior has come to Earth.

This great news has been proclaimed and our Savior has finally come...to the little, no-nothing town of Bethlehem. Christ has come, but He's arrived by way of one of the most meaningless towns in Israel. Yet, not even this detail has escaped God's pen of promise in the Old Testament:

*"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. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace."*  
- Micah 5:2-5

It is this pitiful town's stable that Jesus comes to the Earth. The One who will be King of kings and the peace of the earth spends His first night among animals and hay. God takes such a humble and unassuming birthday to be the beginning of the earthly life that will change the world.

Do you have times when you feel completely insignificant? You feel like you are floating along in life and there isn't a single person who notices you exist. That sort of discourage cuts to the core of who we are, shaking our identity and our hope.

Yet, don't let that discourage you. The long-awaited Messiah came to earth with little fanfare outside of some shepherds and some wise men who came from afar. The greatest moment in human history happened in Bethlehem 2000 years ago with few people stopping to pay attention.

That should make us all stop and rejoice. Our sovereign God is one who uses the weak things to shame the strong and the foolish things to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27). He will use seemingly insignificant people and moments to shape the course of human history.

Rejoice today knowing that God can use simple people like you and I as a part of His sovereign plan of redemption.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes and ask God to be your strength and your identity. May you not see yourself as insignificant, but that you would see yourself as a precious child of the Most High.*

*Day 13*  
*Glory In The Unexpected*

*"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!"*

*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."*

*Luke 2:8-15*

At this point in the Christmas account, and in this devotional, the scene of heavenly messengers has become very commonplace. Mary, Elizabeth and Joseph have spoken with angels. Abraham spoke with God as the covenant is given. Isaiah even gets the chance to take a peek into the throne room of heaven. The picture of the heavenly messenger is almost becoming tired news.

Take a second to put yourself in the shoes of these shepherds. You're in complete isolation, in the wilderness and its sometime after dark. While you're sitting there with your shepherd buddies the darkness is wiped away by glorious light. You go from being alone to being in the midst of an angel. Then to add to the overwhelming glory, you are then surrounded by a fleet of angels singing praises to God.

In this moment of unanticipated power these shepherds are overwhelmed with fear like many of us would be. It is in this moment of fear that the angel dispels by revealing God's gospel and God's glory simultaneously. Which, in Biblical reality, might be one in the same. God's glory and God's gospel are both seen in Jesus Christ:

*"In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."  
- 2 Corinthians 4:4*

And as we see God's glory in His gospel, the transformation is unmistakable:

*"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." - 2 Corinthians 3:18*

The beholding of God's glory is what transforms the heart and passions of a man. The fear of the shepherds was dispelled as they saw God's glory before them. There is this soul-satisfying reality when we come to be satisfied in the glory of God alone. As John Piper says in one of his most famous sermons:

And since God is the source of greatest happiness, and since he is the greatest treasure in the world, and since his glory is the most satisfying gift he could possibly give us, therefore it is the kindest, most loving thing he could possibly do — to reveal himself, and magnify himself and vindicate himself for our everlasting enjoyment.

Today, may you enjoy God and His glory above all else knowing that it is this beholding that changes you in the best ways.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to ask God that you may see His glory, keep your eyes fixed on Him and treasure Him above all other things.*

*Day 14*  
*The Gospel Spreads*

"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."

Matthew 2:1-2

The word of the King's arrival has now spread from outside the boundaries of Israel to the Gentile world. This moment is just beginning to scratch the surface of many people from all nations coming to hear about who the Messiah is. They will travel to Israel to hear see the coming King and to follow Him.

*"And nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your rising."  
- Isaiah 60:3*

God's light has come into the world. As John 1 says that the light of men has come but the world did not recognize His true identity. Though not realizing that the Savior of the world had come, they were coming to hear what the fuss was all about.

By hanging a sign in the stars, God had given a birth announcement to the entire world. These magi were the men who were observant enough to take notice. They clearly saw the star that God hung in the sky and they sought out this new King that they may come and worship. This is our first peek into the gospel going into all the nations.

God has left all of the world without excuse when it comes to a knowledge of His character (Romans 1:20). He reveals aspects of who He is through the things that He has made. In this instance, God let the heavens declare that His glory had come to earth.

Here in Matthew 2, the nations come to see the King, but at the end of Matthew we see the command of Christ for all His followers to go and take His message to the outermost reaches of the planet. God has given His gospel and has formed His chosen instrument, the church, to carry that gospel to the nations.

The light of the nations is not a star, it is Jesus. For all who trust Him as Lord, we have that Light dwelling in us. So we have to carry that light into darkness that all may see, take notice and bow their knee in worship.

