



# *Christmas*

**Celebrating Christ, The Greatest Gift**



# Table of Contents





# Christmas

## Celebrating Christ, The Greatest Gift

### INTRODUCTION

Many families have their own Christmas traditions: Making Christmas cookies and gingerbread houses, caroling, seeing a living nativity, Christmas eve services, family get-togethers, etc. These activities are fun and help us enjoy this season. Yet often, this season is a flurry of activity. We sometimes go from event to event and the season passes before we know it. Sometimes we are so caught up in purchasing gifts, getting to the next event, giving to that good cause, and preparing for the next Christmas get-together that sometimes we may make it through the season without any time of reflection on what this holiday really means.

This family devotional is not meant to be one more thing to cram into an already overpacked season filled with feverous activity and frenzied schedules. It is meant to be a slowdown, a tapping of the brakes, a time for you with your family (or roommates, or friends) to get together, away from the often hectic pace of the season, and remember why we celebrate this Christmas, why this matters for the world, and why this celebration is so special to us as Christians.

Christ. He came here. And He came here for us. He came to rescue us and give us a new life, a new family, and new hope. And we as believers in Christ have these things now, as a gift. In fact, Christ Himself is The Gift of Christmas.

The intention of this devotional is not to be a comprehensive Biblical theology of Christ's advent, nor is it meant merely to be a sentimental let's-remember-the-good-old-days activity. We want this devotional to be a time for you and your family to slow down for a moment and rejoice in the wonderful truth of what God has given us in giving us Jesus that first Christmas two-thousand years ago.

## **HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL**

This devotional is set up so that you can spend 10-20 minutes on one day a week together as a family, remembering, celebrating, and rejoicing in what Christ has done for us this season.

The devotionals are short, approximately two pages each, with lots of blank space. One family member can read the text aloud or you can take turns. Each devotional should last between 10-20 minutes, but it can last longer if you desire through discussion or by adding your own Christmas traditions to it. The questions in italics at the beginning of most devotionals are meant to be asked aloud, allowing each family member to answer and be a part of the discussion.

With each devotional, there is a festive song or activity suggested. These are not obligatory but can be used to spend time together, make memories together, and also to rehearse the truth of the season that we are learning each week. Feel free to use these or replace them with your own activities. You know your family and what will minister to them.

Each devotional will mirror a major point of the sermon on Sunday. It will be a way to remember and rehearse what God has been teaching us in His Word.

## **MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

Again, the hope for this family devotional is that it would be a time for families (or roommates, or friends) to spend together, remembering Christ and His birth during this season and why His birth matters to us and for the world. It is an opportunity to celebrate this wonderful season, individually and with your family.

Of all people, we as Christians should celebrate Christmas well! We have reason to rejoice, give thanks, be glad, and sing praise this season.

Our Savior has come and is coming!

**Rejoice!**

Week of December 3-9

# Promise

## A Hero is Promised

<sup>14</sup> The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; <sup>15</sup> 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.” GENESIS 3:14-15

<sup>6</sup> For a child will be born to 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. <sup>7</sup> 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 zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. ISAIAH 9:6-7

***Who is your favorite hero?***

***Why do you like them so much?***

Whether your hero is an athlete, a political figure, a family member, or a superhero, most everyone finds hero stories compelling. Maybe your hero won the big game for your team. Or your hero fixed a problem no one else could fix. Possibly your hero fights for those who cannot protect themselves. Or your hero may be one who fights off the bad guys and keeps the world safe.

One of the reasons we all find these stories or events compelling is that we all understand the need for someone stronger than us to help us.

***Have you ever been in a situation where you needed help?***

Maybe it was a teacher who helped you with a problem, or a parent, or a coach, or a friend. Heroes are those people who offer help precisely when we need it and how we need it.

In Genesis 3:14-15, after the first man and first woman sinned, God told them how a hero would come and rescue them, making right what the snake had ruined.

*(Have a family member read Genesis 3:14-15 aloud.)*

In this passage, God is pronouncing the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin upon them and the consequences upon the snake who led them to sin. Eve would have great pain in childbirth, a consequence to which every mom can attest. Adam’s work, which before had been a joy, now became toilsome. Work would be very hard and not always completely fruitful. The implication of these consequences is that what was once going to be easy was now going to be difficult and painful.

But in pronouncing His curse on the deceiving snake, God made a great promise. He was going to send someone. He was going to send a hero who would be born of woman and this hero would defeat the snake. While the hero was going to be harmed (“You will strike his heel”), the hero would destroy the snake (“He will crush your head”).

The picture here is that God was going to send the hero to rescue people from their sin. This hero would be a real person (“her seed”). He would completely destroy the snake and all that he had accomplished, and in so doing, He would rescue people from their sin. This person would be the hero for God’s people, rescuing them from sin and destroying their great enemy.

