2026

ADVENT

Daily Devotionals

LifePoint CHURCH

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This week, we are going to explore just a few of the three hundred promises God made about the coming of His Son. You may already know all of these promises or there may be some that are new to you, but they all point to the Child of Promise who would come to this earth to take away our sins.

Week 1 Daily Devotionals

Day 1: The Promise to Reverse the Curse

Scripture

Genesis 3:13-15: Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." 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."

Devotional

If you've read the story of the fall in Genesis 3, you are aware of what happened. Eve listened to and believed the serpent, took and ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and she gave some to Adam who was with her.

In that one terrible moment, sin entered creation and the consequences of it were severe. Not only were Adam and Eve and their future generations all cursed, but God also cursed Satan, our enemy, telling him that there would be a spiritual war between mankind and the powers of darkness from then on.

As bad as this curse is for the forces of darkness and for us, God provided a glimmer of hope in this passage with a simple promise regarding both Satan and the seed of Eve, who is Jesus Christ. Even though Satan would strike Jesus with a fatal bite – through His suffering and crucifixion on the cross – Jesus would ultimately triumph by crushing the head of Satan and defeating death.

This is the first promise of the gospel in Scripture – often known as the protoevangelium – and it tells us that Jesus, the Child of Promise, would come one day to reverse the curse that happened in the garden.

Day 2: The Promise of a Supernatural Arrival

Scripture

Isaiah 7:14 – Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Micah 5:2 – But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Devotional

Throughout history, there have been many people who came along claiming to be gods, prophets, or special messengers from other planets. They have often claimed to possess some kind of supernatural abilities or knowledge, but time has proven that they aren't who they claim to be.

God didn't want any confusion when He sent His one and only Son, so He validated His Advent through several supernatural events. First, Isaiah tells us that Jesus would be born from a virgin. That's obviously an impossible scenario without divine intervention from God through His Holy Spirit. No one in history was born that way, so that narrows the list of people who can claim to be the Messiah down to just one person: Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Isaiah gives the Messiah the name Immanuel, which means "God with us". This is a huge hint that the Messiah was more than human, and it shows that the Child of Promise was far greater than any ordinary human.

Thirdly, Micah foretold that this Messiah would come from Bethlehem, but he also added something mysterious to his prophecy by mentioning that the Messiah's coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. It's incredible that this prophecy shows that Jesus had origins beyond anything that a mortal human being would experience.

This Child of Promise wasn't coming to us like anyone else on earth – He was conceived supernaturally, described as a God-Man with deity, and He would be born in the small village of Bethlehem. God loves us enough to make sure we don't confuse all the people claiming to be God with the one who actually is!

Day 3: The Promise to Take Our Sin and Shame

Scripture

Isaiah 53:4-6 – Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Psalm 22:1,16-18 – My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

Devotional

We live in a world where kings and leaders usually get the best of everything. Nice cars, opulent mansions, and a private chef, all paid for through the generosity of the people. Even back during the time that Jesus was born, kings ruled from palaces regardless of how poor the common folks were, so there was a belief throughout the Old Testament era that the Messiah would live like a king.

Not Jesus. He came to this earth in the humblest of settings, was born in a borrowed stable, and He didn't ever own any property of His own, much less a palace like the kings of His day. As if that wasn't different enough, this Child of Promise came for a divine destiny: to live His life doing good until He was arrested and crucified taking on the sins of the world.

Isaiah shares the promise that the "Suffering Servant" would go through incredible rejection and face the wrath of God for us. It may have been God's will for His Son to go through it all, but it made no sense to those who watched it happen.

Then David shared with us what a first-person experience would have felt like for Jesus as He was crucified on the cross. His hands and His feet were pierced, they gambled for the few clothes He owned, but the worst part of it was that God the Father turned away from God the Son as the full wrath of God against mankind's sin was placed on the innocent Messiah.

Jesus faced the wrath of God on the cross so that we would never face a moment of it ourselves. He suffered greatly so that we could be made whole. His suffering was for our benefit and by His stripes, we are healed.