The responsibility of the believer in this Advent season is to let their light shine among all the other noise. We don't have to catch a flight abroad to make that message known. Hope in Him, speak of Him, love like Him and you will have the chance to reflect Christ wherever you are.

May we be the light of all the nations, even if we start by being a light to our neighbors.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to ask God to let His light shine through you. Pray for the strength and opportunity to take the gospel to your neighbors and to the nations.*

*Day 15*  
*Threatened Kingdom*

*“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:*

*“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.”*

*Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”*

*Matthew 2:3-8*

While many people have received the coming of the King with gladness and joy, that was not the case with Herod. As the wise men come to King Herod with news of a newborn King, we see Herod become threatened immediately. His dominion and power now don't seem as strong as they once were and he will stop at nothing to establish his own kingdom for the foreseeable future.

Dominion is something we all crave. Our human nature pulls us in such a way that we kick against following after or submitting to anyone. It is this nature that drives Herod to the level of genocidal maniac as he tries His best to destroy the threat to His throne (Matthew 2:16).

It is the allure of dominion that draws our eyes back to the Garden of Eden. There, the draw of eating the fruit was to be like God and to no longer have to depend on Him. The only sovereign that man wants is himself and anyone else that wants to claim authority in his life is a threat to his kingdom.

The one certain reality for Herod's kingdom – and every kingdom of man – is that it is fleeting. Herod will eventually pass his kingdom on to someone else either through conquest or death. His kingdom is eroding around him and it strikes fear deep into his heart.

The same certainty is true for our own lives. Our kingdom is always crumbling around us. Every bit of money that we ever work for will be given over to someone else one day. Our fame will fade and our possessions handed down. The kingdom of man has such a short shelf life with little staying power. That's enough to strike fear into the heart of any man.

However, it is the kingdom of God that will stand. John reminds us in 1 John 2:15, "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." Submission to the one true King is the most meaningful decision man will make. It is a decision that goes against our selfish nature, but it is that submission that brings purpose and life to all who believe and submit.

May we be people who wholly submit to Christ as King over all.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to reflect on your own life and see where you're protecting your own man-made kingdom. Ask God to help you in tearing down the part of your life that you're not giving over to Him.*

*Day 16*  
*Satisfied in Christ*

*"Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,*

*"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,  
according to your word;  
for my eyes have seen your salvation  
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and for glory to your people Israel."*

*Luke 2:25-32*

Simeon, like so many other of the other expectant Jewish people, is eagerly awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Almost no one that we see in Scripture knew the time that the Messiah would come, but Simeon had at least a small idea. God had promised him that he would be able to see Jesus somewhere during the span of his life.

Imagine the anticipation that Simeon had as he waited to see the Messiah face to face. On any day and at any moment he could find himself face to face with the Savior of the world. With all the watching and waiting, the day had finally come.

This is one of those moments in Scripture that I wish I could see with my own two eyes. What would Simeon's face look like? Would there be tears of joy? What would be Mary's reaction? There's so many details of this story that I wish I could soak in.

However, the picture we see painted in Luke 2 is one of complete contentment. Years of waiting and anticipation have led to a scene of exhilaration. Right there in the middle of the temple, Simeon gladly rejoices over the infant King in his arms.

It is in this song that we see the universal scope of the gospel of grace that we now see in the person of Jesus. It is a gospel that is great news for all people – both Jew and Gentile. This gospel will bring salvation to all those who trust in Him regardless of skin tone or nationality.

*"The Lord has bared his holy arm  
before the eyes of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God."  
- Isaiah 52:10*

It is this gospel that Simeon has put His hope entirely in. Now that he has been able to see – and hold – the Savior Himself, Simeon is completely satisfied. He's so content that he's ready to leave this world knowing that Christ had come.

He was so wrapped up in the coming Christ that upon His arrival, Simeon knew that nothing else better would ever come his way. There was a total resting on and abiding in the Messiah that his entire life was wrapped up in Him. Contentment personified is seen in Simeon and his song.

In this Advent season, may that be the song of our hearts as well. May we have such a hope, abiding in and resting on Christ that we can truly say He is all we need. As a busy season ramps up and distractions abound, may we say Christ is enough.

## **PRAYER**

*Take time to seek the Lord and ask for the strength to find Him as your everything during this and every other time of the year.*

*Day 17*  
*A Pause*

*"In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God."*

*Luke 6:12*

This Advent study has been broken up into three, eight-day sections so we can see different beautiful facets of the coming of Christ. The first eight days were centered on the promise of the King who was coming to save all men. The next eight days looked at the arrival of Jesus by seeing how He affected those around Him as well as the lessons we can learn for the modern church.

