

THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS



Family Devotions for
December

by
Laurence & Lorie Brown

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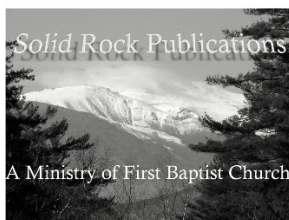
Family Devotions for December

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Preface

Many Christians face the dilemma of trying to decide how to celebrate Christmas. Some have determined to avoid the gross materialism and counterfeit religious symbolism of the world by not celebrating it at all. Others try to be balanced, but without much success. Most sincere believers agree that Christmas should be a wonderful season, but often succumb to the rush and hype of the world; only after the wrapping paper is put away and the tree taken down do we sigh and say, “Next year it will be different.”

This little devotional booklet does not have the magic solution to these problems. It does, however, offer an opportunity for families and individual believers to focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the application of God’s Word to our busy lives and homes – even during the hectic Christmas season – that will bless and benefit us most. This devotional guide offers Christians the chance to do that.

Each day’s devotional presents a Scripture reading. We strongly urge you to read the selected passage carefully and meaningfully. The text provided in this guide will only truly be a help and blessing if you have actually spent a few moments in God’s Word. Read the explanatory paragraphs, then try to answer the thought questions. Answer sheets for the questions will be found in the back. An application from the discussion is provided, along with a suggested activity. Some of the activities involve quizzes or pen-and-paper type of exercises; these will have corresponding solutions in the back. This booklet could be used as a sort of “Advent Calendar,” if so desired.

May God bless the reading and application of His Word to the hearts of His people at Christmastime, and all year long.

Pastor Laurence Brown
First Baptist Church, August 2002

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WHY CHRISTMAS IS SPECIAL



Read Genesis Chapter 3

A long time ago – maybe as much as 10,000 years ago – shortly after God had created our wonderful world, filled it with plant and animal life, and made the first two human beings, Adam and Eve, our first parents, chose to sin against God. Sin is anything that violates or goes against the holy, perfect character of God or His commands. God’s command to Adam and Eve had been simple. They could go anywhere in the garden, do anything, eat anything, except for one thing: the fruit of a certain tree was forbidden for them to eat. They could look at it and touch it, but they were not to use it for food. All the other edible plants in the garden were available for their use, but not that fruit.

Satan, the fallen angel, used a serpent to tempt Eve (Adam was with her at the time) and she disobeyed God. She took the fruit, ate it, and gave some to Adam. He also ate it. This simple act brought sin into the human race. It doesn’t seem like much, and yet the darkness of sin instantly became a part of our nature, a part of every human being. Sin always leads to death, decay, destruction. James tells us that “sin brings forth death” (James 1:15). How could it be otherwise when God and all that He does is light, truth, righteousness and life? Sin, because it is anti-God, is darkness, deception, evil and death.

The sin of our first parents – and really, it is as though we were standing alongside them when they sinned – brought about consequences. Sin always brings bad results. The result is what we call the Curse. All creation, including human beings, became subject to death – physical, spiritual and eternal death. God had already promised that this would happen before Adam and Eve sinned. Also as part of this curse, God said that life would have sorrows and hardships, all connected to the consequences of sin.

But in the middle of God's curse upon men, women, children and all the creation, there is a remarkable statement about the future. God said in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." This strange verse has in it a veiled, mysterious promise about what would happen some day, thousands of years in the future: God would send a descendant of the woman to "bruise" the serpent, representing Satan. This is the first hint of Christmas. On this occasion where God places a curse upon mankind and all the earth, we also find His love. God desires to give us joy, peace and eternal life – the greatest gift of all found only in His Son, Jesus Christ. But sin stands in the way.

Application

Try to picture what Christmas would be like if it was just a celebration about cookies, pretty lights, parties and gifts. It would really be a meaningless holiday! All those things only have meaning if there is a way of escape from the guilt and penalty of sin. If you know Jesus as your Savior, why not offer a prayer of thanks to God for sending His Son for you?

Thought Questions

1. _____ is anything that violates or goes against the holy, perfect character of God, or His commands.
2. The fruit of a certain _____ was forbidden for Adam and Eve to eat.
3. Who ate the fruit? _____
4. The greatest gift of all is found only in _____.

(The answers to the questions begin on page 107.)

Activity

Some Christmas traditions are based in reality and historical fact; others are rather fanciful or not at all true. Take this Christmas traditions quiz. Answers on page 111.

1. As long as Christmas has been celebrated, it has been on December 25. (True or false).
2. How did Mary & Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
 - a. camel
 - b. chariot
 - c. donkey
 - d. Joseph walked, Mary rode a donkey
 - e. walked
 - f. who knows?
3. What did the innkeeper tell Mary & Joseph?
 - a. "There is no room in the inn."
 - b. "I have a stable out back you can use."
 - c. "Come back after the Christmas rush – I'll have some vacancies."
 - d. both a & b
 - e. none of the above

4. Which animals does the Bible say were present at Jesus' birth?
 - a. cows, sheep, goats
 - b. cows, donkeys, sheep
 - c. sheep and goats only
 - d. miscellaneous barnyard types
 - e. lions, tigers & elephants
 - f. none of the above
5. Who saw the star in the east?
 - a. shepherds
 - b. Mary & Joseph
 - c. three kings
 - d. both a & c
 - e. Herod
 - f. none of the above
6. How many angels spoke to the shepherds?
 - a. one
 - b. three
 - c. "multitudes"
 - d. none of the above
7. What is a "heavenly host"?
 - a. the angel at the gate of heaven
 - b. an angel choir
 - c. the angel who serves refreshments in heaven
 - d. an angel army
 - e. none of the above

December 2 The Awfulness of Sin

Read Romans 1:28-32; 3:10-18

Christmas is one of my favorite times of the year, and I expect that it is one of your favorites, too. Mostly Christmas is about Good News – the Christmas cookies, vacation from school or work, maybe seeing relatives or old friends, activities at church, and best of all, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. But before we can really understand and appreciate the Good News, we have to understand the Bad News.

Nobody likes to hear bad news. Like if you found out today that you flunked your math test. Or if you discovered you had missed a car payment. Or maybe a good friend was diagnosed with cancer. But this bad news is really and terribly bad – it's about you and me, and all people, and it's about sin. Remember yesterday when we read from Genesis 3 about how Adam and Eve sinned and therefore sin entered the human race? Well, we mentioned the word “consequences” then. This means “results,” and it is usually used in a bad sense.

The consequence of breaking a dish in the store is usually that you have to pay for it. The consequence of forgetting to return a library book is that you get fined. But in the case of sinning against God, the consequence is death. Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death.” This death is both physical and spiritual. Physically, because of the effects of sin in the human race and in our own bodies, we actually begin to die from the moment we are born. Spiritually, and much more seriously, we are dead – cut off and totally separated from God. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” We had no connection, no relationship to God – we were dead and without hope of being revived by anything we could do.

Sin is so awful in fact, that it has touched every part of our nature and being. This means that the thoughts we think, the emotions we feel, the actions we do – all of them are infected and contaminated by sin. This is why Isaiah 64:6 says, “For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.” Sin is awful! It is horrible and terrible. And it was because of sin, and because of God’s earth-shattering love for you and me, that He planned Christmas.

Christmas is the first visible part of God’s eternal, invisible plan to rescue people from the fires of hell for the everlasting punishment of their sins.

Application

Christmas can only really be a meaningful and truly special season if you know that your sin problem has been taken care of in Jesus Christ. If you are reading this as a person who has never trusted in Christ as the payment for your sins and as your personal Savior, then turn to page 105 and read carefully “The Real Meaning of Christmas.” If you are a Christian, but you know that there are areas of sin or disobedience in your life, you cannot really experience the joy of this season. To receive blessings from the Lord, and to be a blessing to others during this holiday season (and all year long), you need to be in full fellowship with God the Father. You need to confess your sins to Him (I John 1:9) and repent – turn away from them. Make sure you do this right now!

Thought Questions

1. Mostly, Christmas is about _____.
2. The consequence of sin is _____.
3. How much of our nature and being is affected by sin?

4. Our sins must be _____ to God in order for us to have full fellowship with God as Christians.

Activity

Why not do an advent chain? Using strips of red and green paper about 11 inches long and about 1 inch wide, write down a Christmas verse on each one. Or you could look at some of your favorite Christmas passages in the Bible (Luke chapters 1 and 2, Isaiah 9:6,7, or Matthew chapter 2) and write down on each strip a different name, title or description of the Lord Jesus. If you do this today, then you will need to make 23 strips.

Bend the first strip to form a circle, then glue it, tape it or staple it in place. For the next strip, use a different color, and make it loop through the first one, like a chain link. Continue doing this until you have a chain with enough links to represent every day from now until Christmas.

Each day, your family can tear off one strip – you are one day closer to Christmas Day! Then read the verse or the name of Jesus written on the link, and talk about what this means to you, and how you can apply it to your life.

Read I Peter 1:18-21, Ephesians 1:4 and Galatians 4:4

You know what a rescue operation is, don't you? When a firefighter goes into a burning building to get someone out, that's a rescue. Or when a group of soldiers saves someone from enemy territory, that's a rescue. One of the rescues that I have read about happened in 1976 when an airliner carrying some Jewish people was hijacked and brought to Libya in Africa. It looked like they might be killed, but Jewish soldiers flew in, surprised the terrorists and rescued the hostages.

Did you realize that Christmas is the story of a rescue operation? We have studied sin and sin's consequences the last few days, and we know that death and hell are some of the results of our sin. But God, Who is rich in mercy and Whose love is greater than all the universe can hold, planned a rescue for us. How long ago did He begin planning it? Since there is never a time when God didn't know something, He never "planned" it like we plan things. But I Peter 1:20 tells us that the Lamb of God was foreknown before the foundation of the world. And Ephesians 1:4 says that God chose us before the world began.

Imagine that! God, the Almighty One, the perfectly holy Creator of all things, knew that you and I would be sinners deserving of the most severe punishment possible, and yet He loved us and planned for His Son, the Son of God, to come to earth to pay for our sins through His blood. God's love is difficult for us to comprehend because it is so selfless, so unhuman. Would you give up your most precious possession to help someone who hated you, wanted nothing to do with you, and broke all your rules? That is exactly what God the Father and God the Son did for us.

This rescue operation was planned to begin at exactly the right time. I Peter 1:20 says that the Lamb "appeared in these

last times,” and Galatians 4:4 speaks of the “fullness of times.” At precisely the right point in history, when all of God’s preparations and plans came together, God’s rescue operation – a baby named Jesus – came into the world to save sinners.

Application

Why would God plan a rescue operation that would involve the death of His own Son? Simply, because His great love for you and me caused Him to want to rescue us from hell, and in order to do this, Someone had to die to pay for our sins. He did this as a gift for us. Titus 3:4,5 tell us clearly: “But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy.” Why not spend a few minutes thinking about God’s love for **you** right now, and how you can show your love to Him?

Thought Questions

1. Christmas is the story of a _____ operation.
2. Who loved us enough to give His Son for us? _____
3. Who did God send as a Baby to rescue us? _____
4. God sent Jesus to die to pay for our sins as a _____ to us.

Activity

Here is a Christmas word-scramble activity for you. The idea is to see how many new words you can form from the letters of the words below. You may use each letter only once (for example, from the words you can get “sire,” but not “test” because you can use the single available “t” only once.) You do not have to use all the available letters in each new word.

BIRTH OF JESUS

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

December 4

**Hints and Clues of the Coming
Messiah**

Read Genesis 12:1-4 and II Samuel 7:12-17

We need to remember that from the time of God's promise to the time of its fulfillment with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, several thousand years elapsed. There was the time of the patriarchs (people like Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob), the time of the Israelites living in Egypt (about 400 years in duration), the time of the wilderness wanderings, the time of the conquest of Canaan, the kingdom periods, and so on. In fact, before Jesus' birth there was a period of around 400 years when the Hebrew people had no communication from God at all.

Through all this length of time, God gave His people hints and clues about the coming Messiah. But these clues were added gradually through the years. It's a little like having a dimmer switch on a light. You can turn the light on, then slowly make it brighter. The clues about the Messiah added up over the years to make a pretty complete picture of what He would be like and what His mission would be. But it began gradually.

In our Scripture reading for today, we have a couple of these hints. God promised Abraham that through him (Abraham) all the nations or families of the earth would be blessed. How could this be, that every single family on earth would receive God's blessing through one man? Because of this one Man who descended from Abraham! John 1:9 speaking about Jesus, says, "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." Another hint was found in God's words to David. How could it possibly be that David's house and kingdom would endure forever? Many great dynasties and kingdoms have lasted for hundreds of years, but no civilization lasts forever – unless the King of that kingdom lives forever!

