

The Coming of Christ

An Advent Devotional

Jacob & Amy Toman Living Family Ministries

The Coming of Christ

An Advent Devotional

JACOB & AMY TOMAN



This study is dedicated to the public domain. You can copy, translate, and distribute this study without restriction and without needing to ask permission.

This resource is freely given (Matt 10:8)
for the sake of the gospel.

<https://copy.church/free>

Please go to [Redeemingfamilypress.com](https://redeemingfamilypress.com)
to see more free studies.

The Coming of Christ

All of human history centers on two climatic moments. The first of those moments has already come, the second of those moments is yet to come. The first climax of human history was in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. The second will be the return of this same Jesus to Judge the living and the dead.

This devotional contains daily scripture readings, hymns, and devotionals to encourage you and your family to live for Christ.

If you have children and would activities to go along with this devotional, please check our store for separate children's activities.

We are excited to be a part of your growing joy and celebration of Christ's birth, and accompanying growing faith and hope in Christ's triumphal return.

DAY 1

A Ruler Worth Worshipping

Reading: Matthew 2:1-12 **Song: O Little Town of Bethlehem**

What is the longest trip you've ever taken? The Magi came from a great distance to meet Jesus. They acted with the belief that Jesus was worth the trip. They had seen the star of Jesus and wanted to be in the presence of the king Jesus. The Magi took time to ask questions on their journey about where Jesus had been born. They wanted to meet and worship Him. In contrast, those living nearby, such as Herod and religious leaders took no interest in the birth of Jesus until they were approached by the Magi.

The Magi traveled through many lands, meeting rulers along the way. When they met with Herod, he was not the ruler they were looking for. There was something unique, something very special about Jesus.

Before Jesus had worked any miracles, before he had taught anything from scripture, before he went to the cross, and rose from the tomb, before all those amazing, wondrous, and uniquely special things, **Jesus was still worthy of worship.** His arrival was noteworthy for locals and foreigners. History would remember how this Jesus was received by men who claimed to be wise, and wise men. He was a ruler worthy of worship.

What did the Magi do when they found Jesus?

How did they worship Jesus?

How do we worship Jesus today?

DAY 2

Sometimes We Need a Specialist

Reading: Genesis 3:1-24

Song: **Nothing But the Blood**

Do you have anything around you that is broken? Maybe a toy or an appliance? We can often repair minimal damage without too much trouble. However, there are some times in our lives when the damage is beyond our ability to repair. That's when most of us call in a specialist.

In Genesis 3 we read of God's good creation broken through the choices of Adam and Eve. Those choices had consequences that included inaugurating death and rejecting a relationship with God. Adam and Eve sinned. Sin is a word used to name acts that break the relationship between humanity and God. Our sin has created a barrier between us, and our creator God. This barrier is too great for us to remove. We need a specialist.

In the first coming of Christ, God sent a specialist, someone of unique expertise and ability, to repair something that was broken. In Genesis 3:15 we have the first promise of one who would come, born of a woman, to secure ultimate victory. As soon as humanity was faced with the reality that "the wages of sin is death", a promise was also given that God's gift would secure "eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord".

Celebrating the birth of Jesus is the celebration of God's grace to humanity.

Why can't we fix our sins?

How did Jesus repair our relationship with God?

In what ways can we thank God for this gift?

DAY 3

Anticipating Christ

Reading: Mark 2:18-22 Song: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

What is it like for you to wait for something? Do you find excitement in the anticipation? Are you swallowed up by a sense of longing? In Mark 2, Jesus' disciples were compared to guests at a wedding banquet. They were enjoying themselves! They didn't have something to look forward to, they had something to enjoy right in front of them, Jesus himself

We wait for things every day in our first-world lives. We wait in queues, we wait for traffic lights, we wait for employee reviews, we wait to hear back from clients, we wait on hold, we wait for the weekend, and we wait for our next vacation. We are seemingly always waiting for the next thing!