The last eight days leading up to Christmas Eve are going to look at what the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ means for the believer today. This will be a broad look at the weight of the gospel and the very specific ways that Christ rescues the church and then sends her out. Through this, my prayer is that our affections will continue to build towards Jesus.

Today's devotion is simple: be still. Jesus made a habit of getting away to be before the Lord and pray.

In this season of busyness and noise, take time to be still before God. Soak in His character, His presence and His grace in your life. Take note and worship a God who is worthy of all our time and praise.

# Day 18

## The New Has Come

*"Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second."*

Hebrews 8:1-7

From now until Christmas, we'll take a look at what the Advent of Christ has brought man. This will be a deep dive into the power and beauty of the gospel that we may fall more deeply in love with God.

A heavy theme throughout the book of Hebrews is seeing Jesus as the "greater and better than." Hebrews is written to a largely Jewish audience and seeks to show the supremacy of Christ in all things. In this chapter we see Christ as the great high priest, tabernacle and mediator.

In day five of this Advent study we saw the promise of an intimate relationship between God and man from Jeremiah 31. This promise is one in which God has taken up the responsibility to fulfill. It is a chapter that is full of God declaring "I will." He takes all the action – and the glory – to buy His bride back.

Here in Hebrews 8 we see how Christ has done exactly that. God uses the Old Testament picture of God's presence with His people – the priests, tabernacle and covenants – to again show that Jesus is the greater and better. These OT "copies and shadows" were just lesser pictures of what was to come in Jesus.

*"These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." - Colossians 2:17*

First, we see that Christ is the greater and better high priest. Jesus is not a high priest for how He carries out God's purposes towards man, but it is how He acts toward God and before God on our behalf. He communicates all good things from God to us and to plead for us on our behalf. As priests would offer constant sacrifice on behalf of the people for forgiveness of sins, Jesus offers Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins.

Second, we see Jesus as the greater and better tent or tabernacle. The old tent was pledge that God would be present and near with His people. Because of Jesus, we have a nearness that means having the Holy Spirit not just near us but in us. Jesus becomes the means by which God is with us and in us.

Lastly, Jesus is seen as the greater and better mediator of a greater and better covenant. Now there is no need for the blood of bulls and goats for forgiveness of sins. The blood of the spotless Lamb was shed in Christ. As Old Testament sacrifices were offered repeatedly, Christ died once for sins and then ascended to the right hand of the Father. Christ came to bring a better covenant with an unmistakably rich inheritance for all who trust in Him.

## **PRAYER**

*Take time to thank God for Christ being the greater and better. He's our mediator, our seal of God presence in us and our promise of the glory to come.*

*Day 19*  
*The Radiance of His Glory*

*"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."*

*Hebrews 1:1-4*

There may not be a more theologically rich cluster of verses in the book of Hebrews than what is contained in the first four verses of the book. What we see here is a text that connects into a massive amount of Scripture throughout all of the Bible.

In order for us to have a full picture of what the author of Hebrews is talking about, we are going to chase the related passages to what we see in these four verses. In doing this, my prayer is we have a fuller picture of the character of Christ. In doing so, we see the nature and glory of God in the Advent of His Son.

Christ as heir of all things:

*"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." - Romans 8:17*

Christ as Creator of all things

*"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." - Colossians 1:16*

Christ as the radiance of the glory 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." - John 1:14*

Christ as the picture of who God is:

*"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." - Colossians 1:15*

Christ as the One who sustains all things:

*"In him we live and move and have our being" - Acts 17:28a*

Christ as the One who purifies sinful man:

*"how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." - Hebrews 9:14*

Christ seated in victory:

*"But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." - Luke 22:69*

May we, in this Advent season, see Christ for all He is! Praise God that His King has come.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to offer the simple prayer that you may see a fuller picture of who Jesus is.*

## Day 20 Unveiled Faces

*“Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”*

2 Corinthians 3:12-16

Yesterday we saw that Christ was the very radiance of God's glory. In seeing the Son, the world has seen the glory of God. In His Son we see God's glory but we also see God's plan for rescuing and purifying man. It is a glory that we have the opportunity to behold and savor.

That's one of the most beautiful parts of this passage in 2 Corinthians 3 – the chance to behold His glory in the most remarkable of ways. Moses wanted to behold God more than anything, but He was only able to get a glimpse of God (Exodus 34). It was this quick glance that transformed Moses' appearance so significantly and his face shone so brightly that it had to be veiled just so the Israelites could look at Moses.

