

Christ Our Glory

DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT

Jon Payne



Christ Our Glory: Devotions for Advent

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Introduction

*And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and
Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

John 17:3

THE STUDY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST is rightly our task and honor in every season. To be a Christian and to lead others in Christian discipleship should be to look deeply at the glory of our Savior, as he is revealed in the pages of Scripture.

The Christmas season, in which we remember the incarnation of our Lord, is a gift to us. It reminds us to study the Scriptures, to know him more richly, to remember the glory of the Word become flesh, and to be humbled and grateful, yet again, at his willing sacrifice to provide our salvation.

It is my prayer that these Scriptures and brief meditations will enable families to place Christ in the center of our thoughts during this Christmas season. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

—Jon Payne

DECEMBER 1

The Eternal Word

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:1–2

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:1–4

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

Hebrews 1:1–2

WHEN JOHN BEGINS HIS GOSPEL WITH THE WORDS, “In the beginning,” he is reminding his readers of the opening of the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” God was present at the beginning of everything because he is eternal, and the rest of Genesis 1 reveals that he created everything that exists through his powerful word.

John calls Jesus the Word of God because Jesus is God communicating Himself to us. The words of God created the stars and the planets, the animals and the oceans. The Word of God, Jesus Christ, was present as God’s agent of creation, and in entering our world as a man, he came to re-speak God’s creative power into a broken universe. The Word of God spoke again, and a new world, a new creation, was born.

The Son of God was with God in the beginning, and he was God, both distinct in his personhood and divine in his deity. And he has the unique responsibility of being the agent of God’s power in both the creating and re-creating of this world, re-uniting the broken creation with its Creator. He

is the Word—God’s revelation; God’s ultimate and perfect self-expression; God’s agent of creative power.

God has spoken to us in his Son. All we can know about God finds its ultimate expression in Jesus Christ. To study him is to read God. To know him is to know God, and to be created anew.

DECEMBER 2

The Image

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

Genesis 1:26–27

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:15–17

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Hebrews 1:3

WHEN GOD MADE THE FIRST MAN AND THE FIRST WOMAN, he created them in his image, which means that mankind is to look like God on this earth, to be a representation to creation of its Creator. Yet in our defiance of God, mankind distorted this image. Since the first rebellion, men and women have misrepresented God on this earth.

But then God the Son became a man. As God the Son, he had always existed with a perfect divine nature. He was as truly God as God the Father and God the Spirit. But then he added to himself a human nature and in that nature,

he was the image of God in manhood. He revealed in a human nature the perfect image that Adam was called to be, but failed to be.

So perfectly did Jesus as man reveal this image that he could say to his disciples that to know him was to know the Father. There is nothing about Jesus that misrepresents God. If we would know God's love, joy, kindness, holiness, power, gentleness, humility—we have a perfect image of him in Jesus Christ. And, as the perfect image bearer, Jesus was given the headship of all creation. He is God's regent, God's perfect human king. Where Adam and David and Israel failed, Jesus did not. He was the Son who perfectly revealed the Father, and who was given the eternal inheritance of the universe, to rule as God's perfect king. As for God, the psalmist says, he has set his king on Zion, his holy hill (Ps. 2:6), and every knee will bow to him, and every tongue will confess that he is Lord.

He is the image of the invisible God, the sight of the unseeable, the enfleshing of the infinite, the perfect view of the indescribably glorious. He is Christ, the true and better Adam, the firstborn heir of all creation, the God-man ruler of all nations, the Divine Son from Whom, and to Whom are all things.

DECEMBER 3

The Light

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.*

Isaiah 9:1–2

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:5–13

SIN CAUSES CHAOS AND DARKNESS. On our own, we live chained to our desires and dominated by idols that never provide what they promise. Our only future was the darkness of eternal condemnation because we had rejected the God of light. In our sin, we lived in the grip of enemies, and we could not escape to freedom.

Yet God did not leave us in this catastrophe of our own making. God sent himself into the world, and the light of his revelation broke the dark prison of our hearts and illuminated the dark hopelessness of our fallen humanity.