Advent can be a wonderful time of waiting and anticipation if we remember to focus on Christ and not be distracted by this world. As Christians, we can not forget that we will have a day much like the disciples did in Mark 2. A day when we will no longer be waiting in anticipation of Christ, but instead be enjoying Christ in that moment. This is the beauty of Advent. Remembering that our waiting will have an end and that end will be a celebration with Christ Jesus himself.

Why did Jesus say his disciples weren't fasting?

Is there a time when your family fasts?

DAY 4

Expectations

Reading: Psalm 84

Song: In the Morning When I Rise

Are you a morning person? My wife and I have four wonderful children who can have incredible variety in the attitudes they display when waking up. Our waking moments, and our daily moments, are shaped by our attitudes. We may dread what lies ahead, or we may desire greatly the day in front of us!

So much of life is about our expectations! If we wake up and have low or no desire for grandeur, glory, and wonder, then of course we will wake up with a sigh and a heavy heart! The Psalmist has a desire for the Lord, a desire for God's presence, and a desire to be near God. Too often we are the opposite of the Psalmist. We wake up in bad moods, without a desire for the Lord and instead, we have a desire for things of this world.

As we draw near to the birth of Jesus, what are our desires? Are we desiring the celebration of Christ, or are we desiring the gifts? This may be a time of year that you are dreading, or anticipating. Either way, remember the words of the Psalmist and set your heart on an eternal day in the courts of King Jesus that God has promised to his people.

What are your desires of God?

Does an eternity with Jesus sound like a burden or a blessing?

DAY 5

Growing in Faith

Reading: Luke 2:52

Song: It Is Well with My Soul

How do you measure your growth? As a child, my family had a wall that we would stand next to and measure our height growth over the years. At different times of the year (birthdays, holidays, and new school years) my family would take turns standing up against the wall and measuring how tall we had gotten since the last measurement. When we think of Jesus, we often think of his birth and his death. We often forget about the in-between. Jesus was a baby, a toddler, a child, a teenager, and a man. Jesus grew up! Jesus had life moments of achievement. Moments when his parents saw him learning and exhibiting desired behavior, and moments when he severely worried his parents!

Jesus was just like us in the way he grew. We all started as babies and grew up as well. One way that we grew as Christians is our Faith. Most of us know others further ahead in their faith. They individuals have grown through their life and experiences to have more faith than others. As Christians, we should always be praying to grow in our faith and to become more like Christ. Growth is an outcome of our faith in Christ.

What are some ways you are growing ?

What are some ways God is stretching you, challenging you, and shaping you?

DAY 6 Surprise

Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Song: What Child is This?

Christmas is an expected occasion, filled with traditions, gatherings, and events. Our season of Advent is filled with regularity, but the original Advent was filled with surprises. The celebration of Christ's birth was long prophesied, and long expected. Yet when the savior of God's people came, he was a surprise!

Jesus' birth was a surprise to all sorts of people around him. Jesus was a surprise to the ruling government at the time (Herod), to foreign world powers (the wise men from afar), to the local religious leaders (Zachariah), the local workforce (the shepherds), to his Mother (Mary) and a huge surprise to the man who would be his earthly father, Joseph!

As much as Jesus was a surprise, he was expected. We see here the angel telling Joseph that Jesus would save people from their sins, and yet when that time came people were still surprised. We see Jesus as the fulfillment of the promise that God made to Adam. Often we get so caught up in routines and traditions that we forget what we have been told about what will happen. This leads us to be surprised! Jesus was a surprise because the Israelites forgot God's promises. Let us keep our eyes open and not be surprised by Christ's birth this Advent season.

Is the celebration of Christ worthy of your time, energy, and excitement?

How is Christ an exciting reality for you?