Day 4: The Promise to Overcome the Grave

Scripture

Isaiah 53:10-11 – Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.

Devotional

It is said that if you visit a Buddhist temple in Sri Lanka, you can see an actual tooth that survived Siddhartha Gautama's cremation and has been enshrined to honor him. In the Chamber of the Holy Relics in Istanbul, Turkey, you can see pieces of hair and teeth alleged to come from Muhammad. Both of these religious leaders died, leaving proof that their bodies were merely mortal.

Not Jesus. You can travel the earth but you'll never find locks of His hair, a tooth, or any skeletons of His body because He did what no other person in history has ever done: He resurrected from the dead, appeared personally to over five hundred witnesses, and He ascended to heaven in His glorified Body.

Isaiah promised that after giving His life as an offering for our sins, Jesus will see the fruit of His sacrifice – the salvation of many – and His days shall be prolonged because death could not stop Him. It's wonderful that this Child of Promise would give up His life as a ransom for many, but it's perhaps even better to know that He would rise from the dead and see the impact of His sacrifice for all eternity.

As you go about your day today, keep in mind that when Jesus looks at you, He delights in the knowledge that His suffering was more than enough to save you from your sins and give you new life through your faith in Him. As the writer of Hebrews puts it, you were the joy set before Him that made it all worthwhile!

Day 5: The Promise to Finish What He Started

Scripture

Luke 4:16-21 – "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'"

Isaiah 61:1-2 – "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."

Devotional

There is something quite fascinating found in the story of Jesus reading from the scroll of Isaiah in Luke chapter 4. Jesus was visiting the local synagogue – a Jewish house of worship and teaching – in His hometown of Nazareth when He stood up to read from the Book of Isaiah.

Jesus began reading the words of Isaiah, but He stopped in a very particular place and then made one of the boldest statements of anyone in the Bible, saying that the Scripture He had just read was fulfilled in that very moment. Just imagine being there when Jesus said those words!

Like Psalm 22, Isaiah 61 shares – from a first-person perspective – why the Messiah would come: to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom and the opening of doors for captives, and to proclaim the year of God's favor on His people.

Jesus stopped right there in the chapter and stated to those who were present that these promises were happening in real time because He came to fulfill them in that moment. But if you read Isaiah 61, you'll notice that the verse Jesus was reading continues stating that the Messiah would proclaim "...the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."

That was on purpose. See, the first coming – or Advent – of Jesus was as a lamb. He came to suffer and die so we could be forgiven and set free from our sin, our sickness, and the shame of our sin. Jesus fulfilled all those things when He came the first time just as Isaiah said.

But Jesus is coming back again, and He will finish what He started. This time, He will return as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and bring the judgment and justice of God on all those who rejected Him and His people. The day of vengeance will come, and Jesus will return once more to take care of business.

This week, we'll continue exploring the highs and lows that Joseph and Mary faced as God used them to help bring forth His one and only Son. Some moments were incredibly difficult in their story while others were greater than their wildest dreams. In all of it, God accomplished exactly what He wanted to do!

Week 2 Daily Devotionals

Day 1: The Least of These

Scripture

Luke 1:26-33 – In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Devotional

Have you ever thought about how underwhelming Mary's life was before Gabriel appeared to her? She grew up in a small insignificant little village. By all accounts, Nazareth did not make the list of best places in Israel to live when Mary became pregnant there. In fact, when Philip – one of Jesus' disciples – told Nathanael to come with him to see "Jesus of Nazareth", Nathanael replied to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

There were only a couple hundred people living in Nazareth at the time, and the residents were mostly farmers, shepherds or tradesmen. This small hamlet didn't even have a great water source for the community – just one small well to draw water from.

Not only was Nazareth unimpressive, but Mary's life seemed unremarkable as well. She wasn't a person of wealth, notoriety, or prominence. She was just a young virgin girl probably around 14 years old, and although she was a descendant of the great King David, she lived an entirely ordinary life.