Jesus offers to all who will come to him the light of hope. In him, there is forgiveness instead of condemnation. In him, there is love instead of punishment. In him, there is reconciliation instead of enmity. In him, there is eternal life instead of eternal death.

Into the darkness of our world he came as the Light of God himself, breaking chains and defeating our enemies and bringing the light of his victory to our darkened hearts. At the cross, he was covered by the darkness of our sin, so that he could provide the light of our redemption.

When he rose, the light of his salvation was proclaimed in his name to every nation, so that this message of the light of his glory will one day cover the nations and the generations as the waters cover the sea.

Behold him! The Light of life and hope and grace—Christ Jesus, the Light of the World.

DECEMBER 4

The Son of Abraham, The Son of David

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Matthew 1:1-17

WHY READ A FAMILY TREE!? Of course, any family tree is boring if we don't feel any connection to the names on the list. But this list of names has some very important names on it.

Did you notice that at the very beginning Jesus is described as the Son of Abraham and the Son of David? These are important names for Jesus to have in his family background. To be a Son of Abraham meant that Jesus was the heir to the promise that God would bless all nations through Abraham's offspring. To be the Son of David meant that Jesus was heir to God's promise to David that he would have a Son sit forever on his royal throne. So this family tree is meant to communicate that all of God's promises to Abraham for the future and all of God's promises to David about his kingly Son are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

But more than that—this family tree is filled with examples of God's faithfulness to his people in spite of their helplessness and their failure. In just a few short verses, Matthew reminds his readers that the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, is both desperately needed because of the sinful past of God's people, and miraculously merciful because God has been moving throughout all of those generations.

When we read this family tree, we are reminded of all the hopes that Israel had for a Son of David and a Son of Abraham. We are reminded that those from other nations can enjoy these promises like Rahab and Ruth. We are reminded that God has kept his promises in spite of sinners like Judah and Manasseh. And as readers of the gospel of Matthew, we are filled with anticipation that God's faithfulness has come to fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.

DECEMBER 5

Joseph's Dream

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

*"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel."*

(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Matthew 1:18–25

IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US. The ultimate need of every human being is to be with our Creator. Yet because of sin, mankind was cast out of God's presence in the garden of Eden, and had no right to be near God again. Broken relationships among people soon followed our broken relationship with God.

Joseph had every human reason to expect that Mary's pregnancy was yet another disappointing and tragic result of the sin that pollutes our hearts and our world. He had no wish to amplify her shame, and yet the right course was clear. Their betrothal would be broken and they would not marry. He would not take this shame and the burden of this child on himself.

But then a message from heaven interrupted Joseph's plan. There was no shame in this child. God was bringing heaven to earth. God himself, in the person of his Son, was coming to his sin-ruined people and making a way for them to be in his presence again.

God was not keeping them at a distance. He was coming among them. He was becoming one of them.

And he had chosen Joseph to be the adoptive father of the Eternal Son. He must call the baby Jesus because he would indeed save his people from their sins. Like his earthly father before him, Jesus would be willing to carry a burden that did not belong to him. His burden would be the heaviest in the world. He would carry the shame and guilt of all of his people so that Eden could be reopened, so that God could be with us again.

Immanuel, God with us. Amen. Thank you, Lord Jesus.

DECEMBER 6

The Messenger

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

Luke 1:5–16

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

Malachi 3:1–4

BEFORE A KING ENTERS A ROOM ON A SOLEMN OCCASION he is “announced.” We can imagine the scene—a uniformed servant raises his voice to command the attention of the room and announces for all to hear: “his Majesty the king” as the sovereign makes his entrance. The “messenger” introduces the king. The same happens before a judge enters the courtroom. “All rise, the honorable Judge Respectable presiding.”

Like a king, like a judge, before Jesus entered his ministry, God sent a messenger before him, declaring his “entrance,” and preparing the “room” for His arrival. This man was John, son of Elizabeth and Zechariah. His role was foretold by the prophet Malachi 400 years before his birth.

The divine purpose for his life was revealed when his old and barren mother suddenly found herself pregnant. Barren women, like Sarah, the mother of Isaac, and Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and the mother of Samson, were often the instruments God used to reveal his supernatural power toward his people.

