



25 DAYS OF ANTICIPATION

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

Thanks for stopping by during the Christmas rush! Whether you are a Christian or someone who wants to know more about “this Jesus,” we’re glad you’re here.

This is a mini Bible study—a daily selection of readings with two paragraphs of devotional thought and a question or two to ponder.

We’re going to be looking at prophecies regarding the Messiah alongside passages documenting the fulfillment of those prophecies in Jesus Christ.

So grab your Bible and a cup of warm cocoa. Sit with us by the fire awhile and warm your heart!



25 DAYS OF ANTICIPATION

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

1

Jesus—God of Creation

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Genesis 1:1, 1:26

PROPHECY FULFILLED John 1:1-3

READING HIS STORY

READ GENESIS 1:1, 1:26

Have you talked to a 2-year-old lately? Even young children know to use the word “I” or “me” when talking about themselves alone. Here our Creator God uses the plural “Us.” The plural pronoun expresses His unique nature as God the Father in total harmony with His unique nature as God the Son and likewise God the Holy Spirit. “In the beginning, God” refers to the Trinity.

READ JOHN 1:1-3

We may have difficulty grasping the concept of God as three-in-one, but John makes it clear in his opening statements that Jesus is the very God of creation. John refers to Jesus as the Word and states: “the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” He goes on to say that at creation, “nothing was made” without Jesus. The Apostle Paul puts it this way in Colossians 1:16-17, “All things were created through Him and for Him.”

WRITING YOUR STORY

Have you thanked the Triune God for creating you? You can speak to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thanking Him for giving you life. What does it mean to you that you were created “for” Jesus?





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EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

2

Jesus—Victorious from the Beginning

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Genesis 3:15

PROPHECY FULFILLED Galatians 4:4

READING HIS STORY

READ GENESIS 3:15

Jesus' birth and His victory over Satan are prophesied here in the very first book of the Old Testament. After Eve, and then Adam, both succumb to temptation, God tells Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed." Throughout the Bible, the word "seed" refers to the offspring of a male, but here God speaks of the "seed of the woman," a prophecy of the Virgin Birth.

READ GALATIANS 4:4

Jesus was "born of a woman," but not of a man, having instead the sinless genetic make-up of God Himself. He was born "under the law" into a world under judgment. In the sacrifice of His sinless life, He was the only one who could redeem us from the law of sin and death and offer us grace. As we accept His grace, we are born again, not "of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13), with our Heavenly Father's spiritual DNA.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Have you accepted the offer of God's grace? If not, what is holding you back? If so, in what ways are you different now that you have your Father's spiritual DNA?





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3

Jesus—Born of a Virgin

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Isaiah 7:14

PROPHECY FULFILLED Matthew 1:18-25

READING HIS STORY

READ ISAIAH 7:14

Many people struggle to accept the Virgin Birth because it is so obviously a miracle, but the Virgin Birth, prophesied some 700 years before its fulfillment in Bethlehem, is fundamental to the Christian faith.

READ MATTHEW 1:18-25

Without the Virgin Birth, Mary is a harlot, Joseph is a fool, and Jesus is a mere son of Adam. Without the Virgin Birth, there is no one qualified as the sinless substitute and therefore no salvation. Without the Virgin Birth, we are all stuck as we are with no way forward. By repeating the words of the prophecy and providing a detailed account of events, Matthew emphasizes the reason for the Virgin Birth—Immanuel, God with us, sinless from birth, will “save His people from their sins.”

WRITING YOUR STORY

Have you struggled to accept the Virgin Birth because it is not part of our normal human experience? In what ways do you think our increasing reverence for scientific data has hampered our capacity to grasp Divine concepts, believe in miracles, and grow in faith? In what ways has scientific discovery strengthened your faith?





