



# JESUS

## IN THE OLD TESTAMENT



*Devotions for Advent*

# **JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

**2022**

*Jesus in the Old Testament: Devotions for Advent* has been written by selected staff of First Presbyterian Church, Dillon SC. Feel free to use the devotional however you see fit: personally, as a family, or with a group of friends. Additionally, please feel free to share this with others who may find it helpful.

Advent means “coming.” In the historic church calendar, Advent refers to the roughly four weeks prior to Christmas. This is a time of preparation and anticipation surrounding the celebration of the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ - remembering that our Heavenly Father *always* keeps His promises. However, when thinking about Advent, it is healthy for us to focus not only on the first coming of Christ, but also the second coming. As the great hymn beautifully declares, “Come, Thou long expected Jesus Born to set Thy people free; From our fears and sins release us, Let us find our rest in Thee. Israel's strength and consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art; Dear desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.”

We encourage you to use this season of Advent to prepare your hearts for Christmas. Too often we become consumed with the hustle and bustle and fail to truly prepare for Christmas. Slow down and prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to reorient your heart towards Christ and the true meaning of the Christmas season.

May the Lord bless you and your family this Advent.

In Christ,

Rev. Matthew Adams - Lead Pastor

Rev. Donald Stager - Assistant Pastor

Mrs. Maggie Young - Director of Communications & Families

\*\*\*All Scripture references come from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*

# NOVEMBER 27<sup>TH</sup>

## GENESIS 3:15



15 I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.”

If you are like me, it is incredibly hard to believe that Thanksgiving has come and gone and we are now in the season of Advent. Advent means coming. We celebrate the first coming of Jesus over 2,000 years ago and we look forward to Christ's return - His second advent. This is a time to prepare our hearts for Christmas and focus on the true reason for the season.

Today our scripture text starts at the very beginning of God's Word. Here in Genesis 3, the passage takes place right after Adam and Eve decided to turn away from trusting God and instead listened to the lies of the Serpent. While God had threatened judgment - that the day that Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil - saying they would surely die (Gen 2:17), He also immediately spoke grace. God promises mercy despite their sinfulness. We even see this as He does not *immediately* destroy our guilty parents. Instead, He foretells a future Son of the woman who would one day destroy this Deceiver.

God's indictment of the Serpent not only includes bad news for the Devil, but also great news for Adam and Eve - and all believers after them. God promises that a descendant of the woman (Eve) will one day crush the head of the Serpent, the Devil.

In the incarnation, the Devil was dealt a death blow during the life and ultimately the death of Jesus Christ (Col 2:14-16). While we still face an enemy who will accuse us and who prowls about as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8), due to God's gracious intervention, His people (who are indeed guilty of sin just as Adam and Eve were) can withstand his fiery arrows due to the intervention of a Savior who took all of their punishment for them (Col 2:13). Praise God for His intervening, merciful grace.



**Prayer** — Dear God, we give thanks to You for Your mercy and grace to unworthy sinners. Like our first parents we are too quick to give an ear to temptation and to doubt Your love and faithfulness to us. Would you forgive us? Would You help us to look to Christ as our all sufficient Savior, who indeed crushed the head of the Serpent at Calvary, but who also did so at the cost of His own life? Would we live lives of trust and gratitude as we stand in the forgiveness and righteousness of Your Son and Your Son alone? We ask this in the name of the One who came to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8), amen.

# NOVEMBER 28<sup>TH</sup>

## GENESIS 12: 2-3



2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Just as God graciously promised redemption to unworthy sinners and intervened by rescuing them after the fall in the Garden of Eden, so we see Him doing the same here in Genesis 12. Contrary to popular belief, Abraham (originally Abram) was not a “righteous” man that God found worthy to call to Himself. Joshua 24:2 tells us that Abraham worshiped “other gods” before God called him. He even lived in a land full of idolatry; we know this by God calling him while he still lived in Ur. Therefore, this calling of Abraham recorded here in Genesis, just as the calling of any sinner to God, was due to God’s grace and that alone.

Looking back to our scripture text yesterday, we see God narrowing down the seed of the woman to the offspring of Abraham. Here, God makes a covenant with Abram in which He promises to bless Him with land, offspring, and ultimately that the whole world would be blessed through him. The promised Savior, the Snake Crusher who we first hear about in Genesis 3, would be a descendant of Abraham. Thus when

we turn to Matthew 1 and see the genealogy of Jesus Christ, it should not surprise us that the first name we see listed is Abraham.

We must remember that God's promise to raise up a Savior goes to eternity past, into the Garden, and then is narrowed down to this particular family.

While salvation is ultimately from Abraham's descendants (John 4:22), the particular "seed" who is promised in Genesis 12 (v. 7) is Christ Jesus Himself (Gal 3:16-17). While Jesus was a descendant of Abraham, it is not ultimately those who are merely physically descended from Abraham that are God's children. No, all those who have faith in "the Seed" of Abraham, Jesus Christ are children of Abraham...furthermore, sons and daughters of God. Thus people of all tribes, tongues, and nations can praise the Lamb together and truthfully claim to be heirs and descendants of the Land of Promise - Heaven (Gal 3:9, 28-29).



**Prayer** — Gracious God, thank you that salvation is mine because of Jesus. Lord, we praise You for Your Son, the true Seed of Abraham, in whom alone there is salvation for any who will repent of their sins and put their trust in Him. Amen.

# NOVEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup>

## GENESIS 17: 19



19 God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

While we saw God call Abraham and make a covenant with Him in Genesis 12, so we see the Lord keeping His promise that Abraham’s offspring would ultimately bless the world (Gen 12:3). Abraham and Sarah (formerly Sarai) had been promised children to inherit the land that God brought them into, as well as future generations whose number would be beyond measure (Gen 15:5). The problem was that Sarah was old, Abraham was older, and they had been living in the Promised Land of Canaan for decades. And God still had not given them a son.

Our passage here in Genesis 17 shows the Lord showing up to Abraham after he and Sara had taken matters into their own hands. Remember, they had a son born through Hagar, Sarah’s servant (Gen 16:1-3). While it seemed that God was not keeping His promise to Abraham and his wife, or perhaps this “offspring” could be more loosely defined, God lets them know that what had seemed impossible (or perhaps misconstrued) to them was in no way impossible for Him or through Him.



Though it has been over two decades since God had called Abraham, and though Abraham now had a son with Sarah's servant Hagar, God comes to let them know that He has not forgotten His promises nor changed His mind. Sarah herself will have a son!

Of course, this son was born and his name was Isaac. It is this particular son, Isaac, who God's covenant promises will pass through. Thus the promised Seed, the coming Snake Crusher, will indeed be a descendant of Abraham, but also a descendant of Isaac through Sarah.

All this is showing us that, even though in world terms things seem impossible, there is no plan B with God. I love what He later asks Sarah, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Gen 18:14)

Surely, there is nothing!



**Prayer** — Our faithful Father, there truly is nothing that is too hard for You. Would You help us when we think that You have forgotten us or the promises You make to us? You are the Holy One who cannot lie. Give us grace that we would believe as Abraham and Sarah did (Heb 11:11), because You are faithful and always will be. In Christ's name, amen.

# NOVEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup>

## GENESIS 28: 14-15



14 Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

The above passage features Yahweh (“the LORD”) passing on His covenant promises made to Abraham (Gen 12) and Isaac (Gen 17) to their son Jacob. Jacob, like his father Isaac before him, was not the only son of his father...nor were either the oldest brother.

You seen, Jacob had a twin brother who was delivered before him and thus was the rightful heir to Isaac. God however had foretold that it would be Jacob who ultimately would receive the covenant promises. These covenant promises, as proclaimed in Genesis 25:23, would pass down from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob.

While we are told in Hebrews 12:6 that Esau was an immoral and Godless man, we see in Genesis that Jacob was a deceiver who both took advantage of his brother and tricked his father who was blind and of old age.

We are reminded in the life of Jacob that God’s grace is not given to those worthy of it. If that were the case, nobody

would receive grace. Furthermore, grace would also no longer be “grace!” Grace is unmerited favor, but if it was earned, grace would be what was due (Rom 4:4). Instead of a worthy individual being confirmed in his holiness, in Jacob we see a cunning, deceiving sinner who God chose to love despite his sin.

In this passage we see that God not only is going to continue His promised covenantal line through Jacob (who is childless and fleeing from his brother Esau at this point), but that He will be with Jacob everywhere that he goes (v. 15).

Thus we have some of the earliest statements of the “Immanuel Principle” that we see in the Bible. Often times we are reminded during this season of Advent that the name “Immanuel” means “God with us.”

Indeed, the hope of the believer in all ages (including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob - and believers today!) is not ultimately in a promised land by itself, but that God Himself will be with us! We ultimately see this being fulfilled in Jesus Christ, God made flesh, who dwells and will dwell with His people forever.



**Prayer** — Faithful Father, we praise You that we do not need to wonder whether You will leave us or not. Stay with us as You promise and fulfill what concerns us as Your children. We pray in Christ’s name, Amen.

# DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>

## GENESIS 49: 10



10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
until tribute comes to him;  
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Today, in Genesis 49, we see Jacob, now in Egypt and close to death, blessing his twelve sons. But, furthermore, he is foretelling their futures. Decades have passed since Jacob wrestled with God. There, in the place of that great wrestling match, Jacob had his name changed to Israel. Now, God inspires and guides him to foretell (you could really argue that we should say “prophecy” here) the path of each of his twelve sons.

While Judah was not the oldest son of Jacob, he stepped up and took the leadership role that his older brothers had failed to do. We see Jacob proclaim that it will be Judah’s family (tribe) that will be preeminent amongst the people (v. 8-9). The reference to a scepter in verse 10 shows us that rulers will come from Judah. This is significant because Jacob made this prophecy (and Moses wrote it down) many centuries before Israel ever even had a king.

In a like manner, in 2 Samuel 7:4-17, God makes a covenant with David (who just so happens to be of the tribe of Judah...you see the divine providence of God here...), that he will never lack a son to sit on the throne (v. 16). While generations pass with successive heirs who are offspring of

David, this is ultimately ended by the time that Jesus is born. Herod is not of the tribe of Judah nor a legitimate king, and the people knew this and despise Herod for it. Thus, when Jesus carries out His ministry on earth, a man such as Bartimaeus could cry out “Son of David, have mercy on me” (Mark 10:47-48).

God keeps His promises and He is sovereign over all. When He foretold that the scepter would not depart from Judah, it still took centuries for this to happen and a disobedient first king (Saul, who was of the tribe of Benjamin) for God to choose a man after His own heart. Yes, this phrase is usually ascribed to David, but I am not talking about him. I am talking about King Jesus...who descends from the line of Judah, from the line of David.

Despite the failures and sins of the line of Judah, God shows us His trustworthiness of still sending Jesus. You see, ultimately, it took God’s faithfulness and not those of Judah’s line, to bring about the gospel promises of old. God’s faithfulness to His covenant led to the *true* ruler of the nations being born as a son of Judah and David nearly three thousand years after this was first uttered.



**Prayer** — Lord, we take comfort in your sovereignty and goodness. We recognize and worship the babe in the manger who is Son of Mary and the promised Ruler of all nations. Let me worship You in spirit and in truth this Advent season, amen.

# DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>

## EXODUS 12: 5



5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats,

In the Old Testament, we have the implementation of the sacrificial system. Here in our text, God's people are told to take an animal to sacrifice before God as an act of worship. While this sounds insane to us today, the sacrificial system had a purpose. The animal would be killed "in place of" those who were offering it up to God - who had sacrificed it. The animal that is prescribed for the Hebrews is not just any ordinary animal, however. Rather than going out to their flocks and taking anything they wanted...or even the worst that they had to offer...God's people are instructed that the sacrificial animal must be a lamb without blemish and one year old.

Therefore, and we need to understand this, the sacrificial lamb would be in the beginning of its adult years. Furthermore, it would be a perfect example of what a lamb should be. While this may seem a bit pedantic, the reason that the lamb must be a "perfect" specimen is because it was supposed to represent the purity of the one laying down their life for the sinner.

You see, this ultimately points us to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who was as we are yet without sin (Heb 4:15).

God is a righteous and holy God who will by no means overlook the sin of people (Exodus 34:7). Thus, if any person is going to be able to be forgiven by God, he must have someone else pay for that sin. Our God is not the God who just turns a blind eye to sin, it must be punished. Sin must be atoned for; His justice must be satisfied. Thus, if we were going to be saved from God's wrath, it was necessary that there be a blameless, spotless, sinless substitute who did not need to pay for His own sins but rather could take ours upon Himself in order that we could be forgiven.

The gospel teaches that this was fulfilled when Jesus gave Himself up as a perfect sacrifice on the cross.

Hebrews 9:13-14 contrasts the animal sacrifices that were made in the Old Covenant with the sacrifice made by Christ. The author states, "For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."



**Prayer** — Lord, we praise You that we need not make ourselves righteous, for You were pleased with the sacrifice of Your spotless Son. We praise You for Your gift of Your Son Jesus. Amen

# DECEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>

## EXODUS 12: 21-27



21 Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. 23 For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. 24 You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. 25 And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. 26 And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ 27 you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

In this passage we see God “remembering” His promise to Abraham that He had made back in Genesis 15. The Lord had told Abraham that his descendants would sojourn in a land not their own for 400 years (Gen 15:13), but that He would rescue them and bring them back into land He had promised. God not only promised to redeem His people out of Egypt,



but stated that He would judge that nation for its treachery (Gen 15:14).

Thus we fast forward five hundred years later to our passage here. The Hebrews have been in Egypt for four hundred years and God has raised up Moses to bring them out of their bondage and to Himself (Ex 2:23-25). The Lord has brought plagues upon the Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and this final plague is to be the one that will lead to the Hebrews release from bondage.

This final plague became known as the Passover as in it, every house that had been marked with the blood of a lamb that had been sacrificed was “passed over” when the destroying angel came into the land (v. 12-13). The lamb’s blood would stand in the place of those in the household while those who did not have the blood of a lamb covering them would suffer the loss of their firstborn son.