For this reason, another great hint of the coming Messiah is found in Psalm 2. You should read this Psalm. Notice that it talks about “My Son” – God’s Son. And it tells us that we should worship the Son, because He is worthy of honor, and because He has the power and authority to punish those who do not.

Application

Some translations of Psalm 2:12 say, “Kiss the Son.” Why would they say that? Because that’s literally what the Hebrew words mean. In ancient times, when people were introduced to the King, they would bow down to the ground and kiss the king’s foot or hand to show that they were loyal subjects and that they honored the king. Do you bow down and honor King Jesus? We can’t really do that in His physical presence, yet we can with our words, actions, lives and attitudes. Are you honoring King Jesus today?

Thought Questions

True or False?

1. Jesus was born soon after God promised a Savior.
2. God gave hints to His people about what the Savior would be like.
3. Jesus, God’s Son, is worthy of honor.
4. We cannot bow down and honor King Jesus today.

<h2>Activity</h2>

You probably know what a Christmas wish-list is, don’t you? It is a list that you give to your parents, brothers and sisters, friends or whomever, describing what you would like to get for Christmas. It’s not a bad idea, but sometimes we can get a little selfish if we just focus on wishing for what we

want. So for today's activity, why not make a Christmas wish-list that's a little different? We could even call it a "reverse" wish-list.

Make a list of the people who are important to you: family, friends, co-workers, classmates, etc. Now make a list under each name of what you wish you could get for that person, make for that person, do for that person, or be for that person. Make it realistic: don't say I wish I could buy a jet for Uncle Fred – because that probably isn't going to happen! Furthermore, try to think of what that person really needs instead of just what he or she wants. For example, a friend might really want a new dirt-bike; but what he needs is to believe in Jesus as Savior. Instead of wishing for a dirt-bike, you should pray that he will trust in Christ.

Now, try to do one of the things on your list for that person sometime between now and Christmas. You may not be able to do all of them. But just think of the joy of being unselfish and wishing to do more for others than for yourself!

December 5 Looking Forward to Christmas

Read Jeremiah 23:5 and Micah 5:2

Do you know the Christmas carol “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”? It is a very old song that describes the longing of the Jewish people for their Messiah in the long years before Jesus was born. (If you have a recording of this carol, you could play it right now.) Some of the words are, “O come, o come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.”

It’s almost a sad kind of song, isn’t it? The reason it sounds rather mournful is that it accurately captures the sad and lonely spirit of people without the presence of Jesus Christ – people waiting for Him to arrive. This strong yearning for the Messiah was evidenced by people like Simeon, Nathaniel and Anna in the New Testament, and by individuals like Jeremiah, Isaiah and Micah in the Old Testament. We need to remember that we have the benefit of looking back on Christmas and Easter through the whole Bible so we can see the actual historical events. People who lived before the arrival of Jesus had to look forward to His fulfillment of prophecy and the plan of salvation by faith.

Jeremiah 23:5 tells us that God would one day raise up a “Branch” in the line of David. The idea of a “Branch” is like a tree-stump which seems to be dead. It had been several hundred years since any descendant of David had been acknowledged as King in Israel when Jesus was born. But the New Testament is careful to point out that Jesus comes from the royal line of David (Luke 1:27).

This Person would be righteous, and would be King. Jesus Christ, of course is both the Righteous One and King. In Acts 7:52, Stephen speaks of “the coming of the Righteous One,” and John says that if we sin, “we have an Advocate with

the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” The magi from the east called Jesus “the King of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2).

Micah gives us interesting detail about the birthplace of the Messiah. Bethlehem was indeed the city of David – the place where He was born and raised – but it was also only a small village. Micah gave his prophecy about the birthplace of the Savior around 740 B.C. More than seven hundred years later, in God’s perfect timing, Mary and Joseph left Nazareth to go to Bethlehem, where the prophets and faithful people of God had long looked for the Messiah to be born.

Application

Aren’t you glad that Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old Testament pertaining to His birth and death? When Jesus died on the cross, He said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). This means that the whole plan of salvation was wrapped up and done in Him and His perfection. The people who looked forward to His arrival were not disappointed. No one who truly looks forward to Jesus, in His birth, His death, or His coming again, is ever disappointed!

Thought Questions

1. Jesus comes from the royal line of _____.
2. The magi called Jesus “the King of the _____.”
3. Name two people born in Bethlehem: _____,
_____.
4. No one who looks forward to Jesus will ever be
_____.

Activity

A great activity to do, not only today, but all during the Christmas season, is to sing or listen to Christmas carols, then think about the words to see what doctrine or truth they teach. Compare the words to the Scripture – in fact, try to look up verses to see precisely what the Bible says – and note how well or poorly the song has taught Bible facts and truth. Some Christmas carols do very well, some stretch things a bit. See if you can find 5 true facts and 5 questionable statements, for example, in “The First Noel.”

December 6 A Hebrew Christmas

Read Hebrews 2:9-18

The Jewish people have a special holiday that occurs close to Christmas: it is called Hanukkah. But we're not talking about that when we titled today's devotions, "A Hebrew Christmas." What we mean is the material in the Book of Hebrews that relates to Christ coming to earth. Hebrews is a book that describes how excellent Jesus is in every area.

Our reading for the day is from the second chapter of Hebrews and it calls attention to Christmas by telling us, "But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus" (Hebrews 2:9). Another passage that goes along with this idea is Hebrews 10:5-10, which tells us that the blood of bulls and other animals could never really deal with our sin problem, so God the Father prepared **a body** for the Son of God to live in, in order that He could die for the payment of our sins. The second Person of the Trinity – the Son – entering into a human body, is what Christmas is all about. God's Son became a human being so that He could once for all pay for our sin-debt by dying on the cross.

Hebrews 2:9 tells us the purpose of Christmas was that while Jesus was "a little lower than the angels" (that is, in an unglorified human body), He was here to "taste death for everyone." But there's even more to Christmas than Jesus Christ becoming human so that He could die for you and me. Hebrews 2:9-18 gives us several additional reasons to rejoice in Christ's birth:

1) Sanctification. Christ's ministry here on earth models for us how to be made more holy and to "perfect" or bring to maturity our lives before God.

2) Setting us free. Verse 15 tells us that Jesus' death and our faith in Him free us from the fear of death and from slavery to Satan and sin.

3) Support. Not only did Christ's humanity make it possible for Him to die for us, He also can relate to us personally in our trials and temptations. When we pray to God the Father, it is Jesus who serves as our High Priest: He can pass on to our Father the serious cries for help and the deep distresses our human condition causes. He knows because He has been here! His sufferings included every kind of sorrow, temptation and trouble known to man, and He understands our situation even better than we do!

Application

Have you recently considered why Christmas is so important to Christians? If the lights, the Christmas tree, the parties, the gifts, the music were all suddenly gone, would it still be important? Yes! Because it represents the tremendous, universe-shattering love of God in sending the Perfect One into the world to become human, to take upon Himself the sins of mankind, and to die for those sins which others have committed.

Not only that, it represents God stooping down to us, to love us, to fellowship with us, to show us His pity and compassion. Why not spend a few minutes praising God for His love and kindness to you? A great way to do that would be to quietly and prayerfully read Psalm 8.

Thought Questions

1. What book of the Bible teaches how excellent Jesus is in every way? _____
2. Jesus had to become a _____ so He could pay our sin-debt.

3. Who understands our sufferings even better than we do? _____
4. Christmas clearly shows God's _____ to us.

Activity

This activity is a serious one. No doubt you can think of many people around you – family members, friends, neighbors, and others – who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior and therefore do not really understand what Christmas is all about. Why not take ten minutes and list as many people as you can think of who are not saved, then pray for them by name. Some specific prayer requests that you could ask God for would be: that they would come to special Christmas programs at church; that they would accept a tract from you; that they would let you talk to them about Jesus; that they would agree to do a Bible study with you in their home or yours; and most of all, that God would open their eyes and hearts to Jesus Christ, and that they would trust in Him as Savior.

GETTING CLOSER TO THE
GREAT DAY



December 7 The Baby With a Difference

Read Isaiah 9:6, 7

Most likely you have read these verses before now. They are pretty well known. The way they go is: “For a child will be born unto us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore.”

The arrival of a new baby brings along with it many hopes, aspirations and expectations. Whether you get a new brother or sister, or niece or nephew, son or granddaughter, you have certain hopes for the new little one. You hope he or she is healthy; you hope he grows normally and learns to obey his parents. You expect that he will like to eat, and to play, and when he gets a little older, that he will keep his room neat. Christian parents often hope and pray that their children will love God with all their heart and do great things to honor and please Him. These are normal and good hopes for babies.

When babies are born, the mom and dad usually are filled with gratitude and love, and they delight in showing off the new member of the family: “Don’t you think she looks like her mother?” “Aren’t his dimples cute!” “He’s got big hands – I think he’ll be a basketball star!”

But Isaiah 9:6 & 7, written about 700 years before the coming of the Messiah, go far beyond any ordinary statements about babies. The baby these verses describe will indeed be a “son” and a “child” – a human baby, in other words; but He will also be “Mighty God” and “Eternal Father.” No ordinary baby could be anywhere close to these things.

Only One who is both human and God could fulfill these statements.

And that is exactly what Jesus Christ is: perfect human being and complete God, in one single person. He was born as a baby, in the lowliest of places. But He is also the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, and everything else your heart could ever long for.

Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor because His words are always true and always helpful. He never points anyone in a wrong direction. Jesus is the Mighty God because He created the universe (see Colossians 1:15-17). He is just as much God as is the Father or the Spirit. Jesus is the Eternal Father, because in His hands are the ages of eternity. He brings each new time-period to pass, and time is in His control, while He Himself is above and outside of time. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, because wherever He comes into a heart and home, He brings peace; and one day He will bring peace to all the world when He is crowned King in Jerusalem.

Application

What do you think you most need this Christmas season? Are you lonely, and you think that if you just had a good friend to talk to, everything would be better? Are you struggling with school, and you think if you were just getting better grades, life wouldn't be so difficult? Are you tired or sick, or bothered by many pressures of life? Whatever you truly need, Jesus can supply. He is the Baby with a Difference – the One who can meet every need. Talk with the Lord about what He says you really need, and see in the Bible how Jesus Christ can supply that need.

Thought Questions

1. How long before Jesus' birth was Isaiah 9:7 written?

2. Besides being a human baby, Jesus is also called
_____.
3. Jesus is also the "_____ Counselor."
4. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, brings _____
into hearts and homes.

Activity

Why not have a Christmas cookie-baking party tonight? It will take a little extra time and preparation, but it is a great family activity. If the kids are too little to help make the dough and run the oven, they can help color the sugar and apply it to the cookies. If you want to make it even easier, just buy sugar cookie dough, and skip right to the decorating.

When your cookies are done, why not share some Christian love and take a plate of them to your neighbors, or save some to give to someone else at church?

December 8 The Home of the King

Read Matthew 2:13-23

If you were a king or queen and could live anywhere you wanted to, where would you choose to make your home? And what kind of a house would it be? A castle? A really cool-looking house with lots of technical gadgetry? A huge mansion?

Jesus Christ is the King, yet He chose to lower Himself from the halls of heaven to become a human being and live with us here on earth. Furthermore, even here on earth, the houses He lived in weren't exactly palaces. Jesus didn't even own His own house. The houses He lived in or stayed at weren't luxurious at all. The Bible tells us about four locations where Jesus lived while here on earth.

First was Bethlehem, the place where He was born. It was prophesied in Micah 5:2, about 700 years before Jesus' birth, that the Messiah would be born there. Bethlehem, of course, was the royal city – the place where David the king was born and grew up – but it was really a tiny village. In fact, Micah 5:2 says that it was “too little to be among the clans of Judah.” Bethlehem tells us about our Savior's humility. He could have chosen to be born in Rome – the capital of the empire, or at least in the palace in Jerusalem; but He chose the humble town of Bethlehem.

Next came Egypt. Sometimes we forget that Joseph took Mary and baby Jesus into Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod when Jesus was about two years of age. We don't know how long they stayed there, but Matthew tells us that Jesus' time in Egypt was to fulfill what Hosea 1:1 said, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.” The Lord's stay in Egypt speaks of our Savior's identification with His people. Just as Israel had been in Egypt a long time before this, Jesus went into exile in that same land. The Lord Jesus Christ has identified with the

Jewish people, and with all of us – He knows about our troubles, trials and temptations, and He understands what our lives are like.