Elizabeth was no exception. In spite of her old age, she would have a son. And her son would be a prophet, mighty in word, and gathering crowds of Israelites from all walks of life. But his message was not about himself—it was a message of preparation. In fact, when asked, he was insistent that he was not the Messiah, but rather that the Messiah was coming, the One who would cleanse his people with fire, and who was so glorious that John did not even feel worthy to be his lowest slave.

John’s greatest glory was to point people to Jesus Christ—the Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world. Of course, this is our greatest glory as well.

DECEMBER 7

The Virgin

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Luke 1:26–38

IN SCRIPTURE WOMEN WHO HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO HAVE A CHILD were often God's chosen vessels for the arrival of a mighty servant of the Lord. (As previously mentioned, Sarah, Hannah, Samson's Mother, and Elizabeth all fit into this category.)

Yet Mary was different. Her child would not merely be highly unlikely, even unheard of, or even normally impossible as was the case with those other women. His birth would be a categorically, without-question, no-doubt-about-it Divine Event. He would be a miracle beyond every other miraculous birth.

Mary would have a Son supernaturally within her through the Divine creative power of God himself. He would be truly Mary's Son—formed using her own body, and yet truly a Divine Miracle, formed without a human father. And since this child came in this miraculous way, he did not inherit the sinful nature that every biological son of man receives from Adam. He would be miraculous in his conception and unique in his perfection.

This event, announced by a heavenly messenger, and received by a young girl with remarkable faith, revealed God's eternal purpose to bring his own Son, incarnate, into the world. This miracle is not meant for us to worship Mary, but rather for us to be in awe at the greatness of this One who came into the world unlike any other man in human history.

Behold, the Son of the Virgin—Behold the Divine Miracle—the son of Mary who is the Eternal Son—Jesus Christ.

DECEMBER 8

Mary's Song

*And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever."
Luke 1:46–55*

IN MARY'S SONG, we receive a remarkable picture of faith and declaration of God's glory in the arrival of Jesus Christ.

She says that her soul magnifies and rejoices in her Lord because he has looked on her in her humble estate. He has done mighty things for her, the lowly one, and has revealed His power in opposition to the proud.

Mary is a picture here of every believer—and Mary's Song is a celebration in advance of the power of God at work in Jesus Christ.

Jesus did not come to prioritize the mighty, or the rich, or the impressive—he came to rescue the hopeless, the sick, the weak, the lost. As Paul would say many decades later, the salvation of Christ did not come to us because we

were wiser or richer or stronger than anyone else. Rather, salvation reveals the undeserved mercy of God. He rescues exclusively based on his own grace and kindness.

Mary's Song is a song of exultation in God's grace—a grace that overlooks human pretension, rejects human wisdom, and loves to lift up the helpless and shower his strength on the hopeless. He who is mighty has done a great thing, and holy is his Name!

DECEMBER 9

Zechariah's Redemption

*And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit
and prophesied, saying,
“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people
and has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
that we should be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us;
to show the mercy promised to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us
that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”
And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the
wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.
Luke 1:67–80*

ZECHARIAH HAD BEEN MUTE FOR NINE MONTHS. After a lifetime of speech, his voice had suddenly gone silent, gripped helplessly in a sobering divine discipline.

Zechariah was ministering in the temple when an angel suddenly appeared to him and told him the news about his new baby, who would be the messenger

of the Messiah. But Zechariah had doubted. He was old, after all, and his wife was old, and they were barren.

Apparently, he had forgotten that God's Old Testament people had descended from an old, childless couple. He had forgotten that his great forefather was an old man who had believed an impossible promise. In his doubt, Zechariah was disciplined.

But at the birth of his child, he rejected his doubt and placed faith in the God of Abraham. He wrote, "His name shall be John," to declare his submission to and faith in God's plan for his son.

At once, the discipline ended and his tongue was loosed. Immediately, he proclaimed a prophesy of praise to the God of his fathers. He declared that the Lord God of Israel had visited and redeemed his people. He spoke of salvation and forgiveness and the tender mercy of the Lord. He spoke of redemption. He spoke of promises fulfilled and a future secured.