Yet the moment Gabriel appeared to her, his first words were, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" Having an angel show up and tell her that she was favored by the Lord was so shocking to Mary that Scripture says she was greatly troubled and struggled to understand what was happening.

But Gabriel went on to explain what was going to happen and told Mary once again that she was chosen for this assignment because she was favored by God. Imagine that!

God was not looking for someone who came from a prominent city or grew up with power and prestige; He was seeking someone with humility, character, and the courage to obey Him just like Mary did. She didn't have a lot from the world's perspective, but she had everything that God was looking for!

Day 2: Let It Be

Scripture

Luke 1:34-38 – And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Devotional

How? It's a question we ask a lot when we are stuck, confused, or unsure about a situation that we're facing. It was the one question that Mary asked Gabriel right after he told her that she would bring the Son of God into the world. Gabriel gave her an answer, but it didn't change the fact that it was impossible for a virgin to become pregnant.

Like Mary, we may find ourselves frequently wondering how God will do what He has promised to when it doesn't make sense. How will He supply all our needs when the month lasts longer than our paycheck does? How will He work things together for our good when some things are so terrible? How can we experience His peace when the storms of life are raging all around us?

Mary was faced with a question like that, and she couldn't fathom how the things that Gabriel promised could come true. Mary wasn't doubting the words of Gabriel; she was just trying to understand how it would all come to pass.

Gabriel answered her question by telling her what God would do through the power of the Holy Spirit, he reminded her that Elizabeth was also pregnant though she was past the age for childbearing, and then he answered her question with seven powerful words, saying, "For nothing will be impossible with God."

Although she was already a believer in God, this was the first of many times that Mary would be faced with an impossible situation, and she'd have to fall back on those seven words of Gabriel when things didn't make sense. She could have demanded proof or told Gabriel she "needed to pray about it", but Mary responded instead by offering her service and her future to the Lord.

Day 3: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Scripture

Matthew 1:18-19 – Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

Leviticus 20:10 – If a man commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death.

Devotional

In today's culture, people get engaged to be married but it's not official until the wedding day. If one or both of them decide not to get married, they can break off the engagement and it's over. But during the time when Jesus was born, marriages happened in three specific stages.

First was the arrangement to be married. There was an agreed-upon bride price, and a formal agreement was made between families. This often happened when the bride and groom were young children and parents often made these arrangements for social and economic reasons.

Then came the betrothal period when the bride, groom, and their families came together, the groom's family gave a token or paid a fee to the bride's family, and the couple was officially considered married. They were legally bound together but they did not come together physically just yet.

The groom usually spent the next year adding on a room to his parents' home while the bride used her time to prepare to furnish the home while making her wedding clothes. At a time unknown to her, the groom would come one evening in a great procession to take her from her home to make her his wife. The marriage was consummated, then they celebrated over the next week.

Because they were already betrothed, Joseph may have been adding onto his parents' home when he learned of Mary's pregnancy. The Jewish law taught that if a woman was caught in adultery (or found to be pregnant by someone besides her husband) she could be put to death for it. This would have been the easiest way for Joseph to declare to everyone that Mary cheated on him.

But the Bible tells us that Joseph was a just man and he didn't want to expose Mary to public humiliation, so he chose instead to divorce her quietly. Her excuse for being pregnant was unbelievable, and he would have to live with the reputation that he got her pregnant before the wedding celebration, but he cared more about honoring her than making himself look good.

This is the kind of man that God chose to be the earthly father of His Son. He could have sent Gabriel to Mary and Joseph at the same time, but God allowed this test of Joseph to prove that he was a man of character even before he learned the truth about Mary's pregnancy.

Day 4: The Girl of My Dreams

Scripture

Matthew 1:20-25 – But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Devotional

You may have had times when you were watching a movie and one of the main characters was unaware of a secret that everyone else knew. And when that person finally learned the truth of the situation, you may even have breathed a sigh of relief that the truth was now out in the open.