In Christ, we have something so much better. There's no more need for a veil. We don't just have to take a glimpse of God and His glory. The implications of the Advent and sacrifice of Christ in this Scripture are enormous.

First, of all we have a bold access to the Father through Christ. No longer does a tent stand between God and man. No longer does man have to fear death by entering into God's presence because of an unclean life. Our great high priest has removed the stain of sin and given man the chance to approach His God boldly without fear. As Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Secondly, we have the incredibly gift of beholding God's glory. Gone are the days when all man could get was a peek of the glory of the Almighty. Christ has ushered in a new covenant that allows man to bask in the glory of God and in doing so man is changed for the better. Just as Moses was affected by a obscured vision of God, man on this side of the Cross has his life transformed by beholding the glory of God.

It is this transformation that comes by God's glory for God's glory. May we seek to do little else over this next week than to behold the glory of the God that has come to earth.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to seek God and ask that He will stir your affections for Him and that you will fix your eyes on Him and His glory.*

*Day 21*  
*This is War*

*"Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."*

*1 John 3:8*

For the past few days, we've been looking into the work that the Advent of Christ accomplished. Today's verse could not get more to the point than stating why Christ came. He came to earth to destroy every bit of earthly kingdom that the enemy has been trying to piece together since the Fall.

The greatest enemies of man are anchored around sin, death and Satan. The sin in the Garden, and subsequent sins of all men, separate God from man. The resulting consequence of sin is death (Genesis 3:19). It is the crafty serpent of old who wields both sin and death as a weapon against all of humanity.

*"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him." - Colossians 2:13-15*

Christ came to rip those weapons out of the hands of Satan. No longer does the threat of death and alluring scent of sin hold sway over the believer. The arrival of the Christ signaled the end of the Enemy's vast work.

Christ came to buy back His bride – and He did. Christ came to wipe out the glory robbing plans of Satan – and He did. Christ came to give His followers a new identity – and He did. Christ came and Christ conquered.

The vision we have seen of the baby in the Bethlehem manger is one of a King coming to conquer. His Advent was swinging the tide of a cosmic war that had been waged on the planet since the days of Adam and Eve. The serpent crusher was now on the scene and the star over Bethlehem was a signal fire letting the planet know that the war had turned.

Today we celebrate a war that has already been won, but whose celebration is yet to come. Until then, we wait for our King to come yet again so that we may worship Him for what He has won.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes to seek out the Father and ask that you may always seek to see Christ as mighty and victorious – regardless of what your circumstances may say.*

## Day 22

# *A Promise by Faith*

*“For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” 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 3:10-14

The hopeless state of man is very capably laid out throughout Scripture: every man is a sinner deserving death (Romans 3:23, 6:23), there's nothing good in man (Romans 7:18) and we are in a without hope in ourselves (Ephesians 2:12). Here in Galatians 3 we can see that man constantly fails to live according to God's law. To the man who fails to keep the entirety of God's law, he is utterly cursed.

The good news of God's gospel comes in the fact of Christ becoming so much for man. First He becomes sin so that we might not bear the guilt of it.

*"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." - 2 Corinthians 5:21*

In coming to this world, Christ takes on the guilt of our sin that we might have the righteousness of God in Him. Yet, there's more to guilt than just a feeling – there's consequence. That's the second thing that Christ becomes: He becomes a curse for us.

*"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." - 1 John 4:9-10*

Christ becomes a curse for man by being the propitiation for our sins. He comes to this earth so that He may be the spotless lamb of sacrifice. By being the perfect Son, He capably fills the role as the perfect wrath-absorbing sacrifice for all who trust in Him.

That's the remarkable beauty of the gospel – grace is there for all who have faith. By resting in Christ, we are being added into the promise that God gave Abraham ages ago. We taste the blessing God gave Abraham because of Christ alone.

His substitution of Christ for man is something that we faintly imagine but is something that we must wholeheartedly celebrate. For man to grasp grace, Christ tasted affliction. But thanks be to God, that Christ died that we may be righteous! Praise God that He was raised that we may have life!

## **PRAYER**

*Take time to thank God that Christ took the wrath we deserved that we might have a grace that we do not deserve.*

*Day 23*  
*Coming to Seek and Save*

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Luke 19:10

Luke 19 gives us the account of Jesus meeting the tiny tax collector Zacchaeus. Through the process of Zacchaeus climbing a tree and Jesus spotting him we see a brief conversation unfold. Jesus ends up inviting Himself to Zacchaeus' house and his response is one of instant repentance and dependence. He renounces his defrauding ways and promises restoration for those he has harmed.