As we come into the New Testament, we see John the Baptist, crying out in the wilderness and calling on people to repent. When John sees Jesus, he proclaims, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:33,36). And thus Paul can proclaim to Gentile Corinthian believers in the first century that our Passover Lamb has been slain. Like the Hebrews in Egypt, we too can be “passed over” because God’s sacrifice has been made on the cross at Calvary.



**Prayer** — Dear Lord, we praise Your Son and join the multitudes who proclaim, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.” Lord Jesus, we thank you for coming to die in order that we might live. Amen.

# DECEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup>

## NUMBERS 21: 9



9 So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

In the context of our selected passage the people of God are journeying through the wilderness on the way to the Land of Promise. The mighty hand of God had delivered them from Egypt; He had released them from their bondage of slavery. God had shows Himself faithful repeatedly in their release, in their journey, and even now in the immediate context. Yet, as so often was the case, the nation of Israel began to grumble and complain. They even challenged Moses and the goodness of God. They shouted out, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?” (Num. 9:5) In their present circumstance, they cursed God and preferred their chains of bondage rather than trustingly living under His care. Therefore, God sent upon the people serpents and they were being bitten in judgment for their sins.

Admittedly, this is not the “normal” Advent scripture text. Yet, it pushes us to see the mission of Christ...for just as the bronze serpent was lifted up upon the pole, Jesus would be lifted up (He even said so Himself in John 12:32!) upon the cross of Calvary for the salvation of His people.

The Advent season is one of remembrance, and here the text demands that we remember the sacrifice of Christ. The reason why Jesus, the Word made flesh, invaded time and space was so that He could die to bring life to all who look

upon the cross in faith. Additionally, the Advent season is one of looking forward to the second coming of Christ. At that second coming, Jesus will usher in the New Heavens and Earth so that all who believe might experience that life everlasting. Truly, only then, will we know what it is like to live in our full salvation.

You see, for the believer, death's fangs cannot threaten us. The sting of death has been victoriously overcome by Jesus. His coming into the world has taken away God's judgment that we deserve. So, our exhortation is simple; look to the One who has been lifted up. Cling to the Crucified One, and know that ultimately His "being lifted up" on the cross was not ultimate...but now He has been lifted up into the Heavenly places where He awaits the day where we live with Him forevermore.



**Prayer** — Gracious God, thank you for your gift of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Help me to gaze upon Him, the Lamb that was slain, and know that only through Him do I have life everlasting. Help me to live a life of thanksgiving and praise. Help me to walk in your ways, so that I may honor my Savior. Father, posture my heart so that I might long for the day that I am with You forever. I ask these things in the precious name of Your Son and my Redeemer. Amen.

# DECEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>

## 2 SAMUEL 7: 12-13



12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

The Old Testament is filled with prophecies about Christ as the coming Messiah and King. Some are well known and explicit like Isaiah 9:6. Others aren't as well known and a little more obscure. Such is the case for this passage in 2 Samuel 7. The "offspring" mentioned in verse 12 is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. What do we learn about our Savior and Messiah here in this passage?

We see that this is a fulfillment of God's promises to David and beyond. All the way back in Genesis 3:15 God promised to send One to crush the head of the serpent. The Old Testament continues to unfold this promise and expounds upon it with more and more clarity. It is somewhat realized in the Gospels when Jesus is born in Bethlehem. Yet, furthermore, it will be fully realized at Jesus' second Advent! What comfort there is in knowing that God always keeps His promises and fulfills the prophecies! We would do well to meditate on His work this Advent season.

But also, let's ponder on the Kingship of Christ. Our Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 26: *"How doth Christ execute the office of a king?"*

The answer reads, *“Christ executeth the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.”*

Here the catechism is teaching us that the promises of God are found in Christ Jesus. That even though earthly powers come and go...notice that the promise in our text proclaims that David dies, but then Jesus lives...the kingdom of Christ is ever present. He reigns as King now and forevermore!

As our King He is ruling and defending us; He is carrying out His sovereign will; He is executing justice on our behalf. The world does not understand this, and even hate it (Ps. 2), nonetheless; there will be a day that even the most wicked fall on their knees in recognition of the Kingship of Christ. Here is what the Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 2,

*“9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Will you rejoice at the second Advent of Jesus? Will you exalt at your loving King finally arriving to usher you into His heavenly places? Or will you tremble in fear? You see, all who possess saving faith can rejoice, but those who plot against the King of kings and the Lord of lords, Jesus Christ, will tremble for they know their destruction is sure.



**Prayer** — Father, Thank you for the promised King Jesus. Help me to discover joy and confidence at His coming. Fill my heart with faith! Let me trust in His care and goodness. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

# DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>

## JOB 19: 25



25 For I know that my Redeemer lives,  
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.

Admittedly, this is a favorite Easter scripture text. It is Job rejoicing in his living Savior. Of course, that points us directly to Easter and the empty grave, so how can we understand the Advent season better from this text? Well, it is actually quite easy...you see, at Jesus' first coming he came born of the virgin in a humble and meek estate. Yet, when Job declares this gospel truth, he states that, "He [the living Redeemer] will stand upon the earth." This points us not to a lowly estate, but at Christ's second Advent we will behold Him in His full exaltation!

Do you notice the key word here in Job's statement? The first thing that we need to look at in this short verse is the word "Redeemer." The term, as its used here, gives a deep reference to a relative who performs an act of redemption for his kin. As Job makes this beautiful proclamation, he knows that this is indeed a part of the job for the Redeemer. But, what is the act of redemption for the family? It is to buy the inheritance and to restore the inheritance to his relative.

As Job refers to this in his proclamation, he knows that his inheritance is life eternal; therefore, he can say with much assurance that there will be a day where he will live forever with his family again. He can have much hope knowing that

right now he is suffering hardships and failing health, but one day he will have a resurrected and glorified body.

Years may go by, but at the latter day, the Redeemer will stand upon the earth and will perform the office of the Redeemer in raising his body and will usher Job into life eternal. Job knows that he will see God.

There is another point to Job's proclamation. Not only does Job declare that he has a Redeemer, not only does he affirm that Christ is a living Redeemer, but he adds that (quite properly may I add) that Christ is his Redeemer. I love the simple word he uses - "My." Jesus is my Redeemer. You know, we should pause right here, for just a brief moment, and ask...do you know that, "*my*" in relation to Jesus Christ? Can you say that Jesus is yours? What a simple reminder of the need for personal faith!

As one commentator puts it as he talks about a personal relationship with Jesus, "Admiration is good, but personal relationship is better."

If you cannot say that, do not delay for one more second. Do not say "I'll do it next year, or tomorrow." We have no guarantees in the timelines of our lives. Paul writes that now is the day of salvation. If you do not have this personal relationship with Jesus - if he is not your Lord and Savior - run to him in faith and repentance. There is no better time than *now*.



**Prayer** — Father, Thank you for sending us your Son who is the Living Redeemer. Help me to live for His glory with the assurance of my full salvation. Help me to have *more* faith in Him at all times. In Christ's name I pray, amen.

# DECEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>

## PSALM 40: 6-8



- 6 In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted,  
but you have given me an open ear.  
Burnt offering and sin offering  
you have not required.
- 7 Then I said, “Behold, I have come;  
in the scroll of the book it is written of me:
- 8 I delight to do your will, O my God;  
your law is within my heart.”

When I think about these words from the Psalmist David, my mind races to its quotation in Hebrews 10. The original audience of the epistle to the Hebrews faced persecution constantly. The persecution was so bad that many wanted to return to the old covenant rituals in order to escape their suffering.

Such a return would have been a terrible mistake. For the audience was living in the new covenant (Heb. 8), which is a present reality even though it has not yet been fully consummated. The audience was living in the day after Christ’s superior sacrifice (chap. 9). If the audience were to go back to the old covenant, they would have been returning to the age of shadows and ineffectual sacrifices (10:1–4).

Today’s scripture speaks of the inadequacy of the old covenant sacrifices and the superiority of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. This Psalm tells us that God did not desire burnt offerings and sin offerings, and it tells us that David, was resolved to do God’s will. At first glance this seems to put



the need for sacrifices and obedience to God's will in opposition to one another.

However, this is not what David is doing in this psalm. He is merely stating that the sacrifices brought no pleasure to God if they were not accompanied by obedience. If the sacrifices did not produce obedience they were useless.

This is one reason why the animal sacrifices were indeed...useless for salvation...just a foreshadowing of what was to come. No matter how many times they were done, they were always performed by people who could not and would not perfectly obey God.

David was the first to speak these words and resolve to do God's will. However, David could not carry his resolve through perfectly. But when Jesus came into the world, He also spoke these words, but, unlike David, He fulfilled His pledge. His perfect obedience enabled Him to offer a sacrifice that leads His people to obey God.

Do you desire to obey the Lord? We do not always like to hear about this, but the desire to obey God is one mark of a true believer. A true desire for obedience will produce actual obedience, even though it will not be perfect until Christ returns. Look at the areas of your life where you have not been obeying God, and take steps to obey Him today.



**Prayer** — Father, it's not easy to pray, but I ask that you would search me and show me where I'm not living in obedience to You. As you reveal those things to me, give me the resolve to do your will. Let me trust and obey, so that I might glorify your name. I pray this in the name of Christ, amen.

# DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup>

## PSALM 72: 1-4



72 For Solomon.

- 1 Give the king your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to the royal son!
- 2 May he judge your people with righteousness,  
and your poor with justice!
- 3 Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,  
and the hills, in righteousness!
- 4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,  
give deliverance to the children of the needy,  
and crush the oppressor!

Psalm 72 is what we call a “Royal Psalm.” These psalms have much historical context. This one in particular is a psalm for Solomon. This is a prayer written by David for his son to be a fit king, a just king, a beloved king. It's really an awesome look into David's heart as he proclaims his love for his son as he prays over him.

But, this psalm also pushes us to a far greater king...the perfectly just king, the beloved king of the Father, one who is perfectly fit to reign forever and ever. Who is this king? As David pens in Psalm 24, the answer is simple, “The Lord of Hosts, he is the king of glory.” That's right, this psalm is pushing us to see Christ.

When we approach the first stanza of this psalm, verses 1-4, we see the same word repeatedly, “Righteousness.” Verse 1 asks that the king might be endowed with righteousness. Verse 2 predicts that this righteous king will execute justice;

judging the people in righteousness. Verse 3 speaks of the prosperity that a righteous king brings.

And when we see that theme within these verses, we can see how quickly we go way beyond the historical context of this psalm. Did Solomon rule righteously? No, not perfectly anyway. We can read all about his reign - the good, the bad, the ugly. Yet, if we are talking about a kingdom that is described, first and foremost, as righteous...we have to move quickly away from the imperfect Solomon over to King Jesus.

One thing that we are sure of in today's society is that human rulers always let us down; they show their unrighteous ways...but not King Jesus. He rules in righteousness and demands His kingdom to be righteous.

See, those are judicial words that the psalmist uses...King Jesus rules the world in righteous judgment; perfect judgment; wise judgment. So, He is demanding that His kingdom is righteous. But, don't be mistaken; He is not some dictator or a slave-master driving you to do more to earn more. No, King Jesus demands righteousness, and at the same time...makes you righteous. It's a glorious picture of the gospel. We cannot be clean until we are washed in the blood of the Lamb. We cannot be righteous until we are clothed in Christ's righteousness.



**Prayer** — Father, thank you for sending us your Son who is the righteous King. Help me live for His glory alone, and always cause me to remember I'm only a citizen of this Kingdom because Christ came, Christ died, Christ lives again! Amen.

# DECEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup>

## PSALM 72: 5-7



- 5 May they fear you while the sun endures,  
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!
- 6 May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,  
like showers that water the earth!
- 7 In his days may the righteous flourish,  
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!

We looked at the first part of Psalm 72 yesterday, but today I want us to look at that second stanza - verses 5-7. Here the Psalmist is describing the duration of Christ's kingdom...it is eternal. It is a kingdom that will never end. Think about the historical context here...David is writing this psalm close to the end of this life; he has been on the throne for 40 years. His son, Solomon, will inherit the throne, and he will be a great king for another 40 years. But, David and Solomon both met the same fate - they died. Their kingdom was passed on to another. Actually, their kingdom would soon be divided and overtaken by the enemy.

It is the same with the rulers of this world. Their reigns will end. No matter how great these leaders think they are, and how much they want to reign forever - they won't. Earthly kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but Christ's kingdom will never end. It will be an everlasting kingdom; an eternal kingdom. A kingdom not made by hands, but the dwelling place of King Jesus.

Because of Christ's eternal rule, there will be blessings to be enjoyed for Christ's people. The psalm shows us these blessings by poetically proclaiming good gifts from the Lord; specifically, rains falling and watering the earth. These good gifts show us our dependency on our King Jesus.

Do you know the hymn Jesus Shall Reign? In the fourth verse Isaac Watts captures this idea of blessings so well...

*“Blessings abound wherever He reigns; The prisoner leaps to lose his chains, the weary find eternal rest, and all the sons of want are blest.”*

And if the point of the first stanza was that blessings come because Christ judges in righteousness, the point of this second stanza is that those blessings are forever!



**Prayer** — Father, how good it is to remember that the reign of your Son, our Savior, is forever. It gives us much confidence for the days ahead and it keeps our focus on the true King of kings. We pray we will see His majesty so clearly this Advent season, so that we might always know that you are the Sovereign One. Amen.

# DECEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 2: 1-4



The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 It shall come to pass in the latter days  
that the mountain of the house of the Lord  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be lifted up above the hills;

and all the nations shall flow to it,  
3 and many peoples shall come, and say:  
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the house of the God of Jacob,  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4 He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;  
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war anymore.

If you are like me, it is incredibly hard to believe that Thanksgiving has come and gone and we are now in the season of Advent. Advent means coming. We celebrate the first coming of Jesus over 2,000 years ago and we look forward to Christ's return. This is a time to prepare our hearts for Christmas and focus on the true reason for the season.