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4

Jesus—Passover Lamb

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:3-6

PROPHECY FULFILLED Luke 2:4-7

READING HIS STORY

READ MICAH 5:2, MATTHEW 2:3-6

We know that this Scripture is referencing a Person of the Trinity because His “goings forth are from old, from everlasting.” It was understood by Old Testament scholars, including the chief priests and scribes of Jesus’ day, that the Messiah would have His earthly beginnings in Bethlehem.

READ LUKE 2:4-7

Bethlehem is a little village five and a half miles south of Jerusalem. We might never have heard of it had not Mary’s little Lamb been born there. How fitting! For centuries the Jewish priests had been raising a special breed of lambs in Bethlehem, the best of which, the unblemished, were sacrificed during the Passover to atone for sin. Here in Luke, the perfect sacrifice, as prophesied, was born in a Bethlehem stable and laid in an animal trough. He would “atone” for all sin for all time. He would make it possible for us to be “at one” with God.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Do you get the warm fuzzies when viewing a Christmas nativity display? How does knowing that Jesus was raised to be a sacrificial lamb impact your view of the manger?





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5

Jesus—Light of the World

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Isaiah 9:2, Matthew 2:2

PROPHECY FULFILLED John 1:5, 8:12

READING HIS STORY

READ ISAIAH 9:2, MATTHEW 2:2

Christmas and light are so intertwined in our culture we could hardly have one without the other. Even those who don't connect Christ with Christmas derive physical and emotional warmth from glowing candles, crackling fires, star-lit trees, and colorful neighborhood light displays. The wise men from the East followed a great light to Bethlehem because they were driven by a desire for something deeper, a spiritual fire that could not be quenched. They followed a lesser light, a star, hundreds of miles by night in search of the Great Light that has dawned on "those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death."

READ JOHN 1:5, 8:12

Of course we all dwell in that shadowed land...until we meet the One who extinguishes darkness. Jesus told those who were following Him—both those who already saw Him as Lord and those who were just beginning to squint in recognition—"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Once we fully open our eyes, He shows us a spiritual spectrum we did not know existed. We can walk anywhere He sends us. Christ at our sides, we have the eternal assurance that the Light of the World makes darkness disappear.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Should we be content with the twinkling trappings of Christmas when the Light of the World desires our fellowship? Write about what it would mean for you to walk in the light of His presence this holiday season.





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6

Jesus—King, Priest & Sacrifice

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Matthew 2:11

PROPHECY FULFILLED Matthew 26:6-13, Revelation 19:16

READING HIS STORY

READ MATTHEW 2:11

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh, the gifts brought to Jesus by the wise men from the East, were standard gifts to honor a king in the ancient world. Many biblical scholars suggest that the gold—Earth’s most precious metal—recognized Jesus as King of Kings, frankincense—an aromatic resin—symbolized His priestly role, and myrrh—a costly fragrant oil—prefigured His death and embalming. One wonders what Mary pondered in her heart regarding these gifts.

READ MATTHEW 26:6-13, REVELATION 19:16

The gold was certainly a prophetic gift. Even Pilate, in sanctioning Jesus’ death, recognized Jesus as King of the Jews in John 19:1, 2 and 19-22. Revelation states that He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In Exodus 30:34-38, Moses is told to make a fragrant blend of spices (including frankincense) to be placed in front of the Ark of the Covenant. God tells him, “You shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the LORD.” Just before Jesus is arrested, Matthew 26:6-13 records the story of a woman breaking an alabaster jar and pouring a costly oil on Jesus, who says of her, “in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial.”

WRITING YOUR STORY

Obviously the wise men from the East put a great deal of thought into their gifts. What will you bring to Jesus this advent season?





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7

Jesus—Hunted by Herod

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Jeremiah 31:15

PROPHECY FULFILLED Matthew 2:16-18

READING HIS STORY

READ JEREMIAH 31:15

Here, Rachel represents Jewish women weeping for their children. As the special love of Jacob, Rachel is considered the matriarch of all Israel. Jeremiah is speaking about God's faithfulness in two circumstances. God will preserve a remnant of Israel (Rachel's children) despite the nation's exile into captivity, and He will preserve a remnant that will populate Heaven despite Herod's attempts to kill the Messiah who will save His people from their sins.