That's quite the change for a man who was the chief tax collector and had a reputation of being a sinner above anything else. Yet, that is also the illustration of the radical and transforming power that the gospel has in people's lives. Jesus affirms that moments like these are why He came to earth.

Verse 10 only has 12 words, but it is full of the richness of God's rescue and redemption of us. This small verse has a lot to say about the condition and weakness of man while also demonstrating the lengths God goes to in rescuing His lost sheep. Let's peer into this double-sided picture of the gospel for a moment.

First thing for us to notice is the "Who" that is seeking, chasing and saving. It is Christ who seeks out His wayward sheep. Man is not seeking God at all – he's too busy chasing after his lust and desires:

*The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man,  
to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.  
They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;  
there is none who does good, not even one. - Psalm 14:2-3*

Man has no desire or ability to seek God out. Every bit of the nature of man pushes back against the thought of submitting to God in anyway. Man does not have the desire or the ability to save Himself.

However, the second thing for us to notice here is the great news. Even though man lacks the desire and ability to seek after God – God is seeking after Him. Long before Zacchaeus hopped up in a tree to get a better look at Jesus, Jesus was pursuing Him.

Man does not choose God. God chooses man out of his helpless state. Zacchaeus did not invite Christ to His home, Christ invited Himself over. Seen in each of our redemption stories is God's clear pursuit and choosing of us.

*"It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." - Deuteronomy 7:7-8*

God chose Israel because He loved them. God chooses Zacchaeus because He loved him. God chose all who rest in Him as Lord out of the love He has for them. May we as believers celebrate that our King has come to pursue us and save us as we celebrate His Advent.

## **PRAYER**

*Take time to thank God for pursuing you even when you were helpless and buried in your sin.*

*Day 24*  
*Mission of Mercy*

*"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost."*

*1 Timothy 1:15*

The testimony of Paul is one that many people are familiar with. He was once a rabid persecutor of the church who was met by Jesus while he was on his way to hunt the church in Damascus. In a moment of radiant vision, Paul's life is forever changed.

Paul, and so many other broken sinners just like him, is the reason why Christ came. The entrance of sin into the world placed all of creation under an intolerable weight of groaning that no person could lift. The presence of sin separated God from man and placed a death sentence on a guilty human race.

Blood is on the hands of all men. It is a guilt no human can free himself of and a terminal sickness that no man can cure. It is for that very reason that Jesus came:

*"But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." - Matthew 9:12-13*

In mercy Christ came to free trusting man from the guilt and shame of sin. He came to be the perfect sacrifice we desperately needed. He did what we could not by fulfilling the letter of the law and then He sought the will of God by bearing the full force of God's wrath that was set to come for us.

Such a heavy burden was lifted by our merciful Savior. He paid a debt He did not owe to save a race that He deeply loved. It is, as Isaac Watts says, "Love so amazing, so divine."

In a holiday that is soaked with entitlement may we clearly see that God's mercy to us is completely undeserved. We've been spared judgment and given eternal hope and life. No man deserves that sort of love...but that sort of love and mercy is why He came.

## **PRAYER**

*Take a few minutes and reflect on the magnitude of God's mercy to you. Thank God for His mercy and ask that God will help to keep you ever grateful.*

*Day 25*  
*He has Come... and is Coming Again*

*“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.  
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
and the war horse from Jerusalem;  
and the battle bow shall be cut off,  
and he shall speak peace to the nations;  
his rule shall be from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.”*

*Zechariah 9:9-10*

The day has come at long last. The angels are singing glory in the highest. The shepherds have sought the Savior that they could worship Him. The star of Bethlehem is shining brightly for all the world to know that the King has come to earth.

His first coming is one of remarkable salvation and joy. The King has come to rescue His prodigal sons and daughters. He has come to do what we couldn't to give a gift we could never earn. His perfect life is set to lead Him to a death that would change the spiritual landscape of all mankind.

Read the passage from Zechariah again. The good news of His first arrival also holds the promise of His second coming:

*“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.  
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
and the war horse from Jerusalem;  
and the battle bow shall be cut off,  
and he shall speak peace to the nations;  
his rule shall be from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.”  
- Zechariah 9:9-10*

As we celebrate the birth of our King today, let us also look forward to His second coming. May we wait with the same anticipation of a promise fulfilled like David and Abraham did. May we savor His arrival with the same passion of Mary or Simeon. May we look forward to the culmination to God's gospel plan as He returns to reconcile all things to Himself.



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