Most of us may have felt that way when we read today's passage for the first time. The Bible doesn't tell us how long Joseph had to wait until God revealed the truth to him in a dream, but every second Joseph waited was a test of his character and his selfless love for Mary.

God had a purpose in everything that He did with Joseph and Mary. We don't know why He sent Gabriel to tell Mary the news, but then waited for a time until He, Himself, spoke to Joseph in a dream. God knows what we don't know and He is not only sovereign over the affairs of men, but He is always wise and consistently good.

After God spoke to Joseph in a dream (and He would do so three more times), Joseph responded immediately and took Mary to be his wife, meaning that he made his marriage to her public for all to know. But he did not consummate his marriage until Jesus was born.

Scripture doesn't tell us why, but Joseph may have felt that doing so could call into question the paternity of Jesus, or he may have felt like the conception of Jesus was such a sacred thing that he needed to wait until Jesus was born. Whatever the case, it's just another example of the kind of man he was.

Throughout history, Mary has often been regarded with great favor when the story of the nativity is shared. Yet there is a lot to discover about Joseph and how he repeatedly looked out for the interest of others – like Mary and Jesus – even at his own expense. He was a godly man who made a great earthly father too.

Day 5: It's About Time

Scripture

Micah 5:2 – But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

Luke 2:1-5 – 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.

Devotional

As Christians, we believe that God is the supreme ruler of the universe who has absolute power, authority, and control over the affairs of men. God sees the end from the beginning and He knows all things, so He can indeed work all things together for the good of those who love and belong to Him.

In today's story, there was something taking place within the Roman empire that had a direct effect on Joseph and Mary. Rome was moving through the different provinces to get a census of the people living there, and they required everyone to travel to their ancestral homes to register for it.

This was an extreme burden to ask of the citizenry, but no surprise when you consider the way the Romans ruled with an iron fist. It would seem that this situation might have been a distraction from the nativity story, but it may actually have been orchestrated by God for several reasons.

First, Bethlehem was King David's home and God had promised him that He would raise up a Son through David's lineage who would rule the nations forever. It mattered for Jesus to be born in the City of David because it tied Jesus to the title of the Son of David and fulfilled God's promise to David.

Secondly, being born in Bethlehem was a fulfillment of Micah 5:2 that foretold that the Messiah would be born there. Jesus was conceived in Nazareth so the census provided a reason for Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem.

For Joseph and Mary, traveling to Bethlehem may have seemed like a hiccup in their plans that came out of nowhere. But they were precisely following what God had prepared for them to do, and God never makes mistakes. It's a great reminder that God is also working things together for our lives too.

In a season when people are busy going here and there preparing for the holidays and family traditions, it's easy for Jesus to be ignored instead of being adored. The focus for this week is preparing our hearts to adore Him, our mouths to praise Him, and our hands to serve Him this season.

Week 3 Daily Devotionals

Day 1: No Vacancy

Scripture

Luke 2:6-7 – 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.

Devotional

There is a debate as to whether Jesus was born in an outdoor stable or if He was born in a room attached to an inn or residence where travelers left their animals for the night. What we do know is that animals stayed in the place where Jesus was born because Luke 2:7 tells us that Jesus was bundled up and placed in a manger, which was a feeding trough for animals.

You might have the idea that Joseph and Mary went door to door seeking a place to stay and that people didn't give them a room out of unkindness or spite, but that likely wasn't the case. Bethlehem had swelled to beyond capacity because everyone had arrived in town to register for the census so places to stay were simply unavailable by the time Joseph and Mary arrived.

Desperate times called for desperate measures, so Joseph and Mary did what they had to do and settled down in a space created for animals so Mary could give birth to Jesus. It's interesting to consider that King David grew up among sheep and spent much of his youth living right alongside of them. Nearly 1,000 years later, his descendant – known as the Son of David – was born in an environment with animals nearby as well.

