

The Long-Awaited One

Advent Day 1

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. Matthew 1:17

The anticipation of the long-awaited Messiah had ebbed and flowed over these forty-two generations. Those who went into the Babylonian captivity were there because they had stopped expecting the Messiah. Like many of us, their expectations fell to what they could see, hear, and hold in their hands. So God sent Himself in a way that could be seen, heard, touched, and held in waiting arms. The God of creation constrained Himself into the womb of a poverty-stricken mother and made Himself like those who awaited Him. The Messiah came long expected, yet unexpected.

The anticipation of Christmas can sometimes distract our focus to what we can see, hear, and hold in our hands today. Like generations before us, we forget the anticipation of His coming, for He has promised His return since those short years when time marked His arrival. This Christmas, let us intentionally prepare our hearts for His long-awaited coming. Let's wrap the gifts with wonder that He would wrap Himself in flesh. Let us gaze at the lights and remember the Light He brought into the world. Let us wait in anticipation for His coming more than we long for Christmas morning. Let us prepare our hearts even more than we prepare our homes. This is the whole purpose of Christmas.

Jesus (As Was Supposed) the Son of Joseph

Advent Day 2

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Matthew 1:18

Our expectations for Christmas are high. We plan long in advance to make the day perfect. We anticipate the joy on the faces of those we love as we prepare. With such high expectations, Christmas has the potential not to go as planned. Even now, someone might dread the holidays because a loved one will not be there, finances may not be enough, or someone in the family is ill.

Joseph's life surely did not go as planned this very first Christmas. His reputation was tattered as he took up the mantle of the husband of an already expecting wife. Yet, God was accomplishing something far greater in this trial than Joseph knew at the time. Joseph said yes to this unexplainable plan to care for a child conceived by the Holy Ghost. It was not at all what Joseph planned, yet his obedience through such fearful circumstances wove his story into eternity's tapestry.

Though our Christmas may not go as planned, God is still at work in the everyday lives of His people. He knows how to weave the dark threads into His story in just the right places, turning the shaded parts golden with just a turn of His hand. We can trust the Master Artist with the thread for He knows how to make all things beautiful in His time.

The Son of the Highest

Advent Day #3

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Matthew 1:23

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: Luke 1:32

Isaiah, a prophet of God hundreds of years before the first Christmas, promised an ungodly king of Judah that a virgin would conceive and bring forth a son named Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14. Why would God make this promise to King Ahaz? The focus of this king's worship had fallen to empty, sightless idols. The entire book of Isaiah is spent calling God's people back to the Creator who had flung the stars into place and stretched out the heavens as a curtain. (Isaiah 40:22, 26).

This first Christmas, the Virgin's Son would reorient the world to proper worship. The One who created Mary would now subject Himself to the same process as He was knit together in her womb. He was no longer speaking through men; He would now come to be with men Himself. This God who longed for men to know Him would do everything in His power to make it so.

Because man is created to worship, there is no question that each of us makes something the object of our worship. Mary recognized her opportunity to center her worship on the Creator as she willingly offered herself back to Him. By her offering, the Son of the Highest came to be recognized as the center of man's worship once again. Yet, we are forgetful, so Christmas calls us back to proper focus. Who will we worship today?

The Name of Jesus

Advent Day #4

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

Jesus was a relatively common name in first-century Judea. Jesus was the Greek version of the Old Testament name, Jehoshua, or Joshua, as it was shortened to. As the verse describes, the name means that Jehovah saves. But Jesus was only the first name of Jesus' proper name. Matthew 1:18 uses His full name.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Jesus the Christ combined His human name with His divine name. Christ means "the Anointed One" or the Messiah. His supernatural birth avoided the sin passed down from Adam since the Garden of Eden, making Him fully human and fully God. In that very Garden, God had promised that the seed of a woman would one day come to bruise the serpent's head. (Genesis 3:15) The curse of sin that brought shame, suffering, and separation from God could now be broken. Jesus the Christ had come to save His people from their sins.

Sin is just as much a crisis today as it was two thousand years ago. Every person still needs to call upon the name of Jesus for His salvation. Christmas is such a wonderful time of year to speak His name! If you have not yet placed your faith only in Jesus, the Bible says, For

whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Romans 10:13 And if you have already called upon His name, speak His name boldly with anyone who will listen because that is why He came that very first Christmas.

The God of the Impossible

Advent Day #5

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. Luke 1:36-37

Mary's conversation with the Angel Gabriel would have recalled the account of another barren woman well-known in Jewish history. In Genesis 15:5, Abraham had been promised a nation numbered as the stars, but he and his wife were nearing the century mark, and the promised child had still not come. Genesis 18:9-14 records the conversation the Lord had with Abraham.