Here in Isaiah 2, the prophet foretells of glorious days to come. He begins by stating, “It shall come to pass in the latter days...” What is meant by the term “latter days”? Some think they refer to the time right before Christ returns. That is true, in a sense. However, they refer more to a type of time rather than a specific time period. The last days are the ones in between the first and second coming of Christ. Therefore, we live in the latter days right now.

What are these days like? Well our text tells us many things. First, in these days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of mountains (v. 2). This is talking not about physical height, but rather spiritual significance. The Kingdom of God will become the most prominent in the world. Worship of the Triune God will triumph over all other religions. This will be fully realized when Christ comes back. Second, all the nations shall flow to the mountain (v.2). All types of people will come to faith in Christ. We see this today as people from all around the world profess faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior of sinners. Third, God will teach people His ways and the law shall go forth from Zion (v. 3). As the church faithfully proclaims the gospel message this is fulfilled. Finally, there will be peace (v. 4). While peace doesn’t reign now, it will when Christ returns.

Sometimes our view of what Jesus is doing is too small. He is up to big things. As you prepare for Christmas, focus on the work God is doing. Thank and praise Him for it.



**Prayer** — Father, Thank you for the glorious work of Jesus, your Messiah. Help me focus on you this Christmas. May I not be caught up in the busyness, but worship you. Amen.

# DECEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 7: 1-7



1 In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it.

2 When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

3 And the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. 4 And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. 5 Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, 6 "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," 7 thus says the Lord God:

"It shall not stand,  
and it shall not come to pass.

This portion of the scriptures takes place over 200 years after the death of King David. It's the 8th century B.C. David's kingdom was now divided. Israel was the northern kingdom and Judah was the southern kingdom. The capital of Israel



was Samaria; the capital of Judah was Jerusalem. Both kingdoms rebelled against God and eventually fell, but the northern kingdom, Israel, was far worse. Therefore, they were conquered sooner. At this point, Israel has formed an alliance with the nation of Syria.

Now the major threat to all nations at that time was Assyria, not to be confused with Syria. Syria and Israel wanted Judah to form an alliance with them to fight Assyria. But when King Ahaz and all of Judah heard that Israel and Syria were united, it says their hearts, Shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.”

Picture the footage taken during hurricanes, as the wind blows the trees to and fro. These people are shaken. But their inability is magnified by the fact that their king does not trust in God, despite His promises.

And so God sends Isaiah the prophet to give Ahaz a message. And verse 4 says, “...say to him, ‘Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands.” God reassures them that they don’t have to fear because he is real and powerful, especially compared to these “two smoldering stumps of firebrands.”

All this to say, when you are frozen in fear and your heart is shaking like the trees in the hurricane...trust in God. Romans 8 says that, “...for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”



**Prayer** — Dear Lord, Enable me to trust in you more this day. Your promises are steadfast; let me rest in You. Amen.

# DECEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 7: 14



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

Today we come to a verse in scripture that we probably all know very well. It is one that is often read during the Advent season because it was foretelling the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the prophecy even gives a remarkable sign...that the Messiah would be born of a virgin.

The fact that Jesus was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary has always been a defining tenet of Christianity. The virgin birth appears in every major creed and confession, and it sets our Lord apart from all of Israel's prophets, indeed, from every person that has ever lived.

Yet when many church leaders began to embrace the naturalism increasingly prevalent at the beginning of the twentieth century, they repudiated the virgin birth as an essential truth. Even today some believe the virgin birth is impossible even if they accept other aspects of the Christian faith. However, as J. Gresham Machen wrote, picking and choosing which parts of Scripture to believe is the first step toward a wholesale rejection of orthodoxy. "The overwhelming majority of those who reject the virgin birth reject also the whole supernatural content of the New Testament, and make of the 'resurrection' just what the word 'resurrection' most emphatically did not mean — a

permanence of the influence of Jesus or a mere spiritual existence of Jesus beyond the grave” (Christianity and Liberalism, p. 108).

Our study of Isaiah 7:14 a few weeks ago demonstrated that the passage had been fulfilled in the time of Isaiah (with the birth of his son), yet it was realized in a greater way in the birth of Jesus, God’s Son. Jesus is thus a sign that God will bless all those who follow Him and curse all those who reject His way. And clearly, the New Testament teaches that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary, who at the time of conception had not yet known a man sexually (Luke 1:34). To reject the virgin birth is to reject God’s testimony and incur His curse.

The virgin birth is essential to the Christian faith. It clearly reveals Jesus as the Son of David to whom the prophets looked as the king of God’s supernatural kingdom (Ps. 110; Dan. 7:13–14).



**Prayer** — Dear Lord, how it stirs us up when we think about Christ Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer. You have been so good to us by sending us the Messiah! You have sent Him for our salvation and for our eternal rest. Let us remember that you are doing a good work in our lives even today...works far beyond what we can ask or think. Just as you supernaturally worked through the virgin Mary, you are doing as you desire throughout this world. Let us know that our Sovereign God is working for our good. These things we ask through the name of your Son. Amen.

# DECEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 9: 6-7



6 For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
7 Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Scripture does not tell us about people and events that are divorced from history. It explains that God has worked out His salvation in space and in time. One of the clearest examples of this is the Bible's use of prophecy that is set firmly in one historical setting while predicting events in another. Prophecies of the coming Messiah fill the Old Testament, with the book of Isaiah featuring some of the most well-known predictions of the future.

Isaiah 9 records the famous prophecy of the coming child who would be "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah uttered these words during the reign of King Hezekiah, who lived at the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the seventh

century BC. Hezekiah was one of the godliest kings, but he was no King David. Hezekiah inherited the throne of David his forefather and reigned during a period when the Assyrian Empire was the strongest power in the ancient Near East. David, however, was established on the throne of Israel by the Lord, and he took Israel from being a minor player on the world stage to one of great importance. Yet, he paled in comparison to the coming Christ. The prophets looked forward to the day when a king even better than David would rule over God's people once more.

Isaiah 9:6–7 describes this coming king. He would possess unparalleled wisdom, being the “Wonderful Counselor” who would not need advisers or counselors to help guide him. His reign would also be so marked by peace that he would be the “Prince of Peace.” Other kings are known for war, and while this coming king would be a mighty warrior, his rule would establish and maintain permanent peace between God and the king's loyal subjects. And this king would be more than a mere man. He would be “Mighty God, Everlasting Father”—that is, the Creator Himself incarnate.

In this fallen world, people long for peace between family members, between coworkers, and between neighbors. Lasting peace is possible, however, only through submission to the Prince of Peace, Christ Jesus. When we bow to Him in faith, we are put at peace with our Creator, and we are called to announce His reign so that others may know His peace. Let us seek to tell others about the Prince of Peace this day.



**Prayer** — Father, let me submit my life to my great King, Jesus. Help me to live for His glory alone. Amen.

# DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 11: 1-5



- 1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
- 2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
- 3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
- 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
- 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

We have some very interesting language here in this chapter. If you go back to verse 1 of chapter. 11, we have the “shoot” and the “root.” To get a full sense, we need to go back in history a little. We have this name here in verse 1. “Jesse,” who is Jesse? Isaiah is referring to the father of king David; the man that chased after God’s own heart. And there was a promise made to him in 2 Samuel 7, and that promise foretold that his kingdom and his throne would remain forever.