It may not have been an ideal place for any child to be born, much less the Son of God, but a shelter for animals did point to two of the many reasons why Jesus came to this earth. First, He was born among the kind of animals that shepherds cared for to remind us that He is the Good Shepherd who cares for His flock. He also came to the place where lambs would rest to remind us that He is the Perfect Lamb who came to take on the sins of the world.

Day 2: The Last Shall Be First

Scripture

Luke 2:8-12 – 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."

Devotional

If you've ever had exciting news to share, there's probably a short list of people who you'd want to contact first. It might be your spouse, your parents, or a best friend that you want to share with first because those people mean the most to you. All of us would probably pick our favorite people to share our best news with before anyone else heard.

That's why it's fascinating to consider who the people were that God chose first to hear the good news that His Son was born. Shepherds were uneducated, dirty, and poorly paid people who had one of the most insignificant roles in society. Although their services were certainly important to society, their job was anything but glamorous, and they seemed like they would normally be the last people to hear about news this important.

Perhaps God was making a point by announcing the birth of His Son to the shepherds first. He was showing the world that Jesus didn't come for the high and mighty, the sophisticated and wealthy, or those who were always invited to the parties. No, He chose those of low esteem to show who mattered to Him.

It also showed what mattered the most to Jesus. He never owned a home, He never had earthly wealth, and when He went to the cross, all He had to His name was one pair of clothes. Jesus cared more about people than He did about popularity or wealth, and He chose to live a simple life to show us that the Creator of the Universe is a caring and approachable God.

Day 3: An Overflow of Joy

Scripture

Luke 2:13-14 – 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!"

Devotional

It's amazing how different the real nativity story is from what's often portrayed in music, movies, and TV shows. For instance, the magi were not there on the night when Jesus was born, but most nativity sets include them anyway. They also have a star over the stable where the figure of Jesus is lying in the manger, but the star didn't lead the magi to Jesus until sometime later, when He was living in a house.

Christmas songs don't always get it right, either. Even though we love to sing Silent Night around Christmastime, the lyrics don't fully line up with the biblical account either. For starters, it's hard to imagine that it was a silent night in the stable, with a bunch of animals and a newborn baby in the room.

Another thing that the song gets wrong is telling us that the heavenly host sang hallelujah. This may have been a figurative way for the song's writer – the priest Joseph Mohr – to explain how the heavenly host marveled at the birth of Jesus rather than trying to provide an accurate description of what happened.

But what Luke 2:13-14 may be describing to us is that the hosts of heaven are so overcome by the birth of Jesus that they couldn't help but give God glory for sending His Son to bring us peace on earth! The incarnation of Jesus – or His coming in the flesh – was the greatest event that had ever happened to mankind, so it's no surprise that the angels rejoiced like they did. Yet Jesus didn't come for the angels, He came for us. As a result, we should be the ones who can't keep from rejoicing for it is our Savior who came to the earth that Christmas day!

Day 4: The Ministry of Presence

Scripture

Luke 2:15-17 – When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

Devotional

After the angels left them in the field, the shepherds departed at once to find this Newborn King that they had just been told about. As far as we know, the angel didn't give them the exact location where they could find Jesus; they only knew that the Savior of the world had just been born and that the sign they were searching for would be a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

Thankfully, these shepherds were most likely aware of the places where animals were housed in the city of Bethlehem, so they were able to go from stable to stable until they found what they were looking for. When they arrived and found the Baby Jesus with His mother and father, they shared the story of what happened to them while tending their flocks, and how they had come to find the baby in the manger.

It was customary in those days to bring a sacrificial gift when you came to visit the child of a dignitary or king, but the shepherds most likely had nothing of worth as an offering for the Son of God. Though the magi would come some time later and bring their gifts for Jesus, the shepherds – like the boy in The Little Drummer Boy – had no present to place at His feet.

What they did bring may have meant even more to Mary and Joseph than any gifts they could have brought with them. These shepherds may not have had any present to offer, but they gave the gift of their presence by showing up to give honor and praise to the Savior of the world.

Sometimes we may think we have nothing to offer God when the truth is that we do. The simple gift of presence – spending time with God giving Him praise and thanksgiving for who He is and for all He's done – may be the thing He wants the most from us!