And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

That very first Christmas marked another reminder that the Creator God was limitless. A ninety-year-old woman expecting a child was just as possible as a virgin birth, for nothing is too hard for God. The fact that God is strong, powerful, and mighty would mean nothing, however, unless He was also compassionate and personal. He was doing this impossible thing to show the world His limitless love for mankind.

The Creator of life still longs to give eternal life to every person. Is there someone in your life that still does not know Him? Nothing is impossible for God. Keep praying!

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

The LORD—κύριος

Advent Day #6

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38

The name of the Lord is used fifteen times in just the first chapter of Luke. It is the Greek translation of the transliterated word YHWH, first used when God spoke to Moses at the burning bush.

And God said unto Moses, I Am that I Am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you. Exodus 3:14

The name was considered “too sacred to be uttered,” and was translated to God in the Old Testament, Adonai in Hebrew, and Lord in Greek. Of course, these are the English versions of each translation.

HELPS word study describes the name Lord as “*kyrios* – properly, a person exercising *absolute ownership rights; lord (Lord)*.”

It is a name denoting the highest God above all gods, the Lord of lords, the Master of all. Mary revered His name and considered herself His bondservant. Can you imagine the wonder of holding a helpless infant in your arms while recognizing Him as your Master and Sovereign King? Yet, she considered it a high privilege to be His servant.

What greater honor can there be than to serve this Lord of Lords and Ruler of the Universe? The fact that He gives humans the freedom to disobey is baffling, and yet to serve Him is to fulfill the very purpose of man’s existence. Perhaps this Christmas season we can look at every opportunity to serve the Lord like Mary did.

“Behold the handmaid (servant) of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word.”

He Hath Scattered the Proud

Advent Day #7

He hath shewed strength with his arm;
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
and exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away. Luke 1:51-53

Luke’s well-researched account of the birth of Christ is the only Gospel that contains Mary’s song. What a treasure to have a record of Mary’s thoughts as she prepared for the birth of her Savior. Her Magnificat, as it is known, resembles the songs of Moses in Exodus 15 and Hannah in 1 Samuel 2. Both songs reference God’s humbling of the proud. In Moses’ song, a wicked king’s army had drowned in the Red Sea. In Hannah’s case, a barren woman had been given a child who would replace the evil religious leaders of her day. Mary’s song prophetically described how God would humble the proud king of Israel and the religious leaders of her day.

Jesus could have descended from Heaven immediately causing every knee to bow before Him in worship. At the very least, He should have been born in the palace of an earthly king, deserving of every comfort available. Why did He choose a poor peasant family for His earthly home? Why did He choose to be born in a stable and to be wrapped in the rags of a baby lamb?

When God spoke with Job in Job 40-41, God explained that part of His work was to “Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low...” Job 40:12. From the very beginning, Satan has attempted to exalt himself above God. It was pride that made man want to be like God in the garden. Pride has infected humanity ever since man’s fall, and pride’s end is destruction.

The thoughts of God are so much higher than man’s thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8) With such a lowly birth the pride of men’s hearts would be revealed. The arrogance of the religious leaders would be unveiled showing trust in their works and the praise of men more than in the mercy of God. King Herod’s murderous heart would expose itself as soon as he heard of another King at

the wise men's arrival. Jesus's lowly birth exemplified the humility God desires in men's hearts. It is the mind He commands His people to have now.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11

Jehovah-Jireh: God Will Provide Himself a Lamb

Advent Day #8

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,
And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;
As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;
To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;
The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being
delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. Luke 1:68-75

Zechariah's benediction alluded to the hope Israel had when the Messiah would come. Though the death of Jesus had been prophesied in the Psalms (22, 34:20), Isaiah (50:6, 53), Zechariah (12:10), and by Abraham in Genesis 22:8, Israel had focused on the prophecies of the coming Kingdom that the Messiah would set up.

God promised Abraham, however, that he would be the father of many nations and that "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice." Genesis 22:18.

Abraham had been willing to sacrifice his promised son, Isaac, at God's request. When Isaac asked his father where the sacrifice was when they arrived at Mount Moriah, Abraham, with great faith, assured his son that "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:8) Abraham laid his son on the altar as God had asked, and just as he was about to bring down the knife, God called to him from heaven to stop, and a ram was provided for the sacrifice. In that place, Abraham recognized God as Jehovah-Jireh which meant, "In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen." Genesis 22:14 The same Mount Moriah is where Jesus, the Lamb of God would be crucified for the sins of the world. His sacrifice for all the nations of the earth allowed Gentiles to be blessed, as well as God's people. I am so thankful He came for me, too. Aren't you thankful He came for you?