DAY 7

Glory of God

Reading: Isaiah 53:1-9

Song: To God Be the Glory

Christians often speak of the glory of God and the praise of Christ. What comes to your mind when you think of glory? One movie comes to mind when I think of Glory, Cool Runnings. Cool Runnings tells the story of the 1988 Olympic bobsled team from Jamaica. The glory isn't found in the gold, silver, or bronze place finish this underdog story wins, the team doesn't finish their final race to even medal! So where is the glory? Where is the praise?

The baby that was born in Bethlehem would one day be the man hung to die on a tree. He was left by his friends, condemned by his peers, and hated by his culture. No one sang his praises that day, and no one cheered as he crossed his finish line. So where is the glory? Where is the praise?

Cool Runnings emphasizes the glory found in competing and finishing, despite great opposition. The clap and cheers of the spectators in Cool Runnings give glory and praise to the ones who persevered and did not finish until their goal was accomplished. The baby whose birth we celebrate is due glory and praise for accomplishing his goal of atoning-paying the grievous debt his people owed.

How can we glorify God in our home and community?
Are there things we participate in that are not glorifying to God?

DAY 8

The Humbling Reality

Reading: Philipians 2:6-8 Song: Gentle Jesus Meek and Mild

Have you ever been humbled? I once was at a very prestigious presentation at a private university. Before the presentation, I went to get a drink and introduced myself to a fellow who was getting himself a soda. He was gracious and poured me a soda as well. A few moments later, the fellow pouring my drink walked up to the front, and introduced himself as the president of the university! I was honored that a person of such importance would humble themselves to pour me a drink!

The advent of Jesus is the single most humbling reality in all of human history. God became human, for the express purpose of reconciling the differences between humanity and God. Someone of great importance lowered himself to benefit his people.

The one whom we worship, and serve with our praises and adoration, is the one who took on the service of his people, by humbling himself, and subject himself to humiliation. Christ's birth wasn't simply a humble one because of the economics of his parents, or the politics of his people group. Christ's birth was humble in the very essence of God becoming human for the sake of saving humanity. In celebrating Christmas, we celebrate God's humility, and God's humanity.

How can we humble ourselves before God?

Can you think of an example of someone in your life humbling themselves?

DAY 9

Old Story

Reading: Matthew 1:1-17

Song: Tell Me the Old Old Story

In Matthew 1 we see the birthline of Christ is tied to several key historical figures found in the Old Testament narratives of God's people. Two particularly noteworthy names on the list are Abraham and David.

God made promises and a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3 & 15:1-20). Jesus' ancestry as a Son of Abraham is key in relationship to God's covenant with Abraham. By having a heritage in Abraham, Jesus was born into the line of promise dating back to the early promises of God to the patriarchs. Jesus' life secured blessings for his people and secured a curse for those who opposed him.

God made promises to David in 2 Samuel 7:11-16. Jesus' ancestry as the Son of David is key in relationship to God's covenant to David that he would always have a descendant on the throne, ruling over God's people. Christ's eternal reign as the risen Lord of creation places him on the throne that does not rust, with a crown that does not fade. Jesus' birth wasn't a spontaneous act of a random God, it was the calculated, promised, prophesied, gift of a gracious God to his beloved people.

What was the last promise you made?

How far will you go to keep that promise?

What do you learn about God's character in that ancient promises are kept?

DAY 10

Christmas is strange

Reading: Isaiah 6:1-4 Song: Angels We Have Heard on High

Christmas is strange. We celebrate a birthday, but the birthday guest isn't physically in the room. We decorate and adorn our homes, halls, and hearths, for the birthday guest who isn't physically there. Christmas is strange. We sing, praise, and worship the One who is incredibly different from us. It makes sense for Christmas to be strange, to be different, to be set apart, our God is very different from the world.

When Isaiah looked and saw the Lord in his temple, he saw an overwhelmingly different sight than what his merely human eyes were used to seeing. Things were strange, different, and uncommon. The throne room of the Lord was inhabited by strange creatures, praising and declaring the strange and unique reality of God's glory. The word of the angels is a word which means set apart, morally innocent, free from uncleanness or profanity. In a way, God himself is very...strange.