READ MATTHEW 2:16-18

As a baby, Jesus lived in Bethlehem with His parents. Jesus may have been about two years old when Joseph was warned in a dream to take his family to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod who, "put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under." In telling this story, Matthew connects the "massacre of the innocents" to prophecy. The account also foreshadows Jesus' death at Calvary.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Moses was rescued as a baby and grew up to free his people from slavery to Egypt. Jesus was rescued as a baby and grew up to free His people from slavery to sin. What other Bible stories point to the great story of redemption? Have you been rescued by God? From what? For what purpose?





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8

Jesus—Waymaker

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Isaiah 40:3-5, Matthew 3:1-3

PROPHECY FULFILLED Luke 3:3-6

READING HIS STORY

READ ISAIAH 40:3-5, MATTHEW 3:1-3

In Isaiah, God is speaking comfort to His people. Someone is coming who will “prepare the way of the Lord.” Old Testament priests and scribes took Isaiah at his word, believing that, at the proper time, a great prophet would call God’s people to repent and prepare them to meet the Messiah. When John the Baptist actually appears on the scene, however, the religious leaders—the Pharisees and Sadducees—consider themselves above the message of the wilderness prophet. Their hearts remain unprepared for Jesus.

READ LUKE 3:3-6

Most of us think of John the Baptist as preparing the way for the Messiah’s earthly ministry some 2,000 years ago. While accurate, the view is incomplete. John asked people then and, through Scripture, asks us now, to repent—turn from sin, do an about-face—and look Jesus in the eyes. Jesus is our Waymaker. He makes the crooked places in our lives straight. He makes our rough ways smooth. Through Him, we see the “salvation of God.”

WRITING YOUR STORY

Have you ever discounted sound spiritual advice from someone who looked different—someone with the equivalent of camel-hair clothing and a locust-and-honey diet? From what sins do you need to turn away? In what ways do you need to “prepare the way of the Lord” in your life?





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9

Jesus—Good News

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Isaiah 61:1-2

PROPHECY FULFILLED Luke 4:17-21

READING HIS STORY

READ ISAIAH 61:1-2

The heading for the 61st chapter of the book of Isaiah in one Biblical version is “The Year of the LORD’s Favor.” Another version titles the chapter, “The Good News of Salvation.” Both speak to the fuller meaning Jesus provided for us when He read Isaiah 61:1-2 as the opening passage for His earthly ministry.

READ LUKE 4:17-21

When Jesus said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing,” He declared Himself the Good News. “I, Jesus,” He said in effect, “come to usher in the true jubilee. I come to preach the Gospel to the poor, to open the eyes of the blind to God’s plan, to heal the broken-hearted, and to set sin’s prisoners free.” His audience was, at first, spellbound by His claim to Divine activity. Upon reflection, His hearers questioned His words because, as the son of Joseph the carpenter, Jesus was too familiar to them to possess such greatness.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Has Jesus become too familiar to us? After so many Sunday school lessons, do we think we know all we need to know about His mission? Does He still command the respect He deserves? Write your response to His opening sermon in Luke.





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10

Jesus—Eternal Treasure

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Psalm 2:7

PROPHECY FULFILLED John 1:14, 3:16

READING HIS STORY

READ PSALM 2

A thousand years before Christ's earthly life, God talks here about the Messiah's triumph over "kings of the earth" and rulers who "take counsel against the LORD and against His Anointed." People have opposed their Creator throughout history. Some continue their opposition throughout eternity. But Jesus, with humility and suffering, wins all those who put their trust in Him. God the Father promises to give Jesus, "the nations for Your inheritance." Beloved, you're what He came here for! He wants you for His inheritance.

READ JOHN 1:14, 3:16

Because Jesus "became flesh and dwelt among us," lived a sinless life, and died in our place, we can be born again as sons and daughters in the family of God. At that moment, Jesus becomes our inheritance just as we are His!