Jesus is that hero!

Revelation 12:9 tells us that the snake was the devil. 1 John 3:8 says that Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil. Colossians 2:13-14 tells us that Jesus took all our sin to the cross and rescued us from it.

The entire Bible, all sixty-six books, is really a single story, a hero story about God’s love for His people. Even though they sin against Him, the Bible shows how He is their great hero to rescue them from their sin, from His wrath for their sin, and from the great enemy!

God made a promise. He would send the hero. In fact, as it turns out, He would BE the hero.

At Christmas, we celebrate that Christ is the hero! We celebrate that God is faithful because He kept His promise to send Jesus to rescue us! We celebrate that God made a promise and He kept that promise! We celebrate that we have a hero who is faithful to do everything He promised He would do.

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY**

Share or write down one instance when you experienced God’s faithfulness to fulfill a promise He made.

Write or trace John 3:16.

Draw a picture of your favorite Bible Christmas story (i.e. Jesus in the manger, Gabriel speaking to Mary, the wise men visiting Jesus, etc.).

Week of December 10-16

# Awaiting

## God is Working, Even While We Wait

<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; <sup>2</sup> And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup> and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” GENESIS 12:1-3

<sup>12</sup> “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, <sup>15</sup> but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. <sup>16</sup> “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” 2 SAMUEL 7:12-16

*Are you looking forward to Christmas? If so, what are you looking forward to at Christmas?*

*Does it feel like it is taking forever to get here?*

*What is something for which you had to wait a long time?*

One of the things we can all understand is waiting. It’s not always fun. It means we have to be patient. It means that we have to go without the things we are waiting for. Sometimes it feels like forever before Christmas arrives. Maybe for you, you are waiting for something else and it feels like you have been waiting forever.

Sometimes when we wait, especially when we wait a long time, we wonder if the thing we are waiting for will ever happen at all. We may give into despair and think that it will never arrive.

Last week, we read the story of how God promised to send a Hero to rescue His people. God’s people waited for this hero a very, very, very long time.

*What is the longest you have ever had to wait for something?*

From Adam and Eve all the way down to Abraham, God’s people waited. They waited for God to send the hero He had promised. Then to Abraham, God promised that all the world would be blessed in him, telling that the hero would come from Abraham’s family(have someone read Gen 12:1-3). Yet Abraham never saw this happen. He waited for it, understanding that this promise was coming in the future. Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. The promise was given to Isaac, and he also waited for it. Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. The promise was given to Jacob, and he also waited for it. Jacob has twelve sons and they waited for it.

God's people went into Egypt and were later enslaved for four hundred years. Still they waited for the great promise, the hero who would rescue them, one who was a descendant of Abraham in whom all the world would be blessed.

God sent Moses to deliver God's people out of slavery. The people painted the blood of the Passover lamb on their door posts and above the door. In an image of the type of deliverance the hero would bring, the angel of death passed over the houses covered by the blood, while he killed the firstborn of the Egyptians. Then the Egyptian captors told God's people to leave. God had delivered His people out of slavery. After waiting four centuries, they were finally free!

Over the next hundred years, God gave His people the law, led them and protected them in the wilderness for four decades when they refused to obey, and finally led them into the land God had promised to Abraham to possess it. Yet they still waited for the great promise.

Fast-forward another four hundred years. God promised to King David that one of His descendants would reign on the throne forever! (*Have someone read 2 Samuel 7:12-16.*) This promise was part of the very first promise. The great hero would rescue God's people from their sin and God's wrath, destroying the enemy, and in this great hero all the world would be blessed. Now David learned that this great hero would reign as King forever. David waited for this promise but never got to see it himself.

Over the next nine hundred years, more promises were made. And God's people continued to wait, believing the promise He had made to them. They waited and waited and waited.

And some of them wondered if God's promises were ever going to happen. (Don't worry, they WILL!)

But God called His people to remember all His promises and to rely upon Him, trusting Him to protect and provide for them. Sometimes, we too can feel like the things we wait for or the things God has promised us take forever to get here.

- We wait for problems to get better.
- We wait for situations to improve.
- We wait for presents on Christmas morning.
- We wait to graduate from high school. Or college. Or graduate school.
- We wait for that first job where we will finally be earning money.
- We wait to get married.
- We wait for that new job that will earn us more money.
- We wait for our first child. And each subsequent child.
- We wait for them to graduate.
- We wait for grandkids.
- We wait to retire.
- We wait for Jesus to return.
- We wait for loved ones to come to know Christ.
- We wait for that sickness to go away.
- We wait ...
- And wait ...
- And wait ...