It took a strange, unique, and holy person to reconcile the corruption of humanity with the totality of God's perfection. This Christmas season, amid the strange celebrations, remember we celebrate a king who is truly unique, truly holy, and truly strange.

Have you seen anything strange in your life?
How do you set apart your Christmas celebration?

DAY 11

Virgin Birth

Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Song: Trust and Obey

Perhaps the most dreaded and awkward conversation between parents and children, the conversation that some call “The birds and the bees” or the human process of procreation. In Matthew 1 we read about the lineage and story of the “birds and bees” of Jesus’ birth. Two beautiful truths are on display in this true account of Christ’s conception. Jesus was born of God and Jesus was born as a true living human being. Jesus was truly, from conception, fully God and fully human.

With God as His father, Jesus was born without inherent original sin in his life. When Adam and Eve sinned, their sin passed down generationally through parents-specifically fathers. Jesus himself was very God of very God, only able to do the things he did through his identity as a member of the holy, triune God. Yet, simultaneously, Jesus himself was as human as you or I, and yet, he remained sinless.

Joseph trusted and obeyed the word of the Lord. Joseph could have been skeptical, disobedient, or untrusting. He heard the Word of the Lord and responded in faith - trusting that what God had said, God would indeed bring about. Joseph’s role was one he accepted, he took as a wife the virgin mother of Jesus. He trusted and obeyed.

This dream would reshape major life choices for Joseph. Amid the opportunity to distrust and disobey, Joseph instead honored God by trusting and obeying.

What parts of God’s Word are hard for you to trust?

What parts of God’s Word are hard for you to obey?

DAY 12

Mary's Response

Reading: Luke 1:46-55

Song: Silent Night

Mary's perspective on her particular blessing encompasses thousands of years of human history. God had promised to Eve a seed would be born to crush the serpent, and Mary, a humble girl of no worldly fame, would become the bearer of the promised hero of ancient times. Mary rejoices, but she does not do so in a solitary fashion. She rejoices in light of the promises of God through the many generations of believers who had come before.

Mary's response is formed and filled with references to various Old Testament books and passages. Her joyful response to God's work in her is to bring to mind all that the Lord has done and praise God for all God will do through her child.

Mary not only had a perspective that rejoiced in the faithfulness of previous generations, but she also had a perspective that looked to the future. Mary spoke about the future with thanks to the Mighty One. All the generations to come would look back and recognize the tremendous blessing Mary was given. Mary was blessed by God in her service to God.

As believers, God has set us aside and brought us up from a lowly estate. As Mary was humble and yet raised up for glorious purposes, so too we as believers were in a dire state, yet by God's grace, we have been raised up for glorious service to God.

What are some blessings God has give your family?

Recount ways how God called you to serve Him in the last year?

How do you connect your service to the Lord, to previous generations?

DAY 13

Sharing the Good News

Reading: Luke 2:1-7

Song: Once in Royal David's City

Luke 2 begins by telling of a kingdom with order, a kingdom that is vast, and a kingdom that has several rulers. Jesus was born into this world of Rome, to a Mother who was betrothed to a man who obeyed the laws of the land. Jesus was born into a lineage of vast importance as a descendant of the greatest king in his nation's history: David. Jesus was served by his Mother Mary as she cared for his most basic of needs.

The contents of the Angel's message make no mistakes in directly addressing the nature of the wonder of the event of Jesus' birth. There was no chance of mistaking who the Angels were, the shepherds were terrified at the sight and the physical presence of them. The angels used language that the shepherds could understand. The shepherds, upon hearing of Jesus' birth first go to witness and participate in the event of Jesus' birth. After they go, witness, and accomplish the goal of their visit, the shepherds go back to the fields!

The shepherds change their message as they go about their work. They return to work by returning to their fields, and in doing so, they also bring with them an additional task beyond their business of tending flocks, the task of telling others about Jesus.