After the return from Egypt, Joseph led Mary and Jesus to Nazareth. This, too, was in fulfillment of prophetic truth, according to Matthew 2:23. Jesus lived in Nazareth for most of His life, and was well-known to the townsfolk there. In fact, they referred to Him as “the carpenter’s son,” even though Joseph was not his physical father. Unfortunately, it was also in Nazareth that Jesus was first rejected. When He began to teach that He was the way of salvation and the Son of God, the people of Nazareth attempted to kill Him (Luke 4:28-30). Nazareth shows the hard-heartedness and stubbornness of all the people Jesus came to save.

After His rejection at Nazareth, Jesus went to Capernaum (Luke 4:31), and this town on the shore of the Sea of Galilee became His adopted hometown. Jesus performed many of His miracles in and around Capernaum: people were healed, demons cast out of individuals, sick folk restored to health. On the hills and around the villages of northern Galilee Jesus began His public preaching ministry and trained His twelve chosen followers, the apostles. Capernaum is the town where the disciples learned to follow the Master.

In all these places, Jesus never owned His own house, or claimed a space of His own. Once, someone talked to Him about following Him. Jesus replied, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20).

Application

Because Jesus left His home in Heaven and came to earth to live and die for our sins, we now have a new home: Heaven! If you have trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior

from the guilt and penalty of your sins, then He is preparing a home for you right now in His presence in Heaven. Because Jesus became “homeless” we, through faith in Him, can have the greatest home of all: where He is!

Thought Questions

1. Jesus left heaven to live for a time on _____.
2. Name two of the four places where Jesus lived.
_____, _____
3. How old was Jesus when He was taken to Egypt?

4. Jesus preached and healed in the area of
_____.

Activity

Places & Place-Names in the Christmas Story Quiz

Fill in the blanks.

1. The hometown of Mary was _____.
(Luke 1:26)
2. In what tribal territory did Zacharias & Elizabeth live?
(Luke 1:39) _____
3. Where the angel appeared to Zacharias in the temple:
on the right side of the _____ (Luke 1:11)
4. The decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the
_____ should be taxed. (Luke 2:1)
5. Quirenius (or Cyrenius) was then governor of the
Roman province of _____. (Luke 2:20)

6. Joseph and Mary went up from _____ out of Nazareth into Judea, unto the city of David which is called _____. (Luke 2:4)
7. Jesus was laid in a _____ because there was no room for them in the _____. (Luke 2:7)
8. The shepherds were in the _____ (Luke 2:7)
9. After the announcement of Jesus' birth, the angels went away from the shepherds into _____ (Luke 2:15)
10. There came wise men from the _____ to Herod in _____ (Matthew 2:1)
11. The angel appeared to Joseph telling him to take Jesus and Mary into _____ (Matthew 2:13)
12. Joseph, Mary and Jesus returned to Galilee to the city called _____ (Matthew 2:23)

CHRISTMAS DAY REPORTS FROM THE SCENE



December 9

The Original Grinch

Read Matthew 2:1-12

You've probably seen the animated classic "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" on television. I remember watching it when I was a kid. It's a neat story. Of course, it's just a cartoon. In the real story of Jesus' birth and early childhood, there is a person who behaved like the Grinch, only a lot worse: I mean King Herod. This part of the Christmas story actually occurred when Jesus was about two years old, even though we usually associate it with His birth.

King Herod learned about the birth of someone called "the King of the Jews" from the magi – these were the "wise men," astronomers and scholars, probably from the land of Persia. The problem was that Herod thought that **he** was the king of the Jews.

Herod determined to find this baby and put him to death. He would not allow any rivals to his throne! He hatched a plan to use the magi to find the Baby somewhere in the vicinity of Bethlehem. Pretending to desire to worship the Baby, Herod convinced the wise men to send him word when they had located the baby King.

The story has a sad end. King Herod was thwarted in his efforts to kill Jesus by God Himself, Who warned the magi and Joseph. Enraged and blinded by his own sin, Herod ordered the deaths of all baby boys in Bethlehem two years old and younger.

Application

As horrible as Herod's attitude and actions were, we can learn some lessons from him. It is possible to become so twisted by our own selfishness, pride and sin, that we no

longer think straight. Certainly killing off babies is a horrific evil, and not the action of a normal person.

Notice also that rejecting Jesus leads to all sorts of problems: Herod was a man who was troubled (Matthew 2:3), who lied (Matthew 2:8), and who was ruled by his anger (Matthew 2:16). Without Jesus Christ as Savior, these same sins and troubles could be ours! Make sure that you do not harden your heart against God or His plan for your life.

Thought Questions

1. Who thought he was the king of the Jews?

2. What did Herod want to do when He found the baby?

3. Did Herod find Jesus? _____
4. Who protected Jesus? _____

Activity

In the next couple of weeks your church will probably be having some special events – maybe a banquet, a choir cantata, Christmas Eve or children’s Christmas programs. These are great opportunities to invite someone to come with you to church. Often around holidays people think more about going to church than at any other time of the year. Why not pray and ask God to help you to have courage to invite a particular person today, and then go or call on the phone to invite that person or family to a special event or church service?

Person to Invite: _____

Date & Type of Event: _____

Read Luke 1:46-55

Mary's song recorded in these verses is really a collection of quotations from the Old Testament, especially the book of Psalms. She probably didn't sing it, but rather spoke it, even though we often call it her "song." After the angel Gabriel had announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah, Mary hurried off to see her cousin, Elizabeth. As soon Elizabeth saw Mary, Elizabeth did something remarkable: she shouted out: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy" (Luke 2:42-44).

What a strange thing! Apparently the baby in Elizabeth's womb (John the Baptist) recognized that the mother of the Messiah was nearby! Mary responded by quoting a string of praises and exaltations to God. This joysong or chant shows that Mary had an excellent grasp of the Word of God. She evidently had spent much time listening to it in the synagogue, thinking about it and applying it to her life. It also shows that Mary had a very close walk with God. These verses are all about her love for, and praise of, God. She apparently was used to talking to the Lord, and had a habit of praising and thanking Him.

Notice in these verses that Mary first of all talks about her own relationship to God, and praises Him for His goodness to her. She says in verse 47, "And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." This indicates that she knew that she was a sinner and needed a Savior, and that her trust was in God to provide a way of salvation. She also says that God has done great things for her (v. 49). What a tremendous testimony these words are!

Second, Mary calls attention to the power and righteousness of God in verses 50-53. She speaks about how God helps the humble and hands out justice to the wicked and proud. God especially hates the sin of pride, and Mary highlights how God deals with arrogant people.

Third, in verses 54-55, she speaks of God's great faithfulness to Israel. When God promises something, He always keeps His word! In verse 55 she says "As He spoke to our fathers..." This could be literally translated, "Just as He spoke." God fulfills His promises exactly, because He is a faithful God!

Application

Could you do a praise-song like Mary's right now? Maybe you would be shy to try to sing something out loud; that's okay, I can't really sing very well either. But all of us who are Christians should have a song of praise to God in our hearts (see Psalm 40:3). Furthermore, we should have a relationship that is close enough to God our Father such that we can talk to Him about all His wonderful works and actions of love, power and mercy. And, like Mary, we should know the Bible well enough to be able to use it in everyday life.

Thought Questions

1. Mary's "song" was made of quotations from what old Testament book? _____
2. What happened when Elizabeth's baby heard Mary speaking? _____
3. Mary knew she was a sinner and needed a _____.
4. When God promises something He _____ keeps His word.

Activity

CHRISTMAS WORDSEARCH

Locate the names of people associated with Christ's birth. The names can go across, up, down, backwards or diagonally.

*Extra points for finding the unlisted name.

S A D Y O H S A I R A H C A Z
Q U I R N P U L E U N A M M I
Z C T B E R A T U Y S N D O H
E W P S L I N Z A R D E A M T
C L O U U S N H E N R I V R E
B J M I W G A B R I E L L O B
A D O N Q H U V G N H O J Y A
Z I B I E U N A Z O P A L U Z
E V U R X N B Y R N E J E U I
D A O I A R O N L A H L I H L
U D Y U S I M E D M S R T E E
G O H Q S L E G N A R E B I G
M A R Y E H P E S O J Z A C H
M J I A N C H A V O H G I C U
I H N O E M I S E Y W O R E Q

Word List:

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> CAESAR AUGUSTUS | <input type="checkbox"/> QUIRINIUS | <input type="checkbox"/> DAVID |
| <input type="checkbox"/> JOSEPH | <input type="checkbox"/> MARY | <input type="checkbox"/> ANGELS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHEPHERDS | <input type="checkbox"/> ELIZABETH | <input type="checkbox"/> ZACHARIAS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> JOHN | <input type="checkbox"/> HEROD | <input type="checkbox"/> SIMEON |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANNA | <input type="checkbox"/> GABRIEL | <input type="checkbox"/> * _____ |

Read Luke 1

Many times in the Bible when God wants to give a message to someone or has a job to be done, He sends His “messengers.” The Greek word for messenger is *angelos*. Can you see an English word in this Greek one? It is “angel.” Angels appear several times in the Christmas story with important messages for people. Let’s look at them.

First, one of only two named angels in the Bible came to Mary to announce that she would be the mother of the Christ. Gabriel, the angel, came to Mary in Nazareth and told her that God had chosen her for a very special purpose: she would give birth to a baby who had no human father. He would be the Son of God, and His Name was to be “Jesus” (Luke 1:31-35).

Now Mary was engaged to marry a man named Joseph. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he thought that she had been sinful and immoral, and he planned to break off the engagement before they got married. But God sent a messenger – an angel – to tell Joseph that Mary had not been immoral, and that the child she was carrying in her womb was God’s Son. Indeed, the angel continued, Joseph was to name the baby “Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). The name “Jesus” means *God saves*.

An angel warned Joseph about Herod and the plot to kill Jesus about two years later (Matthew 2:13-19), so Joseph took Mary and Jesus and escaped into Egypt, leaving while it was still night.

Angels also played a big part on the night that Jesus was born. In the sky near Bethlehem, you remember, an angel suddenly appeared to some shepherds who were guarding their flock of sheep. The angel glowed with heavenly brightness – the reflected glory of God – and the shepherds

were terrified, paralyzed with fear. The angel, however did not strike them dead. Instead, he gave them news that must have taken a little time to sink in, dazed and fearful as they were. He said, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10,11).

After delivering the message, instantaneously, the sky around the angel was full of angels, all saying in their heavenly voices: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased” (Luke 2:14). The shepherds had just been treated to a visit from God’s good news team!

Application

Would you like to be an “angel”? I don’t mean, “do you want to have wings and a halo?” Remember that “angel” means *messenger*! The angels told the shepherds the good news, or message, “there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” When you tell others about the Savior who was born, died and raised again to give eternal life, you are being God’s messenger!

Thought Questions

1. Name two people to whom angels spoke.

2. What is the name of the angel who talked to Mary?

3. The name *Jesus* means _____.
4. When you tell others about Jesus, you are being God’s
_____.

Activity

You probably have been getting some Christmas cards in the mail, and maybe sending some out, too. Aren't they neat? A special tradition that some families have is to get the Christmas cards that you receive on that day, and bring them to the dinner table. They can be set up so that the whole family can enjoy them. Then, after supper is over, you can pray for the person or family who gave you each card.

Another really neat idea is to make a Christmas card for Jesus. It is Jesus' birthday, isn't it? What would you say to Him? Make it special and put it in a place where family members and guests can see it.

Read Matthew 1:18-25

There is an almost forgotten figure in the Christmas story. Even in nativity scenes, while the animals, the wise men, the shepherds and Mary crowd around the wooden baby in the manger, this solitary figure is often shunted into the corner. We're talking about Joseph, of course.

Now, we need to be clear that Joseph was **not** Jesus' human father. Jesus had no physical, human father. The Bible is very clear on this point. Matthew 1:20 says that the angel told Joseph, "the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." And Gabriel the angel told Mary, "for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Jesus could not have had a human father and still be God. If He were not God, He could not be the perfect sacrifice for sins. So it is very important that we understand that neither Joseph, nor any other man, was the father of Jesus. God was the Father of Jesus.

However, this does not mean that Joseph did not have an important role to play. He was immediately obedient to the plan of God when God revealed it to him. Matthew 1:24 says that when Joseph awoke from his vision of the angel, "he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him." Joseph's complete and uncomplaining obedience to God, under difficult circumstances, are a great example to us.

He also protected Mary and baby Jesus. A few years later Herod was on the prowl, looking to kill Jesus. God warned Joseph, who took his family with him and fled to Egypt in the middle of the night (Matthew 2:13-15).