Day 5: Treasures to Ponder

Scripture

Luke 2:18-20 – And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Devotional

A lot can happen in just one night. Mary and Joseph became parents of a newborn. Animals were there as their Creator was born right before them. The angels brought news that made all of heaven rejoice. And shepherds were given the chance to serve as Jesus' great welcome party!

Everything changed because of the Advent. Those who heard what happened when the angels appeared to the shepherds were struck with wonder. Nothing like this had ever happened before and it became the talk of the town.

The shepherds had a story to share for the rest of their lives. They, of all people, had been chosen to come and see the newborn King before anyone else did. It was so great an honor that they returned to their fields giving glory and praise to God for what they had experienced.

It's easy to believe that Joseph was blown away by all he had witnessed on this most holy of nights, but Mary may have been the one who was impacted the most from the events of that evening. The Son of God who had been miraculously conceived in her womb had been born to her that night, and the confirmation from the shepherds reminded her once again that her son was the Child of Promise. It was a moment for Mary when time stood still and it probably served to encourage her when times weren't so easy to be the mother of Jesus.

The focus for this final week of the Advent study is to think about the importance of paying attention when God has spoken. Throughout the Old Testament, God was constantly speaking to His people in numerous ways, but they often failed to listen and obey His voice. The goal for this week is to learn how to be more like those who paid attention when God spoke – they were blessed for doing so!

Week 4 Daily Devotionals

Day 1: Jumpin' John the Baptist

Scripture

Luke 1:39-44 – In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy."

Devotional

Today's reading shares the wonderful story of Mary's visit to see her relative, Elizabeth, who was pregnant with a son named John. This is a remarkable story for several reasons.

First, Elizabeth was beyond the normal age of childbearing, but God blessed her and her husband Zechariah the Jewish priest with a child in their old age. This wasn't just any child – he was the forerunner of the Messiah who was spoken of in Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1, and Malachi 4:5-6.

Those who had paid attention to these Old Testament prophecies understood that a messenger would come ahead of the Messiah to announce His coming. While Zechariah was serving at the temple one day, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and told him that he would have a son "in the spirit and power of Elijah" who would prepare the way for the Lord.

Now Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy when Mary – who had just learned that she was pregnant – decided to pay Elizabeth a visit. It was the first time that these two godly women came together to celebrate their two miraculous pregnancies.

When Mary entered the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth and greeted her, John leaped for joy in his mother's womb! Somehow through the miraculous power of God, John knew when he heard Mary's voice that she was carrying the One whom he would live his life to point others to.

Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit of God and she pronounced a blessing on Mary, calling her the mother of her Lord. How is it possible that she knew all that she did? Both Jesus and John began their lives and ministries guided by God's Spirit and were faithful to fulfill the purposes that the Father called them to.

Day 2: Simeon Says

Scripture

Luke 2:25-35 – 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." And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Devotional

Simeon may not be one of the more well-known characters in the Bible, but his story is incredible. He was a devout and righteous man who'd been given a promise from God through the Holy Spirit: he would not pass away before he had the opportunity to see the arrival of the Messiah.

The Spirit led him to the temple on the very same day that Joseph and Mary had brought Jesus to dedicate Him at the temple, and his long-awaited promise had finally come true. When Simeon saw Jesus, he took Him in his arms and blessed God through the Spirit.

Simeon prophesied that Jesus would bring salvation to all people – both to the Jew and the Gentile – and that His arrival would divide people based on whether they believed in or rejected Him. Simeon also said that Jesus would be opposed by many (opposition that would end in His crucifixion and break Mary's heart), and that He would reveal the thoughts of many hearts, separating the sincere from the hypocrites.

After waiting each day for the consolation – or comfort – of God to arrive, Simeon was able to praise God saying, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word." Not only was Simeon rewarded with this indescribable gift before his passing, but he testified to those who were present that Jesus is the Promised One who came to save the world!