Have you ever told anyone about Jesus?

In what ways can you be like the shepherds and share about Jesus?

DAY 14

Worthiness

Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

Song: O Come All Ye Faithful

In Matthew 2 we see two contrasting views in the value of the child Jesus who was born. One set of visitors, the Magi, see a value and take the time to visit and give gifts to this newborn child. Another potential visitor, Herod, sees a risk and ascribes value to someone other than the child.

My children place great value on their toys and material possessions. My wife is particularly patient with our children when they are squabbling over the wealth of possessions they have. There is a sense, even among the smallest of children, that material possessions are a way of displaying value, power, and worth. I know my children are serious about their love, passion, and affection for other friends, and family members when they readily give away or share toys that they have fought over, treasured, and created memories playing with.

The royal visitors who came from the east known as the "Magi" certainly had values of their own. They brought with them gifts of great value. The Magi deemed this child's birth as worthy of their time, and worthy of their material goods. The Magi show a tremendous amount of belief in the value of the children that was born.

How do you show that something is worth your time and worth your gifts?

Do you find value in memories made and remembered?

DAY 15

Actions Reflect Heart

Reading: Matthew 2:13-18 Song: Go Tell it on the Mountain

We've seen over the last few days the reactions of the shepherds, the excitement of Mary, and the worship of the Magi. Yet the birth of Jesus was not universally well received. The ruler in the land Jesus was born in was hardly pleased with the birth of this potential rival. Herod was a ruler, not absolute in his power, Herod's power was derived from Roman occupation. Herod was a ruler who had to please his master, Caesar, and worry about the uprisings of his people. The Romans thought well of Herod, and the Jewish religious leaders thought him to be a treacherous rogue.

Herod was not a descendant of David. If Jesus was the Christ prophesied from the Old Testament, then he would reign as king over his people. This would mean an end to Herod's rule. Herod was not someone who devoted himself to God's Word. When the Magi came to Jesus, Herod had to ask the religious leaders where Christ would be born. Instead of rejoicing and truly celebrating the birth of the Messiah as God's ancient Covenant promises coming to fulfillment, Herod does everything in his power to prevent God's Messiah from coming to his people. Herod was terrified of Jesus' birth, and he took actions that reflected his relationship to Jesus. The Magi, shepherds, and Mary were overjoyed to worship Jesus, and they took actions that reflected their relationship to Jesus. A relationship of value, praise, and honor!

How do your actions reflect your relationship with Jesus?
Is your daily life marked by praise, thanksgiving, and worship?

DAY 16

Temptation

Reading: Luke 4:1-13 **Song: God Rest thy Merry Gentlemen**

When we are tempted, we often try to justify our sinful activity by twisting what is true. Sin is a twisting, a perversion, a distortion of what is true. Often temptation and sin are portrayed as destructive and overtly wicked, but in Luke, the Tempter is more subtle in his appeal. Sin is seductive, sin is deceptive, sin is insidious.

In challenging Jesus' to turn to physical comforts the Deceiver hints at a larger game plan. The Tempter puts on all his charms and shows all the grandeur of the world to appeal to Jesus' ambition, desires, and needs. The Tempter even quotes scripture in an attempt to twist Jesus' priorities and bend the will of Christ to the will of the Deceiver. The stakes rise quite high rather quickly as the Deceiver offers Jesus the deal so often represented in books, games, and media. A pact with the Devil for worldly riches, in exchange for the very heart of the person. Sin is insidious.

When Jesus was hungry, the evil one tempted him with food. When Jesus was lowly, the evil one tempted him with power. Some Days we wake up ready to take on the day and the challenges ahead. Yet it was not when Jesus was at his strongest that the Deceiver attacked. We are at our most vulnerable when we are in the midst of difficult life circumstances. When we are at our weakest, the Deceiver's half-truths sound the sweetest. It was for the weak that Christ came to strengthen, it was for the hurting that Christ came to heal, and it was for the dead that Christ came to give new life.