Joseph was not the main character in God's plans. But he was important in the Christmas story. He carried out God's purposes with a willing attitude, and that makes him very special.

Application

Do you ever get tired of being unnoticed? Do you ever wish that somebody would think you are special? God already does! God does have a special plan for your life, whether you are 5 years old, or 105 years old. If you will obey Him with all your heart, He will use you in His service. Not everybody is called on to play a center-stage part in the world's eyes; but everyone who loves and obeys God has an *important* part.

Thought Questions

1. Who was Jesus' Father? _____
2. Joseph was _____ to God's plan.
3. Joseph _____ Mary and Baby Jesus.
4. Joseph wasn't a main character in the Christmas story, but he was _____ to God.

<h2>Activity</h2>

Why not write a new Christmas song by using a well-known tune (such as "Are You Sleeping?") and putting new words to it? Make sure your song is filled with truth from the Bible.

December 13

A Godly Man Meets the Messiah

Read Luke 2:25-35

We do not often think about the story of Jesus being presented in the temple as part of the Christmas narrative, even though it was only eight days after His birth. On the other hand, the story of the wise men is firmly attached to our Christmas traditions, even though it happened about two years after Christ's arrival.

Simeon was a godly Jewish man, to whom God had especially revealed that he would not die until he had seen the Christ – the Messiah. Do you remember when we studied about how eagerly the godly Jews were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah? Simeon was one of these people. He was always watching for God's promise to be fulfilled: the promise of the whole Old Testament, that God would send a Redeemer to take the punishment of our sins (Isaiah 53:11,12).

Have you ever wanted something so badly, it was almost all you could think about? Maybe it was something relatively small, or maybe something really big. In the case of Simeon, it had to do with the salvation of millions of people, and with God's eternal plan for the world.

Can you imagine the thrill and excitement he experienced as he saw Joseph and Mary carrying baby Jesus, eight days old, into the temple? The Holy Spirit had specifically led him there to meet the Savior. He came over and asked permission to hold the baby, and then he began to praise God saying, "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation" (Luke 2:29,30). We can almost picture old Simeon, tears streaming down his cheeks, voice quivering with joy, as he holds in his arms the Baby he knows is the Savior of the world.

Application

What do you really long for and anticipate? At this time of year, I really look forward to Christmas day. Of course, I enjoy the music, the many church activities, and the chances to do special things with the people I love. But I especially like to surprise people with gifts, and so I eagerly await Christmas day, when my family will open the gifts I have made or bought them.

However, like Simeon, all Christians should be looking forward to something more special than that. Simeon was “looking for the consolation of Israel” but we should remember Philippians 3:20: “For our citizenship is in heaven from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Are you eagerly anticipating the coming of the Savior for you? Or is your thinking all about the here and now, the temporary, worldly things which surround us?

Thought Questions

1. How old was Jesus when He was presented at the temple? _____
2. Who had been looking for Jesus all his life?

3. Who led Simeon to Mary, Joseph & Jesus?

4. What should Christians be looking forward to?

Activity

It's time for another word-scramble. If you need to review the rules, check them out on the activity for December 3. The words we're using today are:

CHRISTMAS REJOICING

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WHAT SHALL WE NAME THE BABY?



December 14

“Immanuel”

Read Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:23

When a new baby comes into a home, there is usually a lot of excitement. For the mom and dad, one of the important decisions is what to name the new little one. Sometimes, if the brothers and sisters are old enough, the parents ask them what they think the baby's name should be. But when Jesus' birth was announced, Someone had already decided what His Name would be: God the Father! In fact, the Isaiah chapter 7 passage you read today was written about 700 years before Jesus was born. Because Jesus is both God and man, has so many perfect characteristics, and fills so many roles, He has multiple names. In fact, there are dozens and dozens of them throughout the Bible. For the next four days, we will look at just a few of them.

What does “Immanuel” mean? The Matthew 1:23 passage tells us: it means, “God with us.” Imman is Hebrew for “with us” and “El” is the Hebrew word for God. But why is this name significant?

Just think for a moment about the great difference between God, the Creator, and us human beings, the creature. How deep and wide is the gulf that separates us! Not only is there the obvious: God is eternal, we are mortal; He is infinite, we are very limited, and so on. But also consider that God is perfectly holy and we are tainted by sin in every part of our being. God hates sin! He hates it so thoroughly that we cannot begin to fathom His loathing of it; He hates it so intensely that only a place like Hell can accommodate its consequences.

Now, if you were the richest, most powerful and most morally pure person in the world, and you lived in a wonderful home far above all the crime, evil, diseases and strife of the rest of humanity, would you volunteer to go live

in a homeless shelter to try to help those wretched people? Not likely, but maybe. Would you actually give up your riches and wealth so that you could become one of the poor, benighted people? Not too likely at all. Would you become one of them, live with them for thirty-three years, and then die to take their punishment for them?

You can see where this illustration takes us. Except that in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, the illustration doesn't really explain the whole truth, because of the great gap between Creator-God and sinful, lowly creature. Yet God, in His great love and mercy designed the plan for His Son to become a human being (still being God), to live among us, experience our problems, temptations, heartaches, and then to die as the payment for our sin. This is what "Immanuel" means: God with us!

There is an old American folk hymn that seems to fit this little examination of "Immanuel." It is not a Christmas carol, but it does talk about the great gulf that the Son of God crossed to come and dwell as a human among us. "What Wondrous Love Is This?" says, "What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What wondrous love is this, O my soul! What wondrous love is this That caused the Lord of bliss To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul, To bear the dreadful curse for my soul." The second stanza goes, "When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down, when I was sinking down...beneath God's righteous frown, Christ laid aside His crown for my soul..."

Application

Jesus Christ loves you! He loves you so much – and He demonstrated His love by becoming a man and dying for you. How much do you love Him, and what are doing to show your love for Him? Read John 14:21,23.

Thought Questions

1. Who decided what Jesus would be named? _____
2. How many names does Jesus have? _____
3. What does Immanuel mean? _____
4. How much does Jesus love us? _____

Activity

Put together a care package for someone who could use some love and encouragement – maybe a senior saint, a single person, a missionary or a college student. Have each member of your family contribute a short note and include some treats (candy or cookies) that this person would enjoy.

Read Matthew 1:18-23

Jesus was a common name among Jewish males in the time of the first century. It comes from a Hebrew background, just as “Immanuel” does. “Je” is derived from Jehovah, meaning Lord or God (probably pronounced *Yah* in Hebrew). “Sus” comes from the word meaning “salvation,” “saves,” or “rescues.” So the name Jesus means *Jehovah saves* or *God saves*. The strictly Hebrew form of this name is Joshua or Jehoshua. You might remember some of the stories of the Old Testament bearer of this name.

Even though this name was ordained by God the Father and given to Mary and Joseph by angelic messenger, “Jesus” is the Lord’s human, first or given name. It represents His human nature, the fact that He is fully human, and is often used in contexts that draw our attention to His humanity. Jesus wept, He became hungry, He was weary. We should not forget that Jesus did not merely occupy a human body: He *became* human with all of our limitations, emotions, and weaknesses. Yet He never sinned. Because He is a human being, He is uniquely qualified to be our High Priest. He is the One who relays our prayers to God the Father. Because He has lived here on earth as one of us, He can understand and sympathize with our problems, temptations and difficulties.

Not only is Jesus the Lord’s human name, it also is connected with His physical return from heaven. The angel in Acts 1:11 tells the apostles, “This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.” And in Philippians 2:9-11, Jesus is the name of the glorified Savior at whose feet all the world will one day bow: “Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow,

of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Application

Have you thought recently about what it means to pray “in Jesus’ Name”? We do not have the right to go into God’s throne room without the proper authorization or credentials. Even if you are the president or king or the richest person ever – if you don’t have the right credentials, you can’t have your prayers brought before God’s throne. This is why only Christians can claim God as our Father – through the blood of Jesus Christ; and this is why we pray “in Jesus’ Name.” John 14:13 and John 16:24 tell us to ask in His Name.

Thought Questions

True or False?

1. No one else was ever named “Jesus.”
2. “Jesus” and “Joshua” are the same name.
3. The name “Jesus” represents Jesus’ human nature.
4. Anyone can pray to God in any way he or she wants, and God will answer.

Activity

Make a prayer list as a family – include both everyday kinds of requests and special ones. Put the requests on individual 3x5 cards, and place them in a paper bag. Pass the bag around after dinner and have each family member pray for the request that he or she takes out of the bag. A more permanent form of the same activity can be to tape requests onto metal orange juice can lids, and store them in an empty “Pringles” potato chip can.

Read II Timothy 1: 8-10

The idea of “save” or “savior” is based on the concept of rescuing – it assumes that something or somebody is in trouble, and that someone else is going to rescue him from those bad circumstances. Picture a house on fire, and a person leaning out a window crying, “Save me! Save me!” What that person wants is for a firefighter to get a ladder and get him out of the burning building!

The reason that the title “Savior” is so precious to us is that our situation was so awful, so desperate, it almost defies description. We were dead – without any spiritual life at all (Ephesians 2:1), and under the just sentence from God of eternal death in the lake of fire. But God, who is not only a righteous Judge, but also a merciful Friend, sent Someone to rescue us from our pitiable state. That Someone, our Savior, is Jesus Christ.

II Timothy 1:10 says that “our Savior Christ Jesus,” abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Our Savior has destroyed the power of death, and made it meaningless for believers. If you have trusted Jesus Christ as the Savior who paid the price for your sins, then death has no sting for you! He has saved you and rescued you from the fear of hell forever!

Not only has our Savior saved us from the penalty of our sins, He has also saved us from the evil of the world. Titus 2:11-14 tells us that we can deny ungodliness and worldly desires; and it is possible to live a righteous, holy and God-honoring life, because of the Savior. Not only is the future secure for God’s children, but the present has meaning and hope because of Him, as well.

Application

I hope that you are reading this as a believer in Jesus as your personal Savior – not just as an important Person, not just as a Baby who is the reason for Christmas. I hope that you have come to recognize your need of the Savior, and have put all your trust and confidence in Him. If you have, then the application is: thank the Savior for His supreme sacrifice! By His grace you know what Christmas is about. If, however, you have never come to the point where you know that you are a sinner, and you have never believed in Him as your own, personal Savior for your personal sins, then why wait any longer? He loves you more intensely than you can imagine, and He desires to secure your place in heaven and give you joy and peace. Will you trust Him now?

Thought Questions

1. Whom did God send to save us? _____
2. From what fear did Jesus rescue us? _____

3. Not only are we secure in the future, our _____
has meaning and hope as well.
4. If we have already trusted Jesus as Savior, we need to
_____ Him for His supreme sacrifice.

Activity

It's time for another Christmas Knowledge Quiz. See if you can fill in the blanks below. After the blanks are correctly filled in, the beginning letter of each answer will spell out an important Bible place.

- “You will find the _____ wrapped in swaddling clothes...”

- Mary's cousin's name was _____.
- Tradition, not the Bible, says this was the number of the wise men: _____.
- The name of the wicked king of Judea when Jesus was born _____.
- "Because he was of the house and _____ of David."
- Wise men from the _____ arrived in Jerusalem.
- "...A multitude of the heavenly _____ praising God..."
- "Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the _____ Father."
- The gifts of the magi were: gold, frankincense and _____.

Clue for the acrostic: "House of Bread."

Read Luke 2:10 & II Timothy 4:17-18

Now it is an amazing thought to consider that the angel told the shepherds, “Today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ **the Lord**.” Can you imagine calling a newborn baby “Lord?” Yet that is exactly Who Jesus was, even at His birth. What does it mean that Jesus is “Lord”? There are several concepts wrapped up in this one title – let’s study them.

First there is the idea of ownership. The word in Greek (kurios: κύριος) has to do with the master of a slave. It carries in it the idea of someone who has bought, and therefore owns, a slave or servant. Actually Jesus Christ is doubly our owner: He created us (Colossians 1:16,17) and He bought us from slavery to sin by His own blood (I Peter 1:18,19). The thought of “slavery” or being “owned” by Jesus may seem strange, or even undesirable to us, until we realize that we must be slaves to *something*. We are creatures, and are not independent. We are either slaves of Satan, sin and death, or we are slaves to God; but we can’t be anything else.