Well, then we have this stump in front of Jesse. What’s that about? Well, if you cut down a tree, what is left? The

stump. David's kingdom has been divided and destroyed as Isaiah speaks this prophecy. All that remains is the stump of Jesse; the aftermath of the kingdom's destruction. So, what about the promise back in 2 Samuel?! That is why we have a shoot coming forth from the stump! God is promising that there is going to be One who comes from the stump of Jesse; a shoot from the stump! God is raising up His Savior through something that looked destroyed. Through the lineage of David, Christ comes, and He is the greater, eternal King!

Can you imagine what the nation of Israel felt at this point? They were being held captive by the Assyrians; they have been exiled out of the Promised Land. So they are wondering, "Didn't God say David's throne would last forever? Yet here we are destroyed!" And Isaiah prophecy tells them that there is hope and salvation coming through the shoot on the stump.

But that's not all he says is it? He also says something about the roots. The roots give life to the tree, without the roots the tree cannot grow! Well, who is the root? The Lord is the root! He is the One that gives life, and He is the One that sends forth the shoot from the stump. The mission of God is for Christ to go forth and save and sustain His people. Right here in Isaiah 11 we have glimpses of the mission of God. Because the root is giving life to the shoot. Blessed be the name of the Lord!



**Prayer** — Father, you are sure to keep your promises, just like you prophesied here: that there would be a shoot from the stump. That you would send Christ to save and to reign forever! I give you praise. Amen.

# DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 11: 6-10



- 6 The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;  
and a little child shall lead them.
- 7 The cow and the bear shall graze;  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
- 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's  
den.
- 9 They shall not hurt or destroy  
in all my holy mountain;  
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.

10 In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal  
for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his  
resting place shall be glorious.

In verses 6-9, we have the change that our reigning Savior  
- Jesus Christ - will bring, but that's not the way it is now. We  
can't go to the zoo and put a calf and a lion in the same  
exhibit, can we? So, what is this text talking about? It's  
talking about the kingdom that is to come! Great change is  
coming. One day there will be perfect harmony and perfect  
peace, for those who know the Lord. Now, there is still



sickness, and there is still pain. There is still sin, and there are many who do not know the Lord.

But that doesn't mean that we cannot have this true Gospel peace that our text speaks about today!

Jesus changes us now; we have the Spirit of God that gives us peace and makes a salvation a guarantee...right now. It's the already, but not yet. We can see glimpses of this picture of glory in our lives, and soon we will behold it in all of its perfection.

The way that this text ends is amazing, because the final verse gives us great application. Go back and read v. 10 again. Here is a call to rest in the reigning savior. For He will be a "signal" for us. If we look at the original text, we see that this word for "signal" refers to a banner waving in the wind. Nations will come to this banner, and they will ask about it - inquire about it.

And what shall we say when we are asked about Jesus, our reigning Savior? Let it be the Gospel. That we have the true and reigning savior who blesses us with great spiritual blessings and who is returning again! There is hope everlasting in the person of Jesus Christ, who's second advent is soon to come!



**Prayer** — Father, thank you for Jesus. Thank you that He has lived my perfect life and died my sinner's death. Now, out of true gratitude, let me proclaim Christ to others! Would you give me gospel opportunities to share my faith this Advent Season? I pray you will. Amen.

# DECEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 40: 1-2



1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.  
2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
    and cry to her  
that her warfare is ended,  
    that her iniquity is pardoned,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
    double for all her sins.

When I read this text, immediately I think of the gentleness and lowliness of Jesus. Jesus himself tells us that in the deepest of his being are these two characteristics. It's there in Matthew 11:28-30...

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Isn't this good news for us this Advent season? That God would send His one and only Son so that He might meet us - sinners - with gentleness.

This prophecy in Isaiah tells us how this gentle Savior will treat us. It first says that Christ will "comfort" us. "Comfort" is a state of ease and freedom, but at the same time it carries a feeling of security.

How does Christ do this? He frees us from the condemnation of the Law (Rom. 8:2), He causes us to walk

wide and easy paths (Ps. 18:36), and He gives us peace with God the Father through our justification (Rom. 5:1).

And if that wasn't enough, look and see how the prophet tells us He speaks to us: tenderly and with tears in His eyes. Isn't that an absolutely beautiful picture? I think about my two toddlers at home. My son, the oldest, cares for his little sister so well. Just the other week my one-year old daughter was running through the house, and of course, fell hard as she lost her footing. She began to bawl her eyes out. Next thing I know my son ran over with tears in his eyes for her pain, helped her up, and told her everything was going to be OK. He then led her to where she was going.

That's similar to our elder brother, Jesus Christ! He is affectionate and gentle; tender and caring. Telling us that our sins have been forgiven at the Cross and leading us all the way to our eternal, victorious home.

Indeed, we have received blessings double from the hand of our Lord. Our greatest blessing is Jesus Himself, and that is what we celebrate this Advent season. The greatest gift from Heaven above.



**Prayer** — Dear Lord, how it stirs us up when we think about Christ Jesus, our Savior and our Elder Brother. You have been so good to us by sending us a gentle Redeemer! You have sent Him for our salvation and for our eternal rest. May we see His tender care for us today. These things we ask through the name of your Son. Amen.

# DECEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 42: 1-4



- Behold my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my Spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
- 2 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,  
or make it heard in the street;
- 3 a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
- 4 He will not grow faint or be discouraged  
till he has established justice in the earth;  
and the coastlands wait for his law.

If you think about it, the prophecy of Isaiah really has one central message: The children of Israel have failed in their calling to be God's holy nation; His called servants.

Therefore, if the Lord's people are going to serve Him in holiness, they must be cleansed and trust in Him alone.

Isaiah points to this message in chapters 1–6 of his book. He shows the sinfulness of Israel and Judah in Isaiah 1–5 and then, using his call to ministry as an illustration, showing the way forward through his own cleansing and trust in God in Isaiah 6.

Then, most of Isaiah 1–39 emphasizes the people's failure even under good kings (like Hezekiah), but at points the prophet tells of the restoration of Israel and Judah under the

righteous Son of David—the Messiah—who will reign in the fear of the Lord. I

isaiah 40–66 focuses on the cleansing of God's people that lay ahead in the prophet's day. Servanthood emerges as a prominent theme, since the Lord first called Jacob's children out of Egypt to serve Him. Today's passage, the first of four major Servant Songs in Isaiah, employs the servanthood theme so clearly.

What we should think as we come to these Servant Songs is simple...because Israel's failure to be the Lord's servant is so clear in Isaiah, the Servant Songs must ultimately be about something better. And indeed they are! The Servant Songs speak of an Israel who perfectly obeys the calling of God on the nation. This is Jesus, whom the New Testament reveals as the new Israel of God (Matt. 2:13–15; John 15:1–17). Jesus, the ideal Israel, has atoned for the sins of Israel, namely, all those who trust in Him.