Day 3: A Lifetime of Devotion

Scripture

Luke 2:36-38 – And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Devotional

Another one of the few who knew that Jesus was coming was a prophetess by the name of Anna, which means “favor” or “grace.” She had been married in her youth, but her husband had passed away seven years into their marriage leaving her a widow ever since.

It would have been understandable for Anna to grow bitter from losing her husband so young and living as a widow for all the years that followed, but Anna made the choice to dedicate herself full-time to the service of the Lord.

Day after day, and night after night, she stayed at the temple praying, fasting, and worshipping God. Few people in the Bible showed such devotion to the Lord like Anna did, and like Simeon, her faithfulness to God was rewarded with the opportunity to see Jesus for herself.

Upon seeing Him with His parents at the temple, she gave glory to God and spoke of Jesus to all who were there at the temple awaiting the coming of God’s redemption. He had arrived and Anna made sure that everybody knew it.

Day 4: Asleep at the Wheel

Scripture

Matthew 2:1-8 – 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." 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."

Devotional

Let's talk about Herod the Great for a moment. He was not Jewish by descent, but was the son of an Idumean father and an Arabian (Nabataean) mother from a family that had converted to Judaism. With the backing of powerful Romans like Mark Antony and Octavian (later Caesar Augustus), he was declared "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate in 40 BC, and he conquered Jerusalem in 37 BC.

Herod was considered a master builder who led some of the most impressive construction projects of his time including creating Sebastos, one of the largest artificial seaports of the ancient world; turning Masada into an architectural marvel of a fortress; and rebuilding the Jewish Temple, making it more spectacular and larger than the original temple that Solomon built.

Despite all of these impressive accomplishments, Herod was known to be paranoid, and he killed anyone who threatened his rule, including his favorite wife Mariamne, her mother, his own first-born son, his brother-in-law, and many others. Just a rumor that someone might be plotting to overthrow his reign resulted in a death sentence.

Given his level of insecurity and distrust, it's amazing that, of all the people in Judea, the "King of the Jews" didn't seem to have a clue that Jesus had been born. That is, not until wise men came from afar asking where the newborn King of the Jews had been born. A different king than him!

Upon calling the chief priests and scribes, he discovered that this Ruler would be born in Bethlehem and when he learned of the timing of the star, he must have understood why the magi came when and where they did. He most likely did his best to play down his paranoia after asking the magi to report back when they found Jesus, but history proves his true motives after he ordered the massacre of male children who were two and under. By God's grace, Jesus was already gone before the slaughter began.

Day 5: Gifts Fit for a King

Scripture

Matthew 2:9-12 – After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Devotional

We have no idea how many wise men came to visit Jesus. Tradition says there were three of them, but that number may have been a guess due to the three gifts they had with them. What we do know is that they likely traveled around six months across roughly 900 miles from Persia so they could celebrate the newborn King of the Jews, and they found Him living in a house when they arrived.

It's hard to fathom that this group of Persian astrologer-priests could have figured out the details about the birth of Jesus, but they may have had a few things that helped them. First, they had access to the Old Testament scrolls that the Jewish exiles had with them when they were taken captive to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar.

If they searched the Scriptures carefully, they would have read the same 300 prophecies that we can find in the Old Testament today that tell us a lot of information about the Promised Messiah. Verses like Micah 5:2 provided insight into where Jesus would be born.

Perhaps the most helpful thing they had was a supernatural star that appeared and moved to lead them to Jesus. They may have known, based on Numbers 24:17, that this star would point them to Christ or God may have revealed it to them some other way, but they sought the truth and were rewarded for their trip when they saw Mary and Jesus in the house.

They gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The gold was a symbol of wealth and royalty. Frankincense was a resin used by priests for incense and symbolized Jesus as our Priest. Myrrh was a highly aromatic perfume used in embalming, and it foreshadowed the death of Christ for us. They were costly gifts that helped Joseph and Mary cover the cost of their imminent escape to Egypt. God knew they would need the provision long before they did.