Connected to this ownership is the matter of authority. Most people spend their whole lives running away from authority. But Jesus Christ is Lord, and they will one day bow their knees in front of Him. Instead of running from the control of Christ, we should welcome it. We actually can rejoice in our Savior’s authority over us: the Bible commands us to “Rejoice in the Lord” (Philippians 4:1). We desire to have His gracious, loving hand guiding us and directing us. This lordship provides us with purpose in life. Just like a slave who loved his master, desired to do the best possible job for him, and to please him with every action, we too desire to be pleasing to our Lord (II Corinthians 5:9).

Also, there is security. Since it is the work of the Lord to save us by His death and resurrection, and since we are “in Christ,” we do not need to fear any evil thing. We are His special possession, and He will protect us and bring us safely to heaven to be with Him (II Timothy 4:18).

Application

Most Christians readily affirm with their lips that “Jesus is Lord of my life.” There is often a discrepancy for many of us, however, in that our decisions, motivations and behavior are more about ourselves than about the Lord. Is Christ truly Lord of your life right now, not just in word, but in deed? If not, then why not bow before the Lord of glory, confess your sins, and ask His help in dealing with those areas in which you have not been obeying and honoring Him as Lord?

Thought Questions

True or False?

1. Jesus wasn’t Lord until He grew up.
2. Jesus owns us.
3. One day we will all bow our knees before Jesus.
4. Since we are “in Christ” we do not need to fear anything.

Activity

Unscramble these words having to do with the concept of Jesus as Lord.

1. woenrphsi _____
2. yiotauhrt _____

3. scueiryt _____
4. sslvae _____
5. orLd _____
6. selav _____
7. termas _____
8. joirece _____
9. tecprotion _____

THE GLORY OF THE LORD SHONE ROUND ABOUT



Read Malachi 4:5 & 6 and John 3:16 & 17

There is something mysterious about Christmas. Of course, the darkness of the winter night, the smoke rising from chimneys, and people scurrying about with secret gift boxes and packages all contribute to the air of mystery around the holiday season. But I mean that the fact of Christmas itself has something about it that we can't quite comprehend. In fact, there are at least five mysteries that I can think of concerning Jesus' birth.

1. Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem and not in some larger town? The capital of the Roman world was, of course, Rome. In the Roman province of Syria (including Judea), the largest city was Jerusalem: formerly the capital of Jesus' ancestor, David. And what about Caesarea Maritima, the coastal city which the Romans built and thought of as the capital of Israel?

Of course, Luke chapter 2 gives us some of the reasons why Jesus was born in the little village of Bethlehem. Caesar Augustus, the emperor of Rome had issued a decree that ordered all the subjects of Rome to go the place where their ancestry was listed for a census, or count of the people. This was going to form the basis of a tax for the Roman government. Since Mary and Joseph were both from the ancestry of King David, they had to go to David's hometown: Bethlehem. But Jesus' birth in Bethlehem is also the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Remember Micah 5:2? It said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Jesus fulfilled every single prophecy that was required for Him to prove that He is the Messiah.

2. Why were Herod and “all Jerusalem” troubled when they heard that the King of the Jews had been born? We think of the birth of a baby as a joyous occasion. So do most people – unless they feel threatened by the newcomer. Herod was fearful and angry and jealous of the new Baby because his heart was full of the darkness of sin. John 1:5 tells us that Jesus is the Light; wherever He shines, the darkness doesn’t like It and rejects It. It takes the work of the Holy Spirit in someone’s heart to cause Him to see and understand the Light of Jesus Christ.

3. Why does the Christmas story begin with the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist? It seems a little strange, doesn’t it – to start off the greatest story ever told by talking about the Messiah’s *messenger*? Yet this too, is in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Malachi 4:5,6, you see, teach us that the forerunner of the Messiah will have an important job to do in turning back the hearts of the people to God. Additionally, Isaiah 40:3-5 tell us about this messenger or herald. It is important to realize that even though God’s divine plan is eternal, vast and sweeping, He still uses people. That’s right – just like He used John the Baptist to go in front of Jesus Christ and call attention to the Lord, God uses you and me in His great plan, if we are clean vessels for His purpose.

4. Why was the announcement of Jesus’ birth given to *shepherds*? Why didn’t God send the angels to announce with their silver tongues the grandest news ever heard in the bedrooms of palaces, kings’ courts, and generals’ marshalling yards? Why wasn’t it shouted from the Holy of Holies in the temple? Why didn’t God broadcast it from the mountaintops to the whole world? There is a great theme of humility in the nativity of Jesus. Remember that this is the story of God stooping down to become human – never leaving His deity – but taking on human flesh and nature without sin (see

Philippians 2:1-8 and Hebrews 4:14-16). The lowly cattle shed, the linen swaddling clothes, the humble people to whom God told the news – all indicate the humility, meekness and gentleness of the One whose birth the angels announced. God announced the birth of His Son in tiny Bethlehem to exactly the people He wanted to: humble shepherds.

5. But the greatest and most mysterious question of all is simply the question, *Why?* Why would God the Father ordain such a plan? Why would God the Son be willing to carry it out? The answer is simple, though incomprehensible to us. Ephesians 4:4 gives us the answer: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us...” Galatians 4:4,5 gives us the purpose of this plan: “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” God *loved* us and sent His Son into the world, to be born into a humble place as a gentle Baby, and then to die as the payment for your sins and mine. This simple answer is the greatest Christmas mystery of all: why would God love us sinners so much? I think that through the ages of eternity we will be trying to understand this mystery more completely.

Application

According to Ephesians 3:14-19, if you spend some time thinking about the love of Christ, and praying that God would help you to understand it better, it could change your life. God says so. Why not spend a few minutes right now thinking about the cattle shed in Bethlehem, the hills of Galilee, and the place called Golgotha?

Thought Questions

Multiple Choice Quiz:

1. Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem?
 - a) It was a really big, important town
 - b) To fulfill prophecy
 - c) It was the capital of Israel
2. When Herod heard about Jesus' birth, he was
 - a) jealous
 - b) happy
 - c) encouraged
3. John the Baptist's mission was to
 - a) deal with Herod
 - b) take the census
 - c) call attention to Jesus
4. To whom did the angel give the news of Jesus' birth?
 - a) Herod
 - b) Shepherds
 - c) John

Activity

There are lots of great Christmas tracts available. No doubt your church has a supply of them. The best way to use tracts is to give them to someone you know, or with whom you have established a relationship. People are more likely to read a tract from someone whose face and name they know. But you can also simply leave a tract for someone to find. Why not get some tracts and make it your goal to give one to three different people today?

December 19

The Bethlehem Hilton

Read Philippians 2:1-11

Luke 2:7 tells us that there “was no room for them in the inn.” Apparently there was only one inn in the vicinity of Bethlehem, and it was probably full of other people who had been forced to travel because of the census, though we don’t know that for certain. Do you think the inn was a Holiday Inn? Or maybe a Hilton? No, they didn’t have inns like what we think of today. But whatever accommodations were there, it was all full! So Joseph, trying to care for Mary who was going to give birth at any time, found the only shelter that was available. There are caves in the area of Bethlehem that have been used for centuries for sheep and other animals. According to tradition, it was in one of these sheep-fold caves that Mary delivered Jesus, wrapped Him in strips of linen, and laid Him in the feed-trough.

This makes me think of a Christmas text in the Bible – though it is not often considered a Christmas passage. Philippians 2:6,7 teach us that Jesus Christ, though God, humbled Himself and became a man. He left behind the splendors and glories and honors of heaven to come to – a cattle-shed? He was born there because there was no room for them in the inn. This typifies the response of so many people to Jesus Christ. John 1:10 tells us that He came to His own people, and they did not receive Him.

In fact, as we already saw on December 8, Jesus never owned His own house or lived in a rich dwelling. In many of the houses and buildings where He preached and taught, He was not welcome. In the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth, He was rejected by His own villagers (see Luke 4:16-20,28,29). In the temple, the Sadducees and chief priests were looking for a way to kill Him (Luke 20:1, 19,20). He was once invited to a Pharisee’s home for dinner, but they

didn't really want Him – they were looking for a way to trap Him (Luke 14:1-4).

But there were a few houses in which Jesus ministered where He was received, loved and worshiped. Mary, Martha and Lazarus had one such house. Zaccheus' home was another.

Application

I wonder what kind of house you have? I don't mean two-story, or white or with a garage. I mean, is the Lord Jesus Christ honored, loved and worshiped there? Is His Name spoken with reverence? How about your own heart? Does He occupy the place of Lord and King on the throne of your heart?

Did you know that Jesus is right now preparing a home *for you*? That's right, John 14:3 tells us that Jesus, once rejected by men here on earth, is now preparing an eternal dwelling, because He wants you to live with Him. In this lifetime, is Christ at home in your life?

Thought Questions

1. Was there room for Jesus in the inn of Bethlehem? _____
2. Jesus was born in a _____.
3. Was Jesus welcomed everywhere on earth? _____
4. What is Jesus doing now? _____

Activity

Get out an old photo album and spend some time with your family enjoying the pictures together. Don't forget to pray for people you see in the photos, and maybe even write a card to them. Make sure to thank God for your family and home.

December 20

The Swaddling Clothes of Christ

Read Luke 2:7 & 12

Yesterday we learned a little about the stable or sheep-fold where Mary might have laid Jesus after giving birth to Him. Today we will study for a few minutes about the clothes in which she wrapped Him. The sign which the angel gave to the shepherds was not that they would find the Baby wrapped in cloth. All Jewish babies in the time of the Bible were wrapped in long strips of linen, usually with their arms bound tightly to their sides. It was felt that this comforted the newborn and gave him security. The sign of the Savior was rather that He was laid in a manger – something highly unusual. Both His manger-bed and His swaddling clothes are indications of God the Son becoming “a little lower than the angels,” as the book of Hebrews puts it.

Jesus’ clothing is mentioned on a couple of other occasions in the record of His earthly ministry. There was a very sick woman who touched “the fringe of His cloak” (Matthew 9:20) – maybe one of the tassels which Jews wore on their outer garments – to be healed. Then there was the change which Peter, James and John saw in Jesus’ garments when He was transfigured. This scene gives us a hint as to what the Son of God looks like in His deity. Matthew tells us that His face began to glow, and that His clothing “became as white as light” (Matthew 17:2). This experience stuck with Peter; many years later he wrote about being “eyewitnesses of His majesty” (II Peter 1:16).

At the time of Jesus’ trial, crucifixion and burial, His clothing is again mentioned. The soldiers divided up His mantle, or robe, into four parts; but they cast lots (like throwing dice) for His tunic or inner garment (John 19:23). And when He was buried, as was the custom in those days, His body was again wound up with strips of linen (John 19:40). We are reminded that “though He was rich, yet for

your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (II Corinthians 8:9).

The story of Jesus’ clothing doesn’t end with His burial, however. There are two places where the Bible records something about His garments after His return to heaven. Revelation 1:13 tells us John’s view of Jesus Christ during the vision he had on the isle of Patmos. And Revelation 19:13 tells us about the clothing Jesus will wear when He returns to earth to claim His throne and do battle with the evil forces arrayed against Him by the antichrist and Satan. His eyes are like a flame of fire, His feet like glowing bronze and His white robe, for the battle of Armageddon, has been dipped in blood. We must remember that Jesus came as the gentle Savior, newborn and wrapped in strips of cloth. But when He returns the second time, He will not be the Babe of Bethlehem; rather He will be the King and Conqueror of the world!

Application

How do you think of Jesus? It is easy at Christmastime to picture Him as the gentle Baby in the hay – and he was. But don’t forget that this same Baby came to die on the cross for your sins and mine, and that one day He is coming back to judge the world. He is no longer the Baby, now He is the King. Are you living like He is your King?

Thought Questions

1. As a baby, Jesus was dressed in _____.
2. When a man, Jesus wore a _____.
3. When Jesus was crucified, soldiers cast lots for his _____.
4. When Jesus returns He will wear a _____ robe.

Activity

Tonight, get all the family together around the Christmas tree. Turn off all the other lights in the house and sing some Christmas carols. Share a testimony of what Jesus means to you.

December 21 Great Things in the Christmas Story

Read Luke 1:32

The Greek word for “great” is *mega* (in Greek script it looks like this: *μεγα*). You can see it carried over into English in words like megaphone and megalith. Four times in the narrative surrounding the Christmas story, the word *mega* occurs. Let’s look at these great things.

First, the Great One Himself is described in Luke 1:32: “He will be *great* and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.” This description of Jesus is given by Gabriel the angel to Mary when he tells her that she will be the Lord’s mother. Of all the great people down through the ages – like Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Aristotle, George Washington, David and Hezekiah – none can compare with the greatness of Jesus Christ. He alone is worthy of all honor, praise and worship. He alone is the Most High God and perfect Man; He only has gone through the doorway of death, conquered it, and opened the door to heaven for all who will believe. He is the King, the Savior, and the Righteous One! If you want to think about great things, think about Jesus, the Great One!