Tim Keller said that God's time clock is not always ours. We wait. And while we wait, God is at work, bringing about what He has promised.

Yet just as when the people of Israel waited for the promised hero, and God proved faithful, we can wait too, knowing that God will be faithful.

In all the situations where we are waiting, and anxious, and worried, and wondering, we can trust God to be faithful to what He has promised. And we can trust God to save us from our sin, because He has promised to save all those who trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

This is one of the things we remember at Christmas. While we wait for Christmas to arrive, we also wait for other things. And just like God's people waited for the hero and God proved faithful, we can wait, trusting God for what He has promised. He will be faithful. He will do everything He promised. And we can trust Him to do so. In fact, a great definition of faith is simply, "trusting God to do what He has promised."

Our waiting for Christmas reminds us that people from the very beginning have waited for God to do what He promised. We recognize on this side of the cross that God does fulfill His promises. This reminds us that He will fulfill all His promises to us as well.

We can wait this season too. Wait for Christmas. Wait for relief. Wait for the wedding. Wait for God's promise. And we can trust that God is faithful to His promises.

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY**

*(From Lifeway Kids)*

Place a present your family will enjoy inside a box and wrap it. Gather a pair of mittens and a timer. If you have preteens, use cooking mittens to increase the challenge.

Explain that each family member will have 10 seconds to attempt to unwrap the package while wearing the mittens. At the end of time, the next family member gets a chance. The game continues until the package is completely unwrapped. After the game, talk about what it was like to wait and hope you would be the one to open the present.

## **SONGS OF THE SEASON**

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus  
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Week of December 17-23

# Annoucement

## God Keeps His Promises

<sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.” LUKE 1:30-31

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. <sup>20</sup> But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” <sup>24</sup> And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, <sup>25</sup> but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus. MATTHEW 1:18-25

<sup>1</sup> Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.” <sup>3</sup> When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> ‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’” MATTHEW 2:1-6

*Have you ever received something after waiting for it for a long time?*

*How did you feel to finally have what you were waiting for?*

Last week we talked about how God’s timetable is not always ours and if we demand our own timetable, we will be frustrated. This week, however, we see that God always keeps His promises.

Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2 are pictures of God’s faithfulness. His hero, promised hundreds of years before, was now arriving! God fulfills His promises! All that God promises, He will do!

God had made the promise to bring a hero way back in Genesis 3. He promised Abraham that all the world would be blessed in him and through his offspring. God promised King David that a son of his would reign on the throne forever.

And God fulfilled His promises! He sent Jesus, God the Son, to rescue us from our sins and be our Lord. God is faithful to do everything He promised.

As we wait for Christmas, we are reminded that we wait for many things that God has promised us: full redemption, rescue from sin (even the presence of sin), being confirmed into the image of Christ, a wonderful future awaiting us. And these are just a few of His promises to us.

These are things God promised He would do in us and through us. Just as the Israelites waited for the promised Messiah to come and God fulfilled His promise by sending Christ, we look ahead to what God has promised us, knowing God will be faithful!

He keeps His promises!

But just like the people around the time that Jesus was born, sometimes we have trouble trusting God to do what He promised. Zechariah, the husband of Mary's relative and father of John the Baptist, found it hard to believe that God would bless him and his wife with a son after waiting so long for a child. While all the people in Jerusalem heard about the birth of the hero through the wise men who came to Herod, no one that we know of went to worship the child with them.

They had waited. The hero had been promised to them. But they forgot that God is faithful to do all He promised! They didn't believe when the hero arrived.

Today, remember that God promised to send His hero to rescue His people. Remember that this shows His great faithfulness to fulfill every one of His promises! And trust Him to be faithful to do all He has promised. Guard against the temptation of refusing to believe God.

All that God has promised, He will do!

*Which promise of God excites you the most?*

This season, remember that we serve the God who is faithful to do all He has promised. We can trust Him. We can rely upon Him. We can rejoice in Him, knowing that He will do for those of us in Christ all that He has promised! Rejoice in His faithfulness today!

### **FAMILY ACTIVITY**

Trust fall – Close your eyes and fall back into the arms of your family or friends. Did you trust them to catch you? Was it hard to trust with your eyes closed when you could not see where you were falling?

Read, listen to (on YouTube) or sing Great is Thy Faithfulness

### **SONGS OF THE SEASON**

Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come  
O Come, All Ye Faithful  
We Three Kings of Orient Are

Week of December 24-30

# Arrival

## Rejoice! A Savior!

<sup>1</sup> Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. <sup>2</sup> This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, <sup>5</sup> in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup> In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; <sup>11</sup> for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.