**Prayer** — Father, thank you for the the truth of the Gospel that shows us the beauty of Christ. I find comfort in knowing that He has succeeded where I often fail. Thank you for clothing me in His righteousness and remembering my sin no more. Help me to live in this gospel assurance each day. In Your Son and my Savior's name, amen.

# DECEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 53: 1-3



Who has believed what he has heard from us?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

2 For he grew up before him like a young plant,  
and like a root out of dry ground;

he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,  
and no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;

and as one from whom men hide their faces

he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

This chapter is known by many scholars as a portion of the “Songs of the Suffering Servant.” It’s here that we are confronted with an idea of who Jesus is...He is the One that was despised and rejected. But, at the same time, Isaiah has declared repeatedly throughout his prophecy that Christ was coming as a King! How do we harmonize these two (seemingly!) contrasting thoughts?

My mind goes back to the story of Israel desiring and begging God for a king. They begin looking around the city, and there is a man who stands head and shoulders above the rest. His name was Saul, and due to his looks and strength, this was the king that God’s people desired. They went out and looked for the one that “looked the part” and that was Saul; so, that’s who they wanted.

But we know the story well. We know that Saul was the complete opposite from the kind of king that Israel needed. So, the prophet Samuel, goes forth looking, and he comes to the house of Jesse...and even the family forgets about little David. The quiet shepherd boy. But when Samuel saw David, God said, anoint this one. He will be the king of Israel.

David was unlike anything the people of Israel expected in a king. Remember, David couldn't even fit into the king's armor. Now, he is going to be king? Well, that's exactly what we have here. The description that the prophet Isaiah gives us paints a bleak picture.

This suffering servant was incredibly and completely ordinary. There was no form about him where you would think that this is going to be the promised messiah who would crush the head of Satan. If you would have put his picture in a line-up, nobody is picking this one that Isaiah is describing. He was rejected by men. People turned their face away from him. He was met with hatred and disgust. Do you feel the weight of that?

The promised Savior for all who believe was indeed the suffering servant. He tasted grief; he was rejected. Why? So that he could sympathize with us in our weaknesses. Isn't that the whole reason that Jesus is our Great High Priest? So that he knows our every pain; our every temptation; our every trial; our every struggle; our every frustration; our every grief.



**Prayer** — God, I give you thanks for Jesus, my Great High Priest, who knows my every weakness and in those moments loves me more than I can ever imagine. Amen.

# DECEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 53: 4-6



- 4 Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.
- 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.
- 6 All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

Here in Isaiah 53, the prophet is clear and simplistic. As Isaiah writes under the authority and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he begins to speak of Christ's suffering on behalf of His people. Notice what Isaiah says...Christ bore all of our grief, all of our sorrow, all of our sins, all of our iniquities. All of it! Not some of it, all of it. I hear quite often, Jesus can't forgive me of that, or Jesus can't handle this for me...yes, he can and he did for all those who call on his name for salvation. He bore it, all of it...on the cross.

It really reminds me of that hymn that we love, "*It is Well, with my Soul.*" The third stanza says, "My sin— O the bliss of this glorious thought!— my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more; praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!"



Here is Isaiah telling us this; he bore it. All of it. Jesus on the cross is the answer to all of our sorrow and despair; our frustration and our unbelief. But, notice something very important here. The Lord did it! The Lord placed all of this upon Christ.

If you were to flip over to Romans 8. I want you to read from verse 31 to the end of the chapter. He did not spare his own Son. Why? For us. Christ was mocked, he was beaten, he was murdered. He took it; he faced the wrath of God in our place, he paid the wages of sin, which was death...and was perfectly obedient in his mission. All for us.

Verse 10, back in Isaiah 53. He did this to take our guilt away. This is revolutionary, for us just as it was for the people that were listening to Isaiah's prophecy. In the Old Testament law, the whole point of it was so that you would stand responsible for your own sin, but here is Isaiah saying...you are sinful, but there is one coming who is going to stand in your place. He will bear it all.

And praise our Lord, He did bear it all.



**Prayer** — Father, Thank you for this reminder from the prophets of your true nature of mercy and love towards sinners. You loved your people so much that you placed upon Christ the iniquity of us all, so that we might be justified. I pray that I would take these truths to heart and seek to live a life of thankfulness and praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# DECEMBER 20<sup>TH</sup>

## ISAIAH 61: 1-3



The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;  
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

The people of Israel were bankrupt, ruled by a foreign power and were utterly alone when the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed these words of hope. Israel's only hope was in the future, even if the people did not realize in what way that hope would come. Isaiah 61 is a forward-looking promise of better days for Israel in the promise of the Lord's favor. Our God is indeed a God who brings good news to the poor, who binds up the brokenhearted, who proclaims good news to those who in bondage, and who opens the prison to those who are bound! (v. 1)

Now, those promises to Israel were of a physical nature as well as spiritual. But for us today, we know that Christ's

coming into the world brought great news, healing, liberty, and emancipation for His people from the powers and dominion of sin. The promises that Israel interpreted literally, we can see are spiritually true for us as well. Without Christ, we are lame and in need of healing. Without Christ, we are poor and in debt to sin. Without Christ, we are captives and prisoners to the flesh. Praise be to God though Jesus Christ who has come to be God with us and has changed the reality for those He calls to Himself!

Do you celebrate the good news, healing, liberty, and freedom that Christ brought to His people? During Advent it is easy to get wrapped up in nostalgic themes and memories about Christmas. But the truth of the matter is that what we are celebrating is a conquering king who came to set His people free, and better yet will come again to make all wrongs right and inaugurate His eternal kingdom of peace.



**Prayer** — Father, thank you for this truth of Christ as the liberating and freeing King. Help me to live as a good citizen of His kingdom - showing Christ to a lost and dying world. Help me not to get caught in this nostalgia of this season, but let me be focused only upon You. In Christ I pray, Amen.

# DECEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup>

## ISAIAH 62: 10-12



- 10 Go through, go through the gates;  
prepare the way for the people;  
build up, build up the highway;  
clear it of stones;  
lift up a signal over the peoples.
- 11 Behold, the Lord has proclaimed  
to the end of the earth:  
Say to the daughter of Zion,  
“Behold, your salvation comes;  
behold, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.”
- 12 And they shall be called The Holy People,  
The Redeemed of the Lord;  
and you shall be called Sought Out,  
A City Not Forsaken.

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**Prayer** — Father, thank you for this truth of Christ as the liberating and freeing King. Help me live in that truth. Amen.

# DECEMBER 22<sup>ND</sup>

## JEREMIAH 33:14-16



14 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’

When we come to chapter 33 in Jeremiah’s prophecy, we have an expansion upon the new covenant promises of God. The text is recording what the Lord said to Jeremiah while he was in prison for telling King Zedekiah the bad news that Jerusalem was going to fall. The verses chosen for today’s study were particularly important for the prophet and other faithful believers in Judah as they watched Babylon surround the city. King Zedekiah would soon be conquered and removed from the throne, and then the people would be exiled. What would become of God’s promise to David that his offspring would reign forever? (2 Sam. 7:1–17).