Notice also Luke 2:9, “And the angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terribly frightened.” The King James Version here says, “...they were sore afraid.” If we were to translate this phrase literally it would be, “they were frightened with *great* fear.” Do you remember when Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the Lord? She was “very perplexed;” but the angel told her, “Fear not.” The Roman soldiers posted at the tomb of the Savior fainted, apparently from fear at the appearance of the angel there. The angel told the women who came to the grave: “Fear not” (Matthew 28:5). Evidently the normal human response to the

reflected glory of God that radiates from angels (perhaps in the same way that the moon glows with the energy of the sun), is to be filled with great fear. But for those whom God loves, there is no fear in love, because His love casts out fear (I John 4:18). But for those who do not trust in God, there is reason to fear.

The last two places where “mega” occurs in the nativity story we will consider together. One is Luke 2:10, the verse right after the angel appeared to the shepherds and they were greatly afraid: “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of *great* joy, which shall be for all the people.’” The other occurrence is found in Matthew 2:10 where the magi “rejoiced exceedingly with *great* joy” when they saw the star. Both of these passages have to do with great joy, connected to the arrival of the Savior. The best, the greatest news ever, is that God loves you and me in spite of our sin, and has dealt with the sin-problem through Jesus Christ His Son. There is reason for great rejoicing this Christmas, and every day for the rest of your life, if you know Him as your personal Savior.

Application

Have you thought about great things yet this Christmas season? Maybe, in spite of this devotional and your efforts at making Christ the center of this season, you are still rushed, harassed, over-busy and joyless. Why not spend a few minutes in prayer right now, asking God for help to make Jesus Christ the focus of your attention and the One you will seek to please for the next five days?

Thought Questions

Name the four things mentioned as great:

1. Hint – the greatest One of all time is _____.

2. Hint – the shepherds’ feeling upon seeing the angel:
_____.
3. Hint – the angel’s message: Good news of great _____.
4. Hint – the magi rejoiced with great _____.

Activity

Play a game of hangman using various characters of Christmas. One person is the guesser. He calls letters of the alphabet one at a time. If he is right the letters are put into their proper places (if there are double letters in a word, they all get into place. For example, the word “baby” has two “b’s”. If the guesser calls “b”, both “b’s” are placed in the answer.) When an alphabet letter is called that is NOT in the answer, the poor man who gets hung is begun. He is given a head for the first error, a body for the second, a leg each for the next two guesses, an arm each for the next two guesses and then a face for the last guess. If the puzzle isn’t solved by this time, the guesser loses and it becomes another person’s turn.

Someone other than the guesser can find the word list on page 115.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T
U V W X Y Z

Read Luke 1:32; 2:14

A couple of times in the Christmas story the word “highest” is used. Gabriel used it to describe to Mary how her Son would not have a human father, but would be the Son of the **Most High**” (Luke 1:32, 35). The angel choir announced before the shepherds, “Glory to God in **the highest**” (Luke 2:14). It obviously means the highest – the most elevated thing possible. In these cases, it refers to Christ Who is the Son of the Most High, meaning God; and to the most elevated kind of praise and worship which creatures can give to their Creator. Only God can be the Father Who is worthy of the title “Most High” and only He is deserving of glory in the highest.

This word occurs only a few other times in the New Testament. At the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the crowds shouted out, “Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:10; Luke 19:38). Demons recognized Jesus for Who He is: “What business do we have with each other, Jesus Son of the Most High God?” (Luke 8:28). A demon-possessed girl called Paul and Barnabas “servants of the Most High God” (Acts 16:17); and Melchizedek, the mysterious Old Testament priest, is called a “priest of the Most High God” in Hebrews 7:1.

Interestingly, Jesus uses the phrase once, in Luke 6:38 - “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High God; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.”

It is possible for Christians to reflect something of the glory and love of the Most High to people around us. How we respond to situations of trouble and trial can either glorify the Most High or dishonor Him. What a remarkable thing that

God has shown us what His character is like through His Son – full of glory and power, yet also compassionate, kind and self-sacrificing.

Application

Are you living your life in such a way that people around you give glory to God in the highest possible way? Do you settle for mediocre Christian living, or do you strive with God's help for the highest and the best for God's glory? If you were to offer a gift to Jesus that would honor Him as the Son of the Most High, what would it be?

Thought Questions

True or False?

1. Gabriel is called the Son of the Most High.
2. The word "Most High" is found only in the Old Testament.
3. It is possible for Christians to reflect something of the glory and love of the Most High to people around us.
4. God has shown us what His character is like through His Son.

Activity

Take turns as a family sharing some of your favorite Christmas memories from past years. Why were they special? What about this year is special?

December 23

The Word Made Flesh

Read John 1:1-14

If the Christmas story found in the gospel of Luke is a string quartet, then John chapter one is an orchestra. John chapter one touches on themes of epic proportions: light vs. darkness, God's grace vs. man's sin; the grandeur of the Word and the lowliness of the flesh. Let's look at four truths concerning the Word (the Son of God) becoming flesh (human) found in John 1:1-14.

First of all, there is the Majesty of the Word, found in verses 1-4. John consciously uses the same language as Genesis chapter one: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." He does so to set the tone for the majesty, creative power and awesomeness of God the Son. He declares that the Son shares the same essence as God Himself – He and the Father are one. He states that the Word (Jesus Christ) is the One who made the world and everything in it. This is confirmed in Colossians 1:15-19 and Hebrews 1:3. The Word is also the One Who gives life. I John 1:1 tells us that He is the Word of life – He causes life to happen. He spoke and the planets sprang into existence; He willed it and the dust of the ground became living creatures.

Not only is He the Creator and Life-giver, He is the *Word*. The Greek word here is probably one you have seen before or heard about. It is the term *logos* (in Greek script it looks like: λογος). Logos is the word from which we get our terms logic, -logy (like in biology, and hematology). The *Word* is that which gives meaning and sense to life. Without Him, not only would the universe not exist; apart from Him it doesn't make any sense.

Now contrast all that is contained in the *Word* with the concept of the Meekness of the Flesh. "Flesh" takes in all that it means to be a human being, complete with our nature

(without sin in Jesus, of course), our bodies, our limitations, weaknesses, illnesses, emotions. God the Creator became a creature. How could this be? Why would He do this? Not only did He become flesh, a human being, but even beyond this, He was rejected by us! Verses 10 and 11 tell us that He came to His own, and they did not receive Him. The Jewish people as a whole turned their back on the Messiah, as has most of humanity. The Creator came to display His love to His creatures, and was rejected by them.

Notice third the Manifestation of His Glory. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus Christ is the declaration and explanation of Who God is. While the Hebrew people had a view of God’s glory, power, holiness and wrath from their experiences with Him, and His declaration of Himself in the Old Testament, Jesus Christ shows in human flesh the reality of God’s love, mercy, compassion, and His majesty. And consider this: “He dwelt among us.” The word “dwelt” means “tabernacled” or “lived in a tent of skin.” The eternal God actually lived among us, as One of us! What wondrous love is this, o my soul!

The Mission of the Lamb is introduced to us in this same great chapter of John’s gospel. Verse 29 gives us John the Baptist’s formal introduction of the Messiah to the Jewish nation: “Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!” The reason that the Son of God became a Man and lived among us was to become a sacrifice for our sin. He was born and laid in the manger so that He could die and be laid in the tomb, then rise again victorious over death and with life and liberty for all who will believe in Him. The Word gives meaning and life in this lifetime, and for all eternity.

Application

Where do you find meaning and fulfillment in life? If you are looking for it anywhere but in Christ, you are really empty, and are setting yourself up for loneliness, despair and disappointment. Jesus Christ is the One Who fulfills (see Colossians 1:19). How is your relationship to Him today?

Thought Questions

1. John 1:1 is similar to what Old Testament passage?

2. The Word is also the One who gives _____.
3. The Creator came into the world as a man, but was _____ by us.
4. The Son of God became a human and lived among us so that He could be a _____ for our sins.

Activity

Have a Bible Sword Drill tonight. One person is the caller and tells the rest what the verse will be. The rest of the group each hold their Bible in the air until the verse is called out. They repeat it. The caller says, "Charge!" And the fun begins. The first person to find the verse reads it out loud. This game not only build speed in the use of your Bible, but is a chance to read from God's Word. Reading from God's Word is a wonderful privilege we should never take for granted.

Verses to call out:

Genesis 1:1

John 1:1

Isaiah 9:6-7

Matthew 1:18-20

Matthew 1:21

Luke 2:1-5

Luke 2:6-7

Luke 2:8-11

Matthew 1:22-23

Luke 2:15-17

December 24

The Darkest of Nights

Read I Thessalonians 5:1-8

We are told that the angel came to the shepherds near Bethlehem at night with the good news of Jesus' birth. Night in the Bible is often associated with danger, sin and evil. David speaks of making his bed "swim with tears" during a night of grief in Psalm 6:6. Psalm 91:5 speaks of the "terror by night;" and in Psalm 104:20 night is the time in which "all the wild beasts of the forest prowl about."

There is such a thing as the darkness of sin, as well. John chapter one tells us that Jesus Christ, the Light "shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." Sin is evil, ignorance and hatred against God. All of this is the night, the darkness. The darkest of nights is the human heart where Jesus is not present - where pride, selfishness and fear reign. But Jesus is the Light! Where He enters into a life, there is sunshine, understanding, love and truth.

It is strange that so many Christians –those who have seen and understood the Light – would go back to living in darkness. Why would people who have come to the Light want to live as though they were in darkness? Yet many Christians still want to do the old things – the sinful and "fun" activities they see the world doing. Little do they realize that all of those things are in the darkness, in the night of sin and wickedness. In Romans 13:12, Christians are commanded, "The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."

Application

Can you imagine what it would be like if your Christmas lights didn't work? Not only that, but your house electricity went off, too. Not just yours – the whole town: all the houses,

shops, streetlights were dark. The whole world is in the blackness of sin. What would Christmas be like if the Light had not come?

What do you think it means in I Thessalonians when Paul says, “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief, for you are all sons of light and sons of day”?

Thought Questions

1. At what time did the angel come to the shepherds near Bethlehem? _____
2. _____ is darkness.
3. Jesus, however, is _____.
4. Christians are to put on the armor of _____.

Activity

If your church is having a candlelight service, make sure you plan your day so you won't miss it! If not, why not have a candlelight service of your own. Sing Christmas carols, read the Christmas story, share testimonies of praise of the goodness and glory of God.

THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE BIRTH OF THE LORD



December 25

**Christmas Day: The Arrival of the
Son of God**

Read the Christmas Story, Luke 2:1-20

What a simple story this is! Certainly it doesn't need any help from anything that we might add. I am simply going to quote the words of a Christmas carol, "Once in Royal David's City." The words were written by Cecil Alexander. This song is one that you may not be very familiar with; but its words are worth noting.

*Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child.*

*He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall:
With the poor, and mean, and lowly
Lived on earth, our Savior holy.*

*Jesus is our childhood's pattern,
Day by day like us He grew;
He was little, weak and helpless,*

*Tears and smiles like us He knew
And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness*

*And our eyes at last shall see Him
Through His own redeeming love;
For that Child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in heaven above,
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.*

Application

Thank God the Father for His redeeming love, and the Lord Jesus for His willingness to carry through the plan of salvation for us!

Read Matthew 16;13-16

Who do people say that Jesus Christ is? Who is the Christ of Christmas? For many people, He is simply the symbol of world peace, some kind of unattainable hope. For others He is the quintessential social advocate – the very first Person to try to help the poor, the homeless and the marginalized.

Even in Jesus' own day, this question was a hot one. Many folks in the crowds who followed Him thought that He was John the Baptist come back to life, or a great prophet. Herod, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were all asking this same question, Who is Jesus of Nazareth? Relatively few really stopped to consider the answer. The villagers in Jesus' hometown asked, "Is this not the carpenter's son?" Jesus' own apostles asked each other: "Who is this, that even the wind and the waves obey Him?"

If the common answer is accepted (that Jesus was just a good man and a great example), then we actually have no reason to celebrate Christmas. If Jesus is merely a human being who preached love and peace, then our faith is hollow and Christmas is meaningless. But if He is indeed, as He claimed, the Son of God, equal with God the Father in power, authority and nature, sent from heaven to die in our place as the payment for our sins, then there is reason for joy and reason for celebration.