WRITING YOUR STORY

Whether you know Jesus or you're still searching, how does it make you feel that out of everything He could have, your Creator wants you for His inheritance?





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11

Jesus—Good Teacher

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Psalm 78:2-4
PROPHECY FULFILLED Matthew 13:34-35

READING HIS STORY

READ PSALM 78:2-4

Because He cares about us and our children, God reminds us from Genesis onward to “give ear” to His law and to tell “the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and the wonderful works that He has done.” Just as little children benefit when they listen and obey the rules of a good parent, we profit from attending to God’s teaching.

READ MATTHEW 13:34-35

God’s teaching, however, must be understood spiritually. The great majority of the people in Jesus’ day were not interested in God’s truth. They heard the earthly stories in the parables but missed the heavenly meaning. Oh the joy for those who desired spiritual truth! He eagerly satisfied their appetites. They experienced what God meant when He said through Isaiah, “Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good and let your soul delight itself in abundance” (Isaiah 55:1-2), and what Jesus said to them directly, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

WRITING YOUR STORY

Are you hungry for Truth? Believer or skeptic, write out a prayer asking the Good Teacher to open your ears and give you understanding as you read the Bible.





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12

Jesus—Living Water

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Isaiah 55:1

PROPHECY FULFILLED John 4:10-14

READING HIS STORY

READ ISAIAH 55:1

Until we meet Christ, we are all thirsty for something we can't quite identify. We sample first one well and then another to slake our powerful thirst. The well of human wisdom offers potions to impart meaning to our existence, the fountain of human love extends a tonic to soothe our emotions, and the spring of accomplishment boosts our self-esteem. These may be acceptable wells, perhaps, but they provide only temporary relief. We even drink polluted water from broken wells of addiction, extensive entertainment, and inappropriate sexual behavior; these leave us dehydrated.

READ JOHN 4:10-14, 7:38

The woman at the well was completely depleted when she met Jesus; ironically, she offered Him water. He countered with the greatest offer of all time...the eternal thirst-quencher, Himself. Jesus promises to fill us and keep filling us. He also gives us the capacity to help water the arid land around us—as “rivers of living water” flow from our hearts, we act as divining rods, pointing the way for our friends and families, our country, and our world.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Experiencing drought? Beloved, the abundant life found in Jesus Christ should be our first drink every morning and our last sip before lights out! All day long let us drink from the “Deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless, free, rolling as a mighty ocean, in its fullness over me” (Mark Ladd/Samuel T. Francis © Warner Chappell Music, Inc.). Write down ideas for how you might make sure you stay spiritually hydrated.





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13

Jesus—Humble King

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Zechariah 9:9

PROPHECY FULFILLED Matthew 21:1-11, Luke 19:37-44

READING HIS STORY

READ ZECHARIAH 9:9

Old Testament scholars looked at the opening of this chapter as evidence that the Messiah would come as a Divine warrior to render judgment against Israel's enemies (9:1-7) and to protect Jerusalem from harm (9:8). Most were not expecting the humility expressed in Zechariah 9:9. Though they understood Him as “just and having salvation,” they missed His nature as “lowly and riding on a donkey.”

READ MATTHEW 21:1-11, LUKE 19:37-44

During Jesus' triumphal entry on Palm Sunday, we see Zechariah's prophecy fulfilled; simultaneously, Jesus, humbly and with tears, prophesies another event. Jerusalem will be leveled, He says, by enemies who “will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” Most Bible scholars agree Jesus was speaking of what historians call the Siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD in which the Roman army captured the city of Jerusalem and destroyed both the city and its Temple.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Have you considered today as the “time of your visitation?” Jesus is a gentleman. He humbly invites you to know Him; He also weeps if you reject “the things that make for your peace.” What will you do to draw closer to Him?