<sup>18</sup> And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them. LUKE 2:1-20

*What was/is the best gift you have ever received?*

*Why is it so special to you?*

Sometimes gifts are special because of who gave them. Sometimes they are special because of what the gift means to us. Sometimes they are special because of what the gift is. The gift of Jesus is special for all three of these reasons.

Last week we saw that God is faithful. This week we will see that not only is God faithful, we also see that God, and God alone, is the rescuer of His people! He did not send just another person to save His people. He came here himself to rescue us. And in this, Jesus is the greatest gift that has ever been given.

*(Have someone read Luke 2:1-20 aloud.)*

Good news!

Great Joy!

A Savior, born for you!

Christ the Lord!

Ever since sin entered humanity in Genesis 3, people have needed to be rescued from it. Sin is anything against God's will. Sin imprisons us. Sin enslaves us. Sin places us under the curse of the Law. Sin brings God's righteous wrath upon us. We are trapped and condemned because of what we have done against God.

This is why the gift of Jesus is such good news of great joy. He and He alone rescues us from what our sin has earned us. The Lord Jesus Christ came here to live a perfect life in our place, to die a sacrificial, substitutionary death in our place, and to rise from the grave for our justification. In Christ we are set free! We are no longer condemned! We are no longer under God's wrath! In Christ we are reconciled to God.

And on top of this, God blesses us with every spiritual blessing that He has! We are adopted into His family. We are His children and He is our Father. We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. We have an inheritance. We have a home and a relationship with God that cannot be lost, or taken away, or destroyed, or worn out.

And all this is given to us as a gift. Free. Given by grace to whoever wants it by trusting Christ personally to save you from your sin and lead you as your Lord.

This is why Jesus was born! This is why he came as a baby in the manger. This is why He is our hero! Jesus came to earth to save us!

Rejoice in Christ today. Remember The Gift of Christmas.

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY**

Make a card or some cookies and deliver them to a neighbor. Christmas is a great time to show God's love to others in your community. Wish them a Merry Christmas and tell them that Jesus is the Greatest Gift. These cards or cookies are a way we can share the Greatest Gift of Christmas with those around us.

## **SONGS OF THE SEASON**

Hark the Herald Angels Sing  
Silent Night, Holy Night  
Angels We Have Heard on High

Week of December 31 - January 6

# Still Waiting

**We Can Trust God's Promises, Even While We Still Wait**

<sup>7</sup> He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; <sup>8</sup> but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." <sup>9</sup> And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup> And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? 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." ACTS 1:7-11

This season, we have taken time to remember the big picture of what God is doing for us in Christ.

And yet in many ways, we are still waiting for many of God promises to come about. We are not in heaven yet. We do not yet see every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. We do not yet see Christ reigning on His throne here on earth. We do not yet see ourselves perfectly conformed to the image of Christ.

But this month we have been reminded that He is faithful. He will do everything He has promised!

No one who trusts in Christ will be disappointed ultimately. While times right now may be difficult, and situations may not be exactly the way you want them, Jesus is still sovereignly orchestrating all things for His Glory and for our ultimate joy.

Jesus never leaves us nor forsakes us. So even in the hard times, even when He feels distant, even when you cannot feel Him, even when we cannot see what He is doing, He is still holding us and working to fulfill His promises in us.

Christmas reminds us that God is our faithful Lord; He always does what He promises.

Christmas reminds us, that Jesus, God the Son, is our rescuer and Lord! He doesn't lose one who comes to Him.

Christmas reminds us that while God's promises may take a while to come about, they always do.

Christmas reminds us that God loves us with a never-ending, self-sacrificing, redeeming love.

And Christmas reminds us that this story is not yet finished. Christ will come again, just as He said He would to fulfill all the promises He has made.

That longing we all have for more of God's love and presence, more time with family rejoicing, more time with Christ, more understanding of all that He has done, that longing will ultimately be fulfilled! Just as we long for Christmas Day to arrive, we also long for Christ to return so that we can be with Him forever. And just like God faithfully sent Christ to deliver us from our sin, one day Christ, our great hero, will return, ultimately fulfilling every promise He has made to all of us who know Him.

His love for us will not fade.

His sovereign direction over our lives will not cease.

His power to transform us will not stop.

His joy in us will not quit.

And His redemption of us will last throughout eternity.

And He will return for us, just as He promised, to take us to be where He is that we may rejoice in Him forever!

**He is coming again! So wait expectantly!**

### **FAMILY ACTIVITY**

Find a small, smooth rock and paint the word hope on it, remembering that He is our rock and the hope of glory. Place this rock somewhere the whole family can see it all year long, remembering that the hope of Christmas is not for December only.

### **SONGS OF THE SEASON**

How Great Our Joy  
Love Came Down at Christmas Time  
One Day  
The King Is Coming