Interestingly, the magi seemed to have a grasp of the true identity of Jesus when they followed His star to Bethlehem. The magi evidently were astronomers and scholars from Persia who had intently studied about the King of Jews, and had traveled, perhaps for months, to meet Him in person. Their gifts indicate a level of understanding about Who Jesus Christ was and what He was here to accomplish.

Gold is often associated with royalty in the Bible. King David, after he had defeated the Ammonites, took the crown of their king and had it put on his head. It weighed 75 pounds! (See II Samuel 12:30.) David dedicated vast amounts of materials, including about 112 tons of gold for the temple of Jehovah, which Solomon was to build (I Chronicles 29:4). The wise men gave gold to Jesus because they recognized Him as King. Remember how they asked in Jerusalem, “Where is He who is born King of the Jews?” Jesus is King!

Frankincense was an important ingredient in the special incense that was burned in the tabernacle and temple before God. No one was allowed to duplicate the recipe used for that incense: it was God’s alone. Incense indicates the presence and worship of deity; that is, the wise men seemed to know that Jesus is God. Indeed, the magi “fell to the ground and worshiped Him” (Matthew 2:11). Jesus Christ is God, and He is worthy of worship!

Myrrh was the third gift given to Christ by the magi. This is a strange gift for a young child, because myrrh was used in the preparation of dead bodies for burial (see John 19:39). Could the magi possibly have known that this Baby was going to die for the sin of mankind? We can only speculate on the depth of their understanding, but their worship of Jesus, their visions from God, and their gifts to the Lord show a keen awareness of His unique nature and mission.

Application

Who do you say that Jesus is? He is more than the carpenter’s son – He is the Son of God. He is not merely a teacher; He is the Creator. He is beyond merely a reformer – He is perfect Lamb of God, the Savior of all who put their trust in Him. As the angel told the shepherds, “Today there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Who do you say that Jesus is?

Thought Questions

1. Did people in Jesus' time know Who He was? _____
2. Was Jesus simply a good man? _____
3. Did the Magi seem to understand Who Jesus really was? _____
4. Is Jesus YOUR Savior? _____

Activity

Draw a Christmas tree, add some ornaments, add a star, add some gifts underneath the tree, and, oh, yeah – do it with the paper on a book placed on your head! Let the person who did the best job get out of doing dishes tonight.

Read Matthew 2:10 and III John 4

In the Christmas story in the Bible we find the phrase “great joy” in connection with the angel’s good news in Luke 2:10, and with the magi following the star of Jesus to where He lay in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:10). These words also occur in two other kinds of settings in the New Testament. Let’s take a look at these contexts.

1. *There is great joy in the Person of Christ.* The angel declared, “I bring you good news of great joy...there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10,11). Who could fail to rejoice at such good news? When we comprehend the reality of our sin problem, the coming of the Savior is news of great joy! The wise men’s response to the star of Christ is cast in a repetitive phrase, a favorite technique of Hebrew expression: “they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.” Joy is used as both a verb and a noun. Why were these mysterious travelers from the east so overjoyed? Psalm 16:11 says, “In Your presence there is fullness of joy.” In the presence and person of Jesus Christ, there is always joy, delight and satisfaction.

When all the world wakes up on the morning after Christmas, they discover that the gifts are old news; the family members from out of town are packing to leave; the problems they had on the 24th are still there. In essence, nothing really has changed; there is no new joy; the emptiness that was present before is now more pronounced. But for those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, there is a difference not just on the day after the big celebration, but every day of our lives. For us, the promise of our beloved Friend holds true constantly: “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). In His presence there is great joy, fullness of joy!

2. *There is great joy in the Proclamation of Christ.* After our Savior went back to heaven, He left us with some tasks to accomplish. In this church age, we must edify the saints and boldly proclaim the good news of Christ the Savior. Acts chapter eight records what happened when the good news of Jesus Christ reached the community of Samaria. Verse five of this chapter tells us, “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.” Miracles and amazing events accompanied his preaching, and in verse eight it says, “So there was much rejoicing.” The good news of salvation in Christ is cause for great joy. Similarly, in Acts 15:3, there was great rejoicing when Paul and Barnabas reported to the Jerusalem church about the impact the gospel was having on the Gentile world.

3. *Lastly, there is great joy in the practice of Christianity.* The aging apostle John wrote in III John 4, “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.” Joy is found not only in relation to the person of Christ, not just in telling about salvation in Him; there is joy in putting into practice the principles and truths of biblical obedience and godliness in our lives. Not only do we receive joy – by our adherence to the truth we can give joy to other mature believers around us.

Application

It’s almost time to put away the wrapping paper and the Christmas music for another year. Soon the lights and the tree will have to come down. Is your joy disappearing with these external signs of the season? If your focus is on the wonderful person of Christ, and on obeying Him, your joy will be full and permanent.

Thought Questions

Can you remember the three areas of great joy?

1. There is great joy in the _____ of Christ.
2. There is great joy in the _____ of Christ.
3. There is great joy in the _____ of Christianity.

Activity

Play “I remember.” Each family member is encouraged to remember something done as a family this last year and why it was a blessing to them. It would be great if each person could also remember one spiritual lesson or blessing from this last year and share that as well.

Read Luke 2:19, 33, 51

Mary had a special relationship with her Son, the Lord Jesus. She realized, in a deeper way than anyone else, His unique nature, fully aware that He had no human Father. From the very beginning, she absorbed truth about this Child and pondered it in her heart and mind. Three verses, today's Scripture reading, talk about this.

Mary first of all treasured up in her heart all the things that the shepherds related to her, about the angel who had given them heavenly good news regarding the Savior born in Bethlehem, the One who "is Christ, the Lord." Mary stored these pieces of information like precious gems in her heart and mulled them over. She thought about them, and tried to understand God's plan and love through them.

Secondly, Luke 2:33 says that Mary and Joseph were amazed at the things Simeon said about Jesus. Even though she was Jesus' mother, she needed to be reminded of His divine character and mission. There is a danger that Mary faced, and that each Christian faces when we walk with God over a long period of time. The danger is contained in the phrase, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Do you know what that means? Oftentimes, when a man and a woman are first married, they are so much in love and have such great respect for each other, they do not think it will ever fade. Each day they are amazed at the kindness of their spouse, and look for ways to show love. But over the years as they grow used to each other, familiarity causes them to grow calloused and cold toward one another. This is very sad in a marriage, or any kind of good relationship. But it is especially sad when it happens to Christians in their relationship to Jesus Christ. We sometimes become so used to the goodness of God and the blessings we have in salvation through Jesus that we take

Him for granted. This should not be. We need to treasure up the joys, facts and experiences we have with Jesus and fall back on them in times when we feel our love for Him and His Word growing cold.

Thirdly, notice Luke 2:51. This event occurred when Jesus was twelve years old (see v. 42). Every statement from Jesus' lips, every action of His was precious to Mary, because she knew Him not only as her Son, but also as the Son of the Most High God. When Jesus spoke of His Father, she understood He was speaking of God the Father. As the years went by, Mary's heart must have been full of gems – gems of watching her Son, the Christ, as He interacted with people, spoke truth about Himself and the Father, and performed acts of power and kindness.

Application

What do you treasure? Do you have a collection? Some people collect rocks or stamps or coins. I know people who collect interesting teacups and postcards. But one of the best things to collect is experiences with the Lord. Maybe you should even write down your memories of special events and blessings which Jesus has given you. Treasure up facts about the Lord.

Thought Questions

True or False?

1. Mary didn't really understand Who Jesus was.
2. Mary thought about all she had seen and heard and treasured those things.
3. As Christians, sometimes we take Jesus' goodness for granted.
4. Our experiences with the Lord are treasures.

Activity

Think and plan what you'd like to do as a family next year. Think of both spiritual goals, fun activities, and projects to bless others. Get out a new calendar and schedule something!

EPILOGUE



Read Philippians 3:20 & 21

Many people suffer from the “post-holiday blues.” After a big event like Christmas, when there has been lots of activity and lots to anticipate (like family and friends getting together, parties, gifts and music). After it’s all over, a lot of folks feel a great let-down. The family and friends leave, the bills come due, and the mess has to be cleaned up. All the fun is gone, leaving only loneliness and disappointment.

Maybe you’re one of those kinds of people; it’s even possible that you’re feeling blue today. Now that Christmas has come and gone, what can you look forward to now? There are some encouraging and challenging passages of Scripture that can help us anticipate what’s next in God’s plan for our lives.

First, John the apostle writes in II John verse 12, “Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.” There is much to look forward to in the *fellowship of God’s people*. If you are not now involved and committed to serving the Lord in a solid, Bible-believing local church, you are missing one of the great joys of life! When you meet with other Christians in your local church, you are worshiping God, serving Jesus Christ, receiving edification for your spirit and looking for ways to be a blessing to others.

Closely associated with this is a second thing to anticipate, service to the saints. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, “For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?” (I Thessalonians

3:9,10). In these verses we find not only the apostle's great eagerness for personal fellowship with the saints, but also *opportunities for service*. Do you realize that if you are a child of God, your Father has given you tasks to do – jobs to accomplish – for His glory? He wants you to complete your mission in life of growing to be more Christlike, and of ministering to those around you. Much discouragement and depression can be overcome by focusing on the needs of others, instead of feeling sorry for ourselves. This, after all, is the example of Jesus (Philippians 2:1-5).

Thirdly, and better than the best Christmas celebration you can imagine, look forward to the *coming of the Lord Jesus*. Philippians 3:20 tells us, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Christmas, after all, is only the beginning of the story; the culmination of our joy will be meeting our Savior and Friend face to face. We have so much to look forward to! Even if your Christmas this year was the best one ever, do you realize what a pale shadow it is of the real joy of looking into the face of our Beloved Redeemer, through the glorified eyes of a brand new, immortal body?

Application

If you have been a little gloomy the last few days – or maybe even really depressed – think about this: the same God who loved you enough to send His Son to the manger and the cross, loves you to the same degree right now. And He has wonderful plans for you to accomplish until your mission here on earth is done. Follow the command of Hebrews 12:2, and fasten your eyes on Jesus, get up and serve the Lord to the best of your ability!

Thought Questions

1. There is much to look forward to in the _____ of God's people.
2. There is much to look forward to in service to the _____.
3. There is much to look forward to in the coming of _____.
4. We need to fasten our _____ on Jesus and serve the Lord to the best of our ability.

Activity

Compose a "year-in-review" newsletter. List places you've been, major happenings, life-changing events, awards, victories, funny moments, sad moments, etc. Add some photographs and photocopy the whole thing so everyone can have a copy for their memory chests.

December 30

Christmas and Easter

Read Philippians 2:5-11

In reality, Christmas has no meaning without Easter. If Jesus had merely been born and laid in the manger, even as God the Son, what difference would it make? We needed something more than a Baby in the hay – we needed a perfect sacrifice Who would be willing to take the awful punishment for our sins. This Sacrifice would have to take our sins upon Himself willingly, since He had committed no sin (II Corinthians 5:21), and would have to be separated from God the Father in death in order to effectively pay the price for our rebellion against the law of God.

Yes, without Easter and what it signifies, Christmas is really an empty holiday. But Christmas and Easter taken together show us to what lengths God is willing to go to rescue us from eternal death, and from despair and hopelessness right now! God was willing to become a Man, and to suffer the agonies of physical death, along with the torments of spiritual death (separation from God the Father) in order to secure redemption for you and me.

Sometimes those who are so excited about Christmas forget about Easter and the death, burial and resurrection it represents. If Jesus is still the Baby in the manger, we really have no hope of heaven. In fact, if He is still on the cross, we have no hope of eternal life, because it is only through His conquest over death that He secured victory for us. (See I Corinthians 15:19,20.) Praise God that Christmas led to Easter! If you have trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior for the payment of your sins, then you have God's promise that He has a home in heaven for you.

Application

Since Christmas and the Resurrection are real, we have great confidence in God that our lives have meaning and value. What we do matters to God, and has eternal significance. For this reason the apostle Paul says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58). Since we serve not merely a Baby in the manger, but the crucified, risen and victorious Lord of glory, we should be busy about laboring for Him. What are you going to do to serve the Lord Jesus Christ today?

Thought Questions

1. Christmas would have no meaning without _____.
2. If Jesus had stayed a baby, He could have never suffered on the _____ of Calvary.
3. If Jesus had never died on the cross, we wouldn't have salvation from our _____.
4. Since Jesus did save us from our sins, we need to spend our lives _____ Him.

<h2>Activity</h2>

Why not head over to the church tonight and do some job that's been left undone for too long. Straighten a closet, mop a floor, wash the bedding in the nursery, dust the ceiling fans, change some lightbulbs... Keep it a secret between you and the Lord.