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14

Jesus—Man of Sorrows

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Zechariah 11:12-13

PROPHECY FULFILLED Matthew 26:14-16, 27:3-10

READING HIS STORY

READ ZECHARIAH 11:12-13

God uses the prophet Zechariah here to pronounce judgment (some 500 years before Jesus Christ) because the people of that day had rejected Zechariah and, by extension, the Lord Himself, as their shepherd. At the same time, the prophet points us to a future day—notice that Zechariah is directed to take “the thirty pieces of silver and (throw) them into the house of the LORD for the potter.”

READ MATTHEW 26:14-16, 27:3-10, JOHN 13:26-27

Jesus had been Judas’ shepherd for three close years—guiding, providing, sustaining, and walking beside him. Jesus had treated this man with the same love He showed to all of His disciples; He washed Judas’ feet and sent those feet away in haste toward their appointed treachery saying, “What you do, do quickly.” How the Lord’s heart must have broken in that moment. After betraying Jesus, Judas, with remorse but without repentance, “threw down the pieces of silver in the temple.” The Chief Priests “bought with them the potter’s field” as a burial place for strangers.

WRITING YOUR STORY

No one knows the pain of betrayal better than Jesus, yet He looked on His lost disciple with love, sharing with him a last morsel of bread and a last opportunity to change directions. Have you a betrayer you need to forgive? Have you a course you need to amend?





25 DAYS OF ANTICIPATION

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

15

Jesus—Silent Sacrifice

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Isaiah 53:7

PROPHECY FULFILLED John 10:18, 18:37-38

READING HIS STORY

READ ISAIAH 53:7

Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin, Pilate, the soldiers, and the people guiltless and, to their dismay, silent. He was beaten, mocked, maligned, disgraced, disfigured, and sentenced, yet he said nothing in His own defense. Why the silence?

READ JOHN 10:18, 18:37-38

Pilate stood before the Truth and knew the truth. While Jesus staggered under the weight of the cross, Pilate staggered under the weight of his own guilt. “I find no fault in Him,” Pilate said, washing his hands in vain. And so Truth was crucified. Innocence was executed. The demons must have danced that day; little did they know, Jesus’ silence would silence them!

WRITING YOUR STORY

Let’s be silent before Jesus Christ, the Truth, sacrificing our need to explain ourselves or prop ourselves up. Let’s let Him tell us where we need to repent and what crosses we need to bear. What is He telling you today?





25 DAYS OF ANTICIPATION

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

16

Jesus—Reviled & Robbed

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Psalm 22:6-7, 22:18

PROPHECY FULFILLED Matthew 27:39-44, John 19:23-24

READING HIS STORY

READ PSALM 22

Psalm 22 provides a graphic prophecy of the Messiah's death on a cross. Most scholars date the Psalm to about a thousand years before the birth of Jesus. Crucifixion was originated by the Persians in the sixth century BC; the Phoenicians introduced it to Rome in the third century BC. For today's purposes, notice particularly verses 6-7 and verse 18.

READ MATTHEW 27:39-44, JOHN 19:23-24

Here we see our first-century contemporaries walking by the cross, reviling Him and “wagging their heads.” Can't you just see a 21st-century crowd doing the same? The first-century soldiers “cast lots” (gambled) for Jesus' clothing. Even the finest details of Jesus' last moments fulfilled prophecies regarding the Messiah.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Did cynicism crucify Christ? Hebrews 3:12 says, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” Ask the Lord to deliver you from cynicism and soften your heart for His use.





25 DAYS OF ANTICIPATION

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

17

Jesus—Passover Lamb, Revisited

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Exodus 12:13, 12:19, Jeremiah 23:5-6

PROPHECY FULFILLED 2 Corinthians 5:21

READING HIS STORY

READ EXODUS 12:13, 12:19, JEREMIAH 23:5-6

If you were with us early in this brief study, we discovered on December 4 that Passover lambs were bred and nurtured in Bethlehem, Jesus' birthplace. Such lambs were considered perfect, symbolic of righteousness before God. Even then, only the best of the best made the five-and-a-half-mile trip to Jerusalem for Passover, the oldest and most important religious festival in Judaism.