How are you tempted in your life?
How can you overcome that temptation?

DAY 17

Ordinary Routines

Reading: Luke 4:14-21

Song: Oh Worship the King

We often think of the life of Jesus as marked by miraculous healings, divine interventions in the life of the hopeless, and events of extraordinary proportions. Yet his ordinary "custom" was to read from the scriptures on the Sabbath, and teach the assembly of God's people. Jesus had a regular rhythm to his life and a regular pattern of worship.

If you've ever heard someone ask "Why do you go to church" or had someone wonder why it's important to worship in the community, here is one answer! Jesus himself put a priority on regular worship! To be a Christian is to follow Jesus. Following Jesus is imitating him! Here in Luke 4, we are given a foundational principle for Jesus' regular choice in life, he worshipped in community with others!

Jesus' life purpose was to set his people free from temptation and the bondage of sin. Jesus' mission was the redemption of his people by becoming one of them. Jesus' understanding of his particular identity was found in obedience to God's Word! In one sense, Jesus lived a predictably ordinary life. He had a routine and rhythm. With every day he lived in accordance with his beliefs and trust in God's Word. This advent season, let's celebrate and worship this Jesus, with all of his ordinary routines, and all of his extraordinary life purposes!

How do you Worship God with others?

What are some family routines you have that center around God?

DAY 18

Names Matter

Reading: John 12:12-19

Song: Away in a Manger

What's in a name? Chances are, you've been called by many names throughout your life. God has been called many names throughout ancient times, and he has many titles throughout the scriptures.

Do you have a first name, middle name, and last name? Do some call you friend, daughter, son, mommy, daddy, brother, sister? Do some call you a boss or co-worker? Some names are used as terms of endearment and affection. Some names are specifically targeted to hurt and demean another person. Some names are meant as inside jokes. Some names denote position, identity, or status.

Most likely, you have multiple names that you are known by right now!

Jesus was given many names during his lifetime, and the promised messiah was called by a great many names throughout the Old Testament. Today and tomorrow we will study Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the names that he is called.

What are some names that Jesus is called in this passage?

What are some names you are called and what do they mean??

DAY 19

Many Names

Reading: Zechariah 9:9 Song: Oh Come, Oh Come, Immanuel

The names that we have for one another are remarkably proficient at denoting the value and status of two people in a relationship. When Jesus entered into Jerusalem, he was called King of Israel by the crowd. What a name! The crowd was relating their relationship with Jesus by submitting themselves to his authority and subjecting themselves to his rule. The crowd responded to Jesus by naming him King because of a prophecy. The crowd didn't give Jesus a nickname due to an inside joke. They gave him a name in recognition that he was the fulfillment of God's promises.

Jesus lived his life as the fulfiller of prophecies. Jesus lived his life called by many names. Nathaniel called him "Rabbi" in John 1:49, Martha responds to Jesus' question about his identity by saying you are "The Christ, the Son of God." John 11:27. The Roman Centurion who stood over the hanging of Jesus on the cross declared, "Truly this was the Son of God." Mark 15:39.

The names given to Jesus abound beyond just the names given in the gospels! Jesus is called the "Wonderful Counselor" and "Prince of Peace" in Isaiah 9:6. He is known as "God with us" or "Immanuel" in Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23. Jesus is called the messenger of the Covenant in Malachi 3:1 and the hope of God's people in Joel 3:12-16.

What name is your favorite name for Jesus?

Why?

DAY 20

Hatred

Reading: John 15:18-25

Song: Walk by Faith

Hatred, it's not a concept that's talked about much during Christmas and the Advent season. Yet it was in response to the hatred that Christ took on flesh, and it was despite the hatred of others that Christ accomplished his kingly mission on earth. Some worshiped and shared the news of the baby and some sought to end the life of this child through any means like Herod. Jesus was loved, Jesus was hated.