Read Ephesians 4:22-24 and Romans 6:3-6

Christmas is past and tomorrow begins a new year. New Year's Day is a great opportunity to look back over the past year to praise God for His provision and blessing, and to evaluate where you stand in your relationship to Him. Even if you are planning on attending New Year's Eve activities today or tonight, why not take some time to analyze your life and set some goals for the new year? Here are three biblical principles about "new things" that can help you in planning how you can please God and grow as a Christian. All three passages use the Greek word for "new" which means new and fresh in quality.

First, in Ephesians 4:22-24, we find the principle of laying aside "the old self" and putting on the "new self." We understand from the book of Romans that the dominating sin principle has been crucified with our Lord, and that we no longer are under slavery to sin. Nevertheless, we still have the sin nature that responds so readily to lusts and temptations. But the command of Ephesians 4:22 is to put off the old way of looking at life, and put on the new one (verse 24), just like you get rid of a set of old, ragged clothes and put on a new set. The new self includes a new way of looking at life. Instead of the old, sinful, self-centered mentality ruled by our own desires and pride, the new self wants to please and glorify the Lord Jesus. It wants to view life as an opportunity to serve God. *This is newness of character.* What goals can you set to help yourself to grow in Christlike character? Why not pray right now and ask God to help you put off old sinful character traits, and with His help replace them with fresh, godly ones?

Second, in Romans 6:3,4, observe *newness of conduct*.. There is the same dual action (negative, then positive) that we observed in Ephesians 4 – we have been baptized into His death in verse 3, so that we can walk in newness of life. The

idea of “walking,” as you know, has to do with how we live, our lifestyle. Many Christians are actually pretty good at doctrine and theory; they often fail, however, when it comes to how they live. They would be hard-pressed to show how their lifestyle is different from that of the world around them, or to demonstrate how Jesus Christ has changed them. How about you? Can you be accurately described as walking in newness of life?

Third, in Romans 7:6, notice that once again there is the mention of a negative – here, we have died to the Law, and there is a positive: we should serve in newness of spirit. This is *newness of concentration*. God sent His Son to give us, through His death, burial and resurrection, eternal life, a free gift. However, once we are a part of God’s family through faith in the blood of Christ, we now desire to engage in service for Him. This is what Ephesians 2:10 teaches us: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” Where is your focus and effort? What are you going to accomplish in the new year? What service will you render, and for whom? What you do for yourself is likely to be temporary and unfulfilling; what you do as service for the Christ of Christmas, your Savior, Lord and King, will have eternal value.

Application

Using the three categories mentioned above, character, conduct and service, what goals will you set for yourself in the new year? Make a list of areas in which you need to grow as a Christian, and then think about strategies to actually carry these goals out.

Thought Questions

1. We need to lay aside our _____ self.
2. We need to _____ on our new self.
3. Our life must be _____ from the people around us.
4. Our _____ for the Lord has eternal value.

Activity

Call someone up and invite them to your church's New Year's Eve Fellowship. If your church isn't having one this year, have one of your own. Start the new year out right by thinking of others before self. Look for ways to be a blessing to someone else today!

THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

What is Christmas *really* about? Most people agree that it is not really about Santa Claus and the gross materialism and commercialism that we see all around the season. One of the silliest things imaginable is department stores putting up their Christmas displays in the middle of October, trying to squeeze every last possible penny out of the “holiday spirit.” Many people who have seen through the shallowness of the commercial aspects of the season would acknowledge that Jesus Christ is important to the holiday, and would suggest that His birth has something to do with peace in our relationships and in the world. And they would be right.

However, most people view Jesus as the *symbol* of peace. That is, the gentle Baby in the hay, quiet and peaceful, symbolizes the hopes and dreams of millions of people whose lives have troubles, problems, conflicts and even despair. Again, those individuals who see Jesus, and the Christmas season, in this light of hope for peace would be right. Jesus does symbolize hope, peace and light.

But He is so much more than that. He is not only the symbol of peace – He *is* peace! Isaiah 9:6 calls Him the Prince of Peace, and Ephesians 2:14 says that He “is our peace.” He has broken down the barrier of sin dividing God and man, and has made possible the relationship which all human beings need more than air, water or peace on earth. This peace with God is only possible because Jesus Christ, the perfect Man as well as God in the flesh, willingly put Himself in the place of you and me, taking our punishment on the cross of Calvary so that we might have peace with God.

This peace with God forms the basis for God’s promise of eternal life in heaven with Him, as well as the blessings He pours out upon those who know Him by faith. And it is solely by faith that we can have this relationship. No amount of good works can ever save us from the penalty of our sins; that

is why Jesus Christ, because of His great love for us, put Himself in our place. His death was for our sins; His goodness was transferred to our account, if we believe in Him and His finished work for us. If you depend on a combination of Jesus' work on the Cross plus your own works, you have diluted your faith, and it is no longer faith. You must trust *Jesus alone* to save you.

What better time, than right now, at Christmas, to put your faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? There is no magic prayer or formula, but you can talk to God in prayer to express your faith. It is your faith in Jesus that saves you. You might say something like this: Dear Lord, I know that I am a sinner, and that I deserve eternal punishment. But right now I am putting all of my faith and trust in Jesus, Your Son, who died to take my punishment. I believe that He died for my sins, and that He rose again, so that I can have eternal life. Thank you for your gift of salvation in Christ. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

ANSWERS TO THOUGHT QUESTIONS

December 1

1. Sin 2. Tree 3. Adam & Eve 4. Jesus Christ

December 2

1. Good News 2. death 3. All 4. confessed

December 3

1. Rescue 2. God 3. Jesus 4. Gift

December 4

1. False 2. True 3. True 4. False

December 5

1. David 2. Jews 3. David, Jesus 4. Disappointed

December 6

1. Hebrews 2. Human 3. Jesus 4. Love

December 7

1. About 700 years 2. God 3. Wonderful 4. Peace

December 8

1. Earth 2. Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Capernaum
3. Around two years old 4. Galilee

December 9

1. Herod 2. Kill Him 3. No 4. God

December 10

1. Psalms 2. leapt for joy 3. Savior 4. Always

December 11

1. Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Wisemen 2. Gabriel
3. God Saves 4. Messenger

December 12

1. God 2. Obedient 3. Protected 4. Important

December 13

1. 8 Days 2. Simeon 3. the Holy Spirit
4. Return of Jesus

December 14

1. God 2. Dozens 3. God with us
4. He Died for us

December 15

1. False 2. True 3. True 4. False

December 16

1. Jesus 2. Fear of Hell/Death 3. Present Life
4. Thank

December 17

1. False 2. True 3. True 4. True

December 18

1. "B" 2. "A" 3. "C" 4. "B"

December 19

1. No 2. Cave 3. No
4. Preparing a Home for Us

December 20

1. Swaddling Clothes 2. Cloak 3. Tunic 4. White

December 21

1. Jesus 2. Fear 3. Joy 4. Joy

December 22

1. False 2. False 3. True 4. True

December 23

1. Genesis 1:1 2. Life 3. Rejected 4. Sacrifice

December 24

1. Night 2. Sin 3. Light 4. Light

December 26

1. No 2. No 3. Yes

December 27

1. Person 2. Proclamation 3. Practice

December 28

1. False 2. True 3. True 4. True

December 29

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|----------|---------|
| 1. Fellowship | 2. Saints | 3. Jesus | 4. Eyes |
|---------------|-----------|----------|---------|

December 30

- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|--------|------------|
| 1. Easter | 2. Cross | 3. Sin | 4. Serving |
|-----------|----------|--------|------------|

December 31

- | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------------|------------|
| 1. Old | 2. Put | 3. Different | 4. Service |
|--------|--------|--------------|------------|

SOLUTIONS TO ACTIVITIES

December 1: Christmas Knowledge Quiz

1. False
2. **f** We can guess, but we don't really know.
3. **e** Read Luke 2:7 carefully. It doesn't record any words from the innkeeper; he may have said something, and he may not have – but the Bible doesn't record it.
4. **f** The Bible doesn't say anything about animals being present.
5. **f** We don't know how many wise men there were, and the Bible does not suggest that they were kings.
6. **a** Only one; later in this episode, a "host" of angels joined him in a chorus of praise to God.
7. **d** "Host" is an army.

December 5: Some truths and fallacies from the Christmas carol, "The First Noel"

True facts from the Bible

First stanza: 1. a single angel; 2. spoke to shepherds; 3. it was night 4. they were watching sheep. Second stanza: no true facts here. Third stanza: 1. the wise men did come from a far country; 2. they were seeking the king; 3. they did follow the star. Fourth stanza: 1. the star did, eventually, lead them to Bethlehem, to where Jesus was. Fifth stanza: 1. the wise men did worship Jesus; 2. they did give Him gold, myrrh and frankincense. Sixth stanza: 1. we certainly should praise God; 2. God did create all things out of nothing; 3. Jesus has paid for us with His blood.

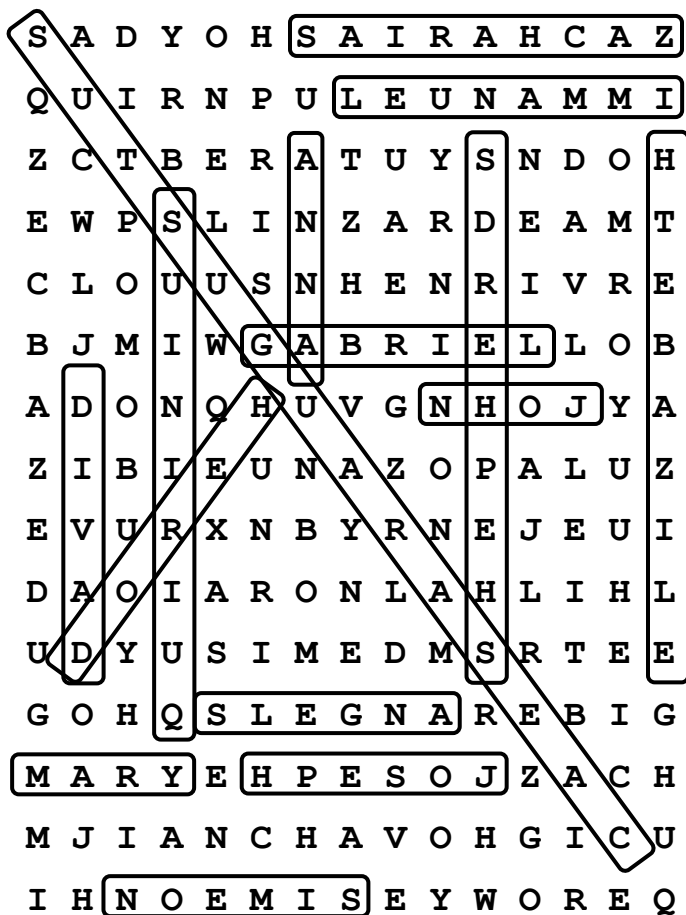
Mistaken ideas not found in the Bible

First stanza: 1. we don't know for sure if Jesus was born in winter or not. Second stanza: 1. the shepherds didn't witness the star – the wise men did; and it appeared 2 years later 2. we don't know if star continued to shine in the day or not. Third stanza: 1. we don't know how many wise men there were. Fourth stanza: 1. the magi actually came first to Jerusalem, not Bethlehem. apparently it had disappeared for a time (read carefully Matthew 2:1-10). Fifth stanza: 1. the Bible says they "worshiped Him," it doesn't mention if they went into the house on their knees.

December 8: Places & Place-Names in the Christmas Story

1. Nazareth
2. Judah (Judea)
3. altar of incense
4. world
5. Syria
6. Galilee...Bethlehem
7. manger...inn
8. field
9. heaven
10. east...Jerusalem
11. Egypt
12. Nazareth

December 10: Christmas Word Search



The hidden word is: IMMANUEL

December 16: Christmas Knowledge Quiz

1. **B**aby
2. **E**lizabeth
3. **T**hree
4. **H**erod
5. **L**ine/**L**ineage
6. **E**ast
7. **H**ost
8. **E**ternal/**E**verlasting
9. **M**yrh

The acrostic is: **BETHLEHEM** (which in Hebrew means “House of Bread”).

December 17: Word Unscramble

1. ownership
2. authority
3. security
4. slaves
5. lord
6. slave
7. master
8. rejoice
9. protection

December 21: Characters of Christmas Hangman

1. Gabriel
2. Herod
3. Elizabeth
4. Joseph
5. Quirinius
6. David

--- THE END ---