The Lord’s answer to the faithful believers in Judah was simple. This exile into Babylon would not nullify the Davidic covenant - the promises of God.

In the new covenant, God would keep David’s line on Israel’s throne by causing a “righteous Branch” to spring up for David. Jeremiah 23:5 also refers to this Branch—the

Messiah—and the other prophets use the image as well (Isa. 11:1; Zech. 3:8). David's line would be like a tree cut down to a stump, but just as a stump shows itself to be alive by sending out a branch, David's line would survive after Zedekiah. God would not forget His promises, and He would put a righteous King on the throne of Israel again.

Of course, we know that this righteous Branch is Jesus, who reigns forever (Matt. 1:1–17). What, then, are we to make of this? How does this apply to us?

We need to always remember that when God makes a promise, He always keeps it. You see, when God strikes a covenant with His people, He swears upon His own name. Meaning that the stipulations of the covenant, He has imposed upon Himself.

Our Heavenly Father promised to carry David's offspring before Him forever...they would always remain on the throne, and this is the promise He has kept in Christ Jesus our Lord. When we doubt that our Father will fulfill His Word, let us remember that He kept His promise to put a righteous son of David on the throne forever. If He could do that, given the corruption of men in David's line such as Zedekiah, surely there is nothing He cannot do for us.



**Prayer** — Father, during this Advent Season, I want to trust you more. I want to have a full assurance of my salvation through Christ Jesus, and I want to bask in the surety of Christ's kingship all my days. Help me to remember that You are always faithful to Your promises to me in Jesus. In His name I pray, Amen.

# DECEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>

## DANIEL 7: 13-14



13 “I saw in the night visions,  
and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him.  
14 And to him was given dominion  
and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;  
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one  
that shall not be destroyed.

Truly this scene removes us from the earth and the kingdoms of this world, and it takes us into the throne room of heaven. If we were to look at all these verses, specifically in verses 9 through 14, we have entered into that vision of God and His throne room. Now, in the context of our passage this should be contrasted over and against the apparent power and the evident depravity of the kingdoms of this world. In God’s throne room we see the actual power, the actual sovereignty of God and the righteousness of God almighty in verses 9 through 14.

And then in verses 13 and 14 we see a picture of awesome power and comfort! We see the coming of one who is called the Son of Man. We are told that one who is like a Son of a



Man comes and He approaches the Ancient of Days and He is enthroned.

And I want to remind you of two quick things from the end of Matthew. In Matthew 26, two images are shown to us. First in Matthew 26, verses 63 and 64, Jesus is asked by the high priest, “Are You the Messiah, the Son of God?” In Matthew 26:64 Jesus says, “You have said it yourself nevertheless I tell you. Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Jesus goes right back to Daniel, chapter 7, verses 13 and 14 and He says, “I am the Son of Man.”

You turn over two chapters to Matthew, chapter 28. Immediately before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave His disciples a great commission. The best part of that great commission is what He said before He gave it. In Matthew, chapter 28, verse 18, Jesus came up and spoke to them and He said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and in earth.” One of the last things that Jesus is telling us is that the picture of Daniel, chapter 7, verses 13 and 14 is not a picture of *only* His second coming; it is a picture of His ascension to the right hand of power.

What does that mean for you and me? The Lord Jesus Christ reigns now. He is on the throne. Daniel in exile, never knowing whether he’ll see his home again, knows that his God is the Mediator and sits on the throne for his good.

What a great reminder as we get close to Christmas.



**Prayer** — Heavenly Father, thank you that you provided the Christ who reigns upon the throne. May I trust in His sovereignty more each day. Help me, I ask. Amen.

# DECEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>

## HOSEA 11: 1



<sup>2</sup> When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.

Hosea the prophet ministered during the eighth century BC and focused his attention primarily on the northern kingdom of Israel. During the early part of Hosea's ministry, Jeroboam II ruled over Israel and the northern kingdom enjoyed a good deal of prosperity. But spiritually and morally, the Israelites were wicked.

The people were in a spiritually bankrupt condition, and part of what made it so tragic was that the people had failed to be what God called them to be—a royal priesthood and a light to the nations. This failure occurred despite God's having graciously adopted Israel as His son, as Hosea 11:1 shows us. Israel was not true to its identity and was ultimately cast out of the land. But Hosea also saw that God's anger against His people would not last forever; He would provide a better Israel who would serve Him faithfully.

That hope for a new Israel—a better Israel that would embody all that God called Israel to be—continued through the centuries into the New Testament era. This hope was finally fulfilled in the incarnation of God's true Son, Jesus Christ. Matthew tells us that Jesus fulfills Hosea 11 (Matt. 2:13–15). He is the true Israel, the faithful Israel who succeeds where old covenant Israel failed. Like ancient Israel, He came up out of Egypt, passed through the waters, and

was tested in the wilderness. Unlike old covenant Israel, however, Jesus passed the test. He is therefore worthy to be called God's Son!

The good news of the Advent Season tells us that we can be the true Israel of God as well. If we are in Christ, we share in the privileges and relationship He enjoys as God's true Son. We are sons and daughters of God by adoption. If we possess saving faith, we are His beloved children in Christ. In Christ we can be known as the true Israel of God, heirs of the glorious destiny promised to God's covenant people.

Ultimately, the Israel of God is not an ethnic designation but a spiritual one. God's covenant people includes all those who put their faith in the true fulfillment of Jesus our Lord. Together, Jews and Gentiles united to Christ have a common and exalted end. Let us rejoice in our status as the children of God and work to break down needless divisions in the body of Christ. God's people are one Israel in the Savior.



**Prayer** — Dear Lord, Thank you for Christ; for He not only purchased my redemption by His blood. But, He also secures for me the promises of the Father. Help me to live in this gospel truth, specifically by loving my brothers and sisters in Christ. Despite our differences, we are one body. So, let me work for their good and Your glory. Amen.

# DECEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup>

## MICAH 5: 2



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

In the above passage we see that the prophet Micah foretells that David's great son, the one whom he refers to as his Lord (Ps. 110:1), will come and lead God's people. We see that this son of David will not be born with the pomp and circumstance that those awaiting His arrival in Jerusalem might expect. Rather, the Christ-child will be born in the small shepherding town of Bethlehem from where David himself was born. We also see that this great ruler will rule God's people by God's own strength and for His sake (v. 4).

As we turn to the New Testament, we see a man who was born in Bethlehem due to a census brought about by Caesar Augustus who claimed to be the "Good Shepherd" (Jn. 10:11). This Shepherd would humbly and obediently lay down His life for His sheep and all those who come to Him will never be cast out (Jn. 6:37).

On this Christmas Day, it is good for us to remember that the sovereign God who carried along His prophets to speak forth His word, also sent His Son to shepherd His people. The

Good Shepherd leads us through the green pastures of life as well as through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

This Good Shepherd also gives all of us an invitation. He says in Matthew's Gospel that all who are weary and heavy laden may come to Him to find shelter, peace, and rest under His perfect and continuous care. Easily, I am reminded of Psalm 23. Let's read it together this Christmas Day.

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.

Thanks be to God!