

Day 1

December 25



Pray | Praise God for sending Jesus – our King forever.

THE BIRTH of Jesus begins the final phase of God’s creation restoration.

The entire Bible, and the history of the church of Jesus Christ, is a single story. From the fall of humans in the Garden of Eden to today, God is working out a plan to return His creation to its original state of perfection: God and humans in perfect relationship. The angelic message delivered to Mary in our Scripture reading today connects the promised baby to this Story of God. The connection goes back over 1000 years to a promise God made to King David—a promise to establish a kingdom that will endure forever.

The birth of Jesus Christ is both an end and a beginning. It is the culmination of many promises and the start of the final phase of God’s plan to restore creation to a state of perfect relationship with Him: the kingdom that will last forever. That is the key message of Christmas, a message truly worth celebrating this Christmas season!



Read | Luke 1:26-38



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

Take a few minutes to reflect on what Christmas means to you; what do you focus your thoughts and time on during this season? As you celebrate this season, is there an opportunity to increase the focus on celebrating the arrival of your eternal King? This is the perfect time to differentiate yourself from the world and let the light of Jesus shine.

How does the connection of the birth of Jesus Christ to the larger Story of God impact the significance of the event for you?

Christmas can be a time of sadness and loneliness for many people. If that is true for you, know that you’re not alone. God promises to be with you always, and God’s people are called to be with you as well. Take the courageous step to reach out to God in prayer, and join His people in church this Christmas season. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, ask God to reveal those in need around you this Christmas season. Take the courageous step of reaching out to them and connecting with them in a meaningful way.

Day 2

December 26



Pray | Ask God to make the joy and hope of Christmas real every day.

GOD USES imperfect people to achieve his perfect plan.

The angelic promises to Mary that her baby would receive the throne of his father David, and that his kingdom would have no end, have their origins in a covenant made between God and King David over one thousand years earlier. God promised King David that he would build him a house, a kingdom led by descendants of David that would endure forever. What an amazing promise! But why did God pick David for this critical role in His plan? Why did God pick Mary to give birth to our Savior? It is a mystery, beyond our complete comprehension, why God uses his imperfect creations to restore his creation to perfection. Like Mary and David, God has chosen each of us for a special and meaningful role in this plan. In this Christmas season, it is important to remember the great gift of Jesus Christ, but it is even more critical to reflect on your response to this great gift.



Read | 2 Samuel 7:8-16; Psalm 89:1-4



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

God's plan to restore his creation to perfection includes a specific role for you. In Matthew 5:16, Jesus describe your primary role or duty, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." What life practices have you put in place to stay connected with God and his plan for your life?

Psalms 89:1-2 twice use the word "steadfast" to describe the love of God. How does this word shape your vision of God's love for you? Think of a response for each of the persons in the trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

In 2 Samuel 7:14-15, God promises to be a Father to the descendants of David. Romans 8:15-16 tells us that the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus make it possible for us too to become children of God. "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry Abba! Father! The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." Take a few minutes to reflect on the significance of having God as your perfect Father and the impact that can and should have on your life.

Day 3

December 27



Pray / Give thanks for Jesus, Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God.

OUR SALVATION is only possible because of God's will, zeal and love.

Over two hundred years after promising King David a kingdom that would endure forever, God sends the prophet Isaiah to a divided and failing kingdom to remind them of the promise and to bring new hope. The words of God spoken by Isaiah share the vision and promise of an almighty king who will bring relief from the many sorrows and burdens of life, establishing a kingdom that will last forever. This promised King, or Messiah, became the primary source hope of the people of Judah.

The final words of Isaiah 9:7 remind us of a key fact that we see in the story of David, this prophecy from Isaiah, and the promise of the angel to Mary. The plan for restoration of creation to its perfect state is a work of God. It is only by His mighty nature and zealous love that such a thing could happen.



Read / Isaiah 9:2-7



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

In Isaiah 9:2-7, many words are used to describe the nature of the promised Messiah: A Great Light, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Which of these names for Jesus is most meaningful to you in this Christmas season? Why?

“The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this” (Isaiah 9:7b). What does the word zeal mean to you? In the context of the promises we've seen over the past three days, how do these words encourage and inspire the actions and priorities of your life here on earth?

“Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end” (Isaiah 9:7a). These words are generally interpreted to include the message that the promised eternal kingdom would be (is) for all people, not just the people of Israel. Consider that there are nearly 7.5 billion people on earth today. How do these words from Isaiah shape your view of each person who lives on this planet, and how are you helping them to know that the truth of these promises applies to them as well?

Day 4
December 28



Pray / Give thanks for Jesus, your Prince of Peace.

ONLY A CHILD of God *and* man could redeem humans from sin and death.

Until the arrival of Jesus Christ, the throne of the kingdom of David had been occupied by imperfect men. While these men were part of the plan God had to restore his creation to perfection, they were not qualified to complete the final steps of that plan. These final steps required someone special, someone who could stand in the place of all humans, paying the price for the sin of everyone and conquering the death and separation from God caused by sin. That someone was Jesus. He was and is sinless God, making it possible for Him to pay the price for our sin. He was also truly human. He experienced our nature and our temptations, making him the perfect mediator for us before God. Praise God for our perfect and eternal King Jesus, whose kingdom will truly have no end!



Read / Luke 1:35; Hebrews 2:5-18



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

The Bible clearly tells us that Jesus was both the Son of Man and the Son of God. This two-fold nature of Jesus is both a mystery that we will never fully understand and a truth that is core to God's story and plan for his creation. How do you handle the conflict between desiring to have a full understanding of this mystery and trusting the truth of the Bible?

As our King, Jesus is both a mighty conqueror and a loving mediator. Both of these natures of Jesus are important to keep in mind as you worship him and come into the presence of God. Take a few minutes to reflect on both, and then go to God in prayer, giving him honor and praise for both.

Hebrews 2:18 reminds us of the following about Jesus: "For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted." How does this reality encourage and strengthen you as you deal with temptations and suffering in your life?

Day 5

December 29



Pray / Worship Jesus for making eternity in heaven possible.

YOUR VISION of heaven determines your behavior on earth.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ secured the eternal kingdom promised by God to David. However, the plan for the final restoration of creation, the final state of that eternal kingdom, is not yet complete. We still live in a world of sin and separation from God, but those who have made Jesus their Lord and King live with a new and powerful assurance of eternal life with their King. The hope, peace and joy that come from that assurance must overflow into lives here on earth, who are a beacon of light drawing others to Jesus. The brightness of your beacon is determined by where your heart and mind are focused. If you are focused on treasures of earth (money, power, security, comfort), your beacon will be muted, perhaps even hidden. But if you are focused on the treasures of an eternal and perfectly restored creation (heaven) made possible by Jesus Christ, your beacon will shine brightly, bringing others to Jesus through your life.



Read / Revelation 21:1-7



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.

Take a few minutes to articulate your vision of heaven. Is it a vision that inspires you to prioritize things of eternal consequence over the things of this world? If not, perhaps it is time to reform your vision of heaven. Consider reading a book like *Heaven* by Randy Alcorn.

If the hope and peace that comes from the assurance of eternal life with Jesus Christ is not real to you, now is the time to turn your life over to Jesus Christ and make him Lord (center) of your life. Go to God in prayer, and share your heart and desire to make Jesus your Lord.

Reflect on where you spend the majority of your time and money and the motivations behind that spending. That list is a good indicator of where you are storing up your treasures: here on earth or in heaven. What adjustments might need to be made to maximize your investment in eternity?

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