Jesus' arrival on earth heralded the promised deliverance of God's people from wickedness. Just as Jesus was hated, followers of Jesus will also be hated. The world hated Jesus, the world will hate his followers. The celebration of Advent goes beyond the celebration of joy and fulfilled promises of future hope. The celebration of Advent includes the celebration of God's justice on wickedness. The hatred and rejection of Jesus and his people are unacceptable in God's eyes.

Advent is a message of hope and unexpected justice for God's people. The hatred we receive for our faith does not go unnoticed by our heavenly father. Christmas isn't often a time when we think about hatred, justice, and vindication, but it was precisely the hatred of the world that caused Christ's death on the cross, precisely the hatred of the world that deserves Christ's justice, and precisely the hatred of the world that Christ vindicates his people from.

What are some reasons Jesus is hated today?

DAY 21

Kiss the Son

Reading: Psalm 2

Song: This is My Father's World

In the Psalms, we see Christ's nobility and necessity. We see both the need for a redeemer (God's promised messiah) and we see the prophetic Psalms giving great detail regarding the life, ministry, and nature of the Messiah.

Jesus is the king of kings and Lord of lords. Every individual, family, and people group is under his dominion. There is no part of the universe that is outside of the jurisdiction of Christ. Despite the rulers of the earth, like Herod the political schemer, or like Pontus Pilate the people pleaser, or Caiaphas the prosecutor, raging against the Lord and his anointed, the One enthroned in heaven laughs.

Every leadership structure has a path to leadership and rule. Monarchies often depend on lineage, Republics and Democracies depend on votes; Dictatorships depend on the force of power. Christ, as Lord of the nations, rules as the very king that God has declared cosmic monarch.

Wise leaders, in their families, local communities, and national assemblies, will serve and celebrate the rule of the High King of Heaven. No people group in all of history is beyond the rule of Christ. All are subject to Jesus as Lord. The family, community, and nation that is blessed, are those who take refuge in Christ. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. What a comfort that is to us that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet!

What does it mean that Christ is due service and celebration among all nations?

Who are leaders you can pray for that they would come to serve and celebrate Christ?

DAY 22

Jesus' Announcer

Reading: Luke 1:1-23 **Song: Come Thou Long Expected Jesus**

There are several points of comparison between Elizabeth and Mary's conception and pregnancy that are worth our attention. First, we cannot understate the human impossibility of conception for those who biologically are unable to conceive. This was true for Zechariah and Elizabeth. Luke puts it plainly that they've tried, and cannot conceive. It will take something out of the ordinary, indeed something extra-ordinary to change the outcome of Zechariah and Elizabeth's attempts for conception.

We see a comparison between God's promise of a child to Abraham and Sarah and the announced coming of John to Zechariah and Elizabeth. The explicit emphasis on age and barrenness is found in only one other place in the Old Testament. While Sarah was unable to conceive until God's appointed time, so too for Elizabeth. Abraham was promised a miraculous child from God - so too for Zechariah. The barren status of Elizabeth hearkens us back to Sarah and the birth of a promised child to a woman far too old, earthly speaking, to otherwise conceive and deliver a healthy child. This child will bring many back to the heart of God and will cause joy among many. Out of a drought would come plenty, and out of a famine would come feasting.

Contrasted with the old age of Elizabeth and repeated attempts at conception is the youthful virgin who would also be visited by Gabriel with news...more on that tomorrow.

What are some promises that God has made to His people?

Have you seen any promises come true in your family?

DAY 23

Gabriels News

Reading: Luke 1:34-37

Song: Go Tell it On the Mountain

Mary hasn't been married, her status is that of a betrothal to a man named Joseph, and she's a virgin. Elizabeth and Zechariah are an old married couple. Mary and Joseph have yet to "tie the knot" as it were. Elizabeth and Zechariah tried and failed to conceive, but Mary was still a virgin.