Oh come, let us join the words of Zechariah! Let us cast our doubts aside and sing to the Lord who has visited His people, who has redeemed us from our sins, and who will come again with mercy from on high.

DECEMBER 10

Find the Emperor

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:1–7

CAESAR AUGUSTUS WAS THE ROMAN EMPEROR. He controlled the most powerful army in the Mediterranean world. Countries, citizens, and conquered lands submitted to his rule, and those that did not were crushed under his power.

Presumably his decision to order the people of Judea to return to their ancestral towns for a census was a means of communicating his power—perhaps for the purpose of calculating the population under his control, perhaps for tax purposes. In any case, Luke invites us to see beyond all of the dignity and power of the mighty Roman emperor and to notice one simple, stubborn truth. The Messiah was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, where God wanted him to be born.

Though Caesar was flexing his political muscles, he was simply doing the bidding of God’s sovereign plan. And though all of the world knew Caesar to be supreme in power and prestige, the real emperor of the world, the One who ordered history, was about to enter the world as a child precisely where he wanted to.

If this passage were a game of “who is the emperor,” the right answer is that the real Emperor, the One who orders all of history, revealed himself in a feeding trough for animals in the town of David.

And so the irony of ironies begins. The one with apparent power is just the servant of the One who seems all weakness. The one with all the apparent prestige is the one doing the bidding of the One who appears as an outcast. This irony will not end until the cross—when the man who dies in weakness is actually the conquering King.

DECEMBER 11

The Incarnation

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."

Luke 1:26–35

THE WONDER OF THE INCARNATION! The Eternal Word taking on flesh and dwelling with us! The manhood of Jesus is a miracle worthy of our worship, our gratefulness, and our adoration.

God the Son, without ceasing to be divine, added to his person a human nature. He was simultaneously God and man. His divine nature did not cause his manhood to be less than human; his human nature did not cause him to cease being divine.

At every point of his life after conception, he experienced life as a man the way all humans do—with the same childhood and physical vulnerability that

we do, yet without sin. The author of the DNA code had to learn the Jewish alphabet—the Word had to study the Scripture!

At every point of his ministry he steadfastly refused to use the power of his divine nature to mitigate the temptations or weaknesses of his human nature. So, though he could create bread for the multitude, he would not create a bite for himself in the desert. Though he could raise Lazarus from the dead, he would not keep his wrists from bleeding and his nerves from agonizing on the cross. He felt cold and heat as only a creature can, while in his divine nature he sustained the very cold and heat that caused his human suffering.

What a wonder, the incarnation! And what a mercy!

In facing every human reality, yet without sin, and with perfect obedience, he stood truly and fully in our place. In him, we have the redemption of mankind. All men and women who put their faith in Christ, receive the mediation of the Man Christ Jesus, God the Son, who intercedes for us eternally before the throne of God.

DECEMBER 12

Heavenly Hallelujah

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Luke 2:8–20

BOTH THE AUDIENCE AND THE CHOIR ARE DELIGHTFUL in this heavenly hallelujah. God reveals his host to lowly shepherds, despised of society and yet not forgotten by God. God sends his mighty army not to conquer but to sing, to worship, to evangelize, to exult.

One can only imagine the wonder of the angels as they dared to speak the message—the Messiah has come. The Almighty God has led history to the

moment of his entrance. The Holy Judge is unveiling his undeserved favor toward his enemies!

Peace on earth—it means more than a good feeling on the inside of our hearts. It is much more than a hot chocolate on a cold night. Peace means God’s blessing, the ending of His enmity, the presence of His generosity—all is promised in the arrival of God the Son.

And indeed the result is glory to God in the highest. Glory to the All Wise and All Merciful. For no wisdom on earth could create this plan, revealed in that little divine infant in Bethlehem.

So let us follow the directions of the angels in our hearts and minds. Let us go again to the manger and let us rejoice and be glad, for our God has come to dwell with us, to rescue us, and to bring us back to himself. Glory to God in the highest!