READ MARK 14:24, LUKE 22:20, 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

It's Passover week. Jesus enters Jerusalem through the Eastern Gate; the Passover lambs enter through the Sheep Gate. Jesus cleanses the temple; the Jewish people cleanse their homes of leaven (yeast), a symbol of sin. Jesus introduces the cup of "the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you;" the Jewish people celebrate the Seder meal—retelling the story of the blood on the doorposts. They will miss the deeper meaning, spiritual redemption through the Messiah. Jesus is examined before Pilate; the Passover lambs are scrutinized. Jesus walks to Calvary; the priests sharpen their knives. Jesus commits His spirit to the Father; the Passover lambs lift their chins to the priests.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Christmas is our oldest and most important religious festival. As we mark our traditions, let's make sure we don't miss the deeper meaning. Write down your plan for focusing your heart and your home on Jesus.





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18

Jesus—Christ Alone

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Habakkuk 1:13, Zechariah 13:7

PROPHECY FULFILLED Matthew 26:31, 26:56, 27:46

READING HIS STORY

READ HABAKKUK 1:13, ZECHARIAH 13:7

Jesus was completely isolated when He went to the cross. After an evening of fellowship during the Passover meal, Jesus' disciples progressively abandoned him. They failed to "watch and pray" in the Garden of Gethsemane, leaving Jesus to wrestle alone with the temptation to "let this cup pass." At His arrest, the disciples departed and denied. Even those at the foot of the cross hopelessly mourned not only His death but also their own loss of hope. Jesus alone remained faithful; He alone accomplished salvation.

READ MATTHEW 26:31, 26:56, 27:46

Finally, even the Father, with "purer eyes than to behold evil," turned His face from Jesus. While David could proclaim in Psalm 23, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me," Jesus claimed no such blessing, crying out instead, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This was a rhetorical question; Jesus knew why His father could not look at Him—He had become sin "that we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

WRITING YOUR STORY

Believer, you do not have to face this world, or the transition to the next, alone. Seeker, Jesus desires your fellowship. He has promised to be with His own "always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Thank Him for His sustaining presence.





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19

Jesus—Our Healer

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Psalm 22:16, Isaiah 53

PROPHECY FULFILLED John 19:34

READING HIS STORY

READ PSALM 22:16, ISAIAH 53

The name Isaiah literally means “Salvation of God” or “God Saves.” Isaiah is both prophet and evangelist. Though he is foretelling the future (he is writing about 800 years before Jesus’ birth), he describes the events of Christ’s death vividly as if writing about the past—calling us to respond to the Savior King. “He was wounded for our transgressions,” Isaiah pleads, “bruised for our iniquities...And by His stripes we are healed.”

READ JOHN 19:34

Wounded how? Isaiah, along with the Psalmist, paints a highly specific picture of crucifixion before such punishment exists. Healed from what? We are healed from sin—both the burden it adds to our lives on Earth and the punishment it brings us forever in Hell. Sadly, Isaiah’s warnings and John’s confirmation continue to be ignored by people who hold to a dogma against the miracle of prophecy, refusing to accept that a God who created time itself knows the future.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Jesus was pierced for all transgressions for all time. Every sin ever committed hung on the cross with Him. Have you laid your burden at His nail-pierced feet? Do so today, and the prophecy for your life is peace now and forever. List any burdens you still must lay down.





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20

Jesus—Our Wholeness

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Psalm 34:20

PROPHECY FULFILLED John 19:31-37

READING HIS STORY

READ PSALM 34:20

Crucifixion was one of the most agonizing forms of capital punishment in history. Though it could be accomplished quickly by suspending the arms above the head, the method for Jesus involved stretching the arms parallel and nailing them to a horizontal bar. To speed death, executioners would often break victims' legs; with legs broken, those crucified could no longer use their thigh muscles to push their weight up and breathe. This was the plan for Jesus and the two thieves beside Him, specifically because the Jewish leaders wanted the three bodies removed before the Sabbath.