Mary's status as a virgin isn't significant on its own. Yet when it's put in the contrasting moment of history with Elizabeth and Zechariah, and is tied with news from God of conception that will happen without an earthly male partner, the situation becomes all the wondrous. From out of the womb of a virgin would come a child promised many ages previous. Gabriel provides an example of God's hand already at work by citing Elizabeth's amazing conception. Do you believe Gabriel's news?

The entirety of this story depends on the reality of Gabriel's news. These two pregnancies in themselves stand as emissaries of God's kingdom, boldly intruding into our very busy lives. During our struggles, our triumphs, and our life's peaks and valleys, the news of Gabriel stands as a foundational part of our faith.

If Jesus wasn't born of a Virgin, then he wasn't the fulfillment of the promise in Isaiah 7:14. If Gabriel's news isn't trustworthy, surely we have no reason to continue reading. To believe the things Luke shares about the miraculous life of Jesus, the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, the trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate, or the resurrection account that after dying Jesus rose again from the grave. If we don't believe Gabriel's news to Zechariah, we have no reason to believe his news to Mary.

Are there any moments of your life when God has shown you a miracle?

DAY 24

By Faith

Reading: Hebrews 11

Song: O God our help in ages past

All the ancient people of God named in Hebrews 11 are marked out as having lived “by faith”. Faith is the fuel of the Christian life. What is faith? There are many potential ways to define faith biblically, one way is to think about faith as “trusting that what God has said, God will do”. All of these ancient people of faith received what God had said, and responded trusting that God would act by His word.

Hebrews 11 points out this pattern on display in the life of these believers from ages past. The ancient believers were living looking forward to the full enjoyment of the rich everlasting blessings promised by God. Faith looks forward with a conviction that the future is in God’s hands, and God will provide abundantly according to His promises for the future.

The Bible is the giant story of God’s promises and provision. It’s a story that has importance in our present day and for eternity. Long ago, before electricity was discovered, before planes, trains, or automobiles, before, Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, or Hammurabi, before multiple languages, paper money, or even clothing, when rebellion first broke out against God, God made a promise to win victory through the seed of the woman. The victory God promised to Adam and Eve, God accomplished in Christ. The ancients, and we, live by faith trusting that what God has said, God will do.

What is a one or two sentence example of living by faith from your past?

What promises of God are you clinging to at this moment in life?

What promises of God regarding the future do you most look forward to?

DAY 25

The King Lives Forever

Reading: Psalm 24

Song: The King of Glory Comes

Today is the day that we celebrate and remember the birth of Jesus, but Jesus is no longer a baby in a manger. Today we remember Jesus' birth, and in that, we must also remember and celebrate his death, resurrection, and ascension. In the ascension of Jesus, we see the faithfulness of God on display. We see God deliver victory to the one who has done the will of the Father. In the ascension of Jesus, we have the historic moment wherein the son of God, who humbled himself to death, even to death on a cross, received his welcome to the side of God the Father Almighty.

Since Jesus did ascend, we have hope, and we have sure answers to a great many questions. We have answers to questions like "Where is Jesus' body?" - in heaven. A very real place and at the same time an undiscovered country by those who have yet to pass through death. In our lives, we either believe that the same Jesus who was born to the virgin Mary suffered and died, and rose again 3 days later, then ascended bodily into heaven, or we don't. We either trust Jesus' promises and the testimony of the apostles regarding Jesus, or we don't.

Our hope is not in this life. This life has realities like cancer, poverty, and realities like dementia. Our hope is not here. Just as Jesus is not here. He has ascended.

Where does your Hope lie this Day?

We would love to hear how this study was useful to you in the Christian life. You can contact us with questions, comments, and encouragement at redeemingfamilypress@gmail.com

We would appreciate it if you could leave us a review on Amazon and share this study with your friends.

Be sure to check out all our other resources at Redeemingfamilypress.com