DECEMBER 13

The Long Awaited One

And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

*“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”*

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Luke 2:22–38

MAY THE LONGING AND JOY OF SIMEON AND ANNA be present in all of our hearts and homes. Long had they prayed and waited for God's Messiah. We can imagine them year after year in the temple, bowing before their God, declaring their trust in his promises, exulting in the Scriptures that predicted the coming King.

And here he was! Here in this little bundle in Mary's arms was the fulfillment of all their faithful prayers. Here was the mighty victor over the enemies of God's people, here was great David's greater Son. Here was Messiah—the Anointed One, the Promised One, proof of God's *hesed*, his faithful loving-kindness to his people.

May the joy of their hearts be echoed in our own.

We also have been given eyes to see the glory of this gift, and we also should have hearts longing for his entrance into this world again. What a day that will be—to join with Simeon and Anna and rejoice at our faithful God, who kept his promises to send the Messiah and will keep his promises again when he returns on the last day.

Amen! Come soon, Lord Jesus!

DECEMBER 14

King Above All Kings

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Matthew 2:1–12

WHEN THE WISE MEN ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM asking about the birth of the king, Matthew reports that Herod and all Jerusalem with him were troubled. And well they should be.

The kings of this earth—including Herod—have only a temporary lease on power. Wicked kings like Herod have great reason to fear the coming of the righteous and holy King of all kings—he who will bring to justice all those who oppress the weak and lowly and who reject his rightful authority.

In contrast, the great men from the east came eager to show their respect and to honor the newly born sovereign. In their gifts, there is a real anticipation of the end of all the ages. The riches and glory of this earth will be surrendered to the firstborn of all creation, the King of every king and Lord of every lord. All worship and honor will be provided to him, and every knee of the great and lowly alike will bow before him.

In that simple moment, when the rich gifts were laid down before him, there is a snapshot of history, and an invitation for our hearts. Let us come and worship. O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord. He is the theme of heaven's praises and the glory of our hearts. Let not our hearts be troubled, but let them be transfixed in loving, reverent praise.

DECEMBER 15

The Serpent Seeks the Son

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

*"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."*

Matthew 2:13–18

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE CHILDREN OF BETHLEHEM was not a random act of violence in history. It was the inevitable response of evil to the arrival of the righteous Son of God.

Psalms 2 declares that the kings of the earth gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed. Going further back, God declared in Genesis 3 that the serpent would seek to bite the heel of the promised One. Revelation 12 pictures Satan as a great dragon, waiting for the coming holy child to devour him.

Herod did not care about the weeping mothers and grieving fathers of Bethlehem—he was under the control of the prince of the power of the air, the evil one, the serpent, whose only thought was for the killing of the Messiah. And the serpent would not cease looking for a way to destroy him, from

temptations in the desert, to a betrayal in the garden, until finally, the hammers fell and the cross was raised.

But the serpent, for all of his raging fury and wicked cunning, would not slaughter the Son until the Son chose to die, until his appointed time had come. And in the end, the wounding of God the Son would in itself be the death blow of the serpent. In the very act of bruising the Son of God, the serpent positioned himself for his ultimate destruction, and the great Son would crush his head.

The serpent always sought the Son, but the Son will cast him into darkness forever. Glory to the Lord, the Serpent Crusher has come, and the pain and grief of the serpent's evil rule has received its death blow.

DECEMBER 16

The Obedient Son

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written,

*"Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you,"

and

*"On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone."*

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

*"You shall worship the Lord your God
and him only shall you serve."*

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Matthew 4:1-11

WHAT WAS THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS? At its core, Satan offered Jesus a crown without a cross. He offered glory without humility. He offered exaltation without painful obedience. He offered a throne without a tomb.

As with most temptations, these were subtle—starting at first with just the simple encouragement to make a loaf of bread with divine power. But in that subtle question, Jesus saw a diabolical trap.

Jesus could not truly provide a record of righteousness if he did not truly face mankind's temptations. He would not use his divine power to mitigate the reality of his human obedience. And he did not come merely to rule as a human tyrant, but to rescue as a Redeemer. He did not merely want humanity's submission, but their salvation.

And most importantly of all—Jesus was God the Son, and he would not worship anyone or anything other than his Father. Unlike