READ JOHN 19:31-37

Why dwell on the grizzly details? While the legs of the thieves were broken, Jesus' bones were left whole to fulfill prophecy. The blood and water that poured from His pierced side evidenced pericardial fluid around the heart. He did not die because of broken bones; Jesus quite literally died of a broken heart.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Sin fragments our lives and clouds our futures; as we confess our brokenness, Jesus makes us whole. Use this space today to discuss with Jesus your need for spiritual healing.





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21

Jesus—Buried With the Rich

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Isaiah 53:9

PROPHECY FULFILLED Matthew 27:57-60

READING HIS STORY

READ ISAIAH 53:9

As a condemned, so-called criminal with no home, no earthly goods, nothing but the clothes on His back—and those having been gambled for and taken—Jesus was scheduled to have made “His grave with the wicked.” His body might have been buried in an unmarked grave in a place of shame, but that’s not what the prophet foretold, and it’s not something Jesus’ disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, would stand for.

READ MATTHEW 27:57-60

Joseph, a rich man, lovingly removed Jesus’ body from the cross, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in his own new rock-hewn tomb outside the city. According to a *National Geographic* report, a team of researchers from the National Technical University of Athens carefully inspected in 2016 a site long marked as the burial site of Jesus Christ and found “evidence to suggest that the identification of the site by representatives of the Roman emperor Constantine may be a reasonable one.” *National Geographic’s* archeologist-in-residence, Fredrik Hiebert, said at the time, “My knees are shaking a little bit because I wasn’t expecting this. ...It appears to be visible proof that the location of the tomb has not shifted through time, something that scientists and historians have wondered for decades.”

WRITING YOUR STORY

Whether or not the *National Geographic* story proves accurate, we can say for certain that the Word of God does not shift over time. Every prophecy has been or will be fulfilled. Every promise has been or will be delivered by our God. Thank Him for His faithfulness in your life.





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22

Jesus—The Risen One

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Psalm 16:9-10

PROPHECY FULFILLED Matthew 28:2-7

READING HIS STORY

READ PSALM 16:9-10

David counted his own soul as eternally safe because the Messiah, God's Holy One, would rise again. His flesh could "rest in hope." Job also trusted in Christ's resurrection, saying, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:25-27). These saints believed the resurrection before it happened! How much more should we who have the evidence before us place our hope in the Risen One.

READ MATTHEW 28:2-7

The evidence is overwhelming. Consider just a few facts. Jesus' disciples, who ran away like frightened children when He was arrested, became fearless Gospel messengers after the resurrection. They chose to die as martyrs rather than recant their undeniable experience! No body was ever found—if one had been available, either the Jewish or Roman authorities (both loathed the preaching of the resurrection) certainly would have brought it forward. And since, as Paul tells us, some 500 eyewitnesses who saw the Risen Christ were still alive in 56 AD (1 Corinthians 15:3-8), even the most skilled liars could not have convinced first-century dwellers the resurrection was anything but true.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Paul tells us, "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty" (1 Corinthians 15:14). If, however, He is alive—as David and Job believed beforehand and as Jesus' disciples confirmed—He has defeated death. He is King Eternal. And we owe Him our allegiance. Where do you stand?





25 DAYS OF ANTICIPATION

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

23

Jesus—Our Traveling Companion

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Luke 24:13-35

PROPHECY FULFILLED John 15:26

READING HIS STORY

READ LUKE 24:13-35

In this astonishing passage, Jesus takes two unnamed disciples on a prophetic journey within a journey. The disciples are traveling on a physical road to a town called Emmaus and Jesus takes them spiritually from Point A of Blindness and Defeat to Point B of Illumination and Hope. “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” We can only imagine how they must have felt.

READ JOHN 15:26

But we don’t have to imagine! Jesus told us, “When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” We “anonymous disciples” of the 21st Century have the same Traveling Companion on our road as did the two on their way to Emmaus. As we read Scripture, Jesus’ prophecy about the Holy Spirit’s work is fulfilled in our lives, for the Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus, bringing to our minds supernatural understanding and direction.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Have you met Jesus on your road? Have you surrendered your life and received the Holy Spirit? Are you walking with Him? If so, write about what you have learned on your journey. If you have not yet established a relationship with the Friend who sticks “closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24), what’s stopping you from heading that direction?





25 DAYS OF ANTICIPATION

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

24

Jesus—The Ascended One

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Psalm 68:18

PROPHECY FULFILLED Mark 16:19

READING HIS STORY

READ PSALM 68:18

Through His finished work on the cross, Jesus literally took sin as His prisoner for all time. During this beautiful Christmas season, we have beheld Him as a babe in Mary's arms, looked Him in the eyes as a friend who walks alongside us, and seen Him through tears as the silent suffering servant on Calvary's cross. Let's take a wide-eyed look at Him today as the conquering warrior who defeated death, "led captivity captive," and, victorious evermore, ascended on high.

READ MARK 16:19

Here are two things to ponder today about Jesus' position at God's right hand. 1) Ephesians 1:20-21 says that this position is, "...far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come." 2) Romans 8:34 teaches, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

WRITING YOUR STORY

Jesus Christ is the greatest authority of all time. Though He has every right to do so, He does not condemn His sin-ridden subjects. In fact, as believers face the difficulties of this life, He is actually praying for us. Could we have a more powerful prayer warrior than the Ascended One?





25 DAYS OF ANTICIPATION

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

25

Jesus—Soon-Coming King

PROPHECY PROCLAIMED Isaiah 9:7

PROPHECY FULFILLED Revelation 19:11-16

READING HIS STORY

READ ISAIAH 9:7

The word “advent” means “coming” or “arrival.” We have been studying the life of Jesus for the month of December in preparation for the celebration of Jesus’ first advent in Bethlehem. It is also a time to celebrate anew the advent of Jesus as Savior in our own lives and to anticipate His coming again. The fact is Christ has come. He is present in the world today. And He will come again in power.

READ REVELATION 19:11-16

This passage should leave us breathless. Despite all the challenges we have faced this year—and in every other difficult year—when Jesus comes again, He will right every wrong. As Isaiah said, “Of the increase of His government and peace, there will be no end.” We do not know the day or the hour, but we can be certain that this prophecy, too, shall be fulfilled—perhaps in only a moment.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Soon-Coming King have a privileged identity and unshakable confidence in this life and are forever safe in His realm. Where is your hope for the coming New Year? For the next decade? For eternity?





25 DAYS OF ANTICIPATION

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

Our Christmas Gift to You!

It's been our pleasure to bring you this mini Bible study, "25 Days of Anticipation" from Love Worth Finding. If you've enjoyed the advent journey, we'd love to come alongside you with additional free resources. Here are some ideas to consider.

If you're still unsure about your personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we invite you to listen to some messages from Adrian Rogers. We think you'll find both comfort and hope in Pastor Rogers' simply stated explanation of the Gospel.

lwf.org/discover-jesus

The holidays can be a difficult time for some people. If you're struggling at this or any time of year, we have some dedicated resources just for you.

lwf.org/biblical-guidance

Perhaps you're a new Christian.

If so, welcome to the family! One of the best ways to get started in your new faith walk is to complete the series *What Every Christian Ought to Know* from Pastor Adrian Rogers, offered online from Love Worth Finding.

lwf.org/wecotk

If you've been with Love Worth Finding for some time, you know that our heart is to bring people to Jesus Christ and mature them in the faith. Maybe God is calling you to support that mission. Find out how to partner with us.

lwf.org/why-lwf

Again, thanks so much for joining us. Be sure and check back with us soon at lwf.org for more encouragement from Love Worth Finding with Adrian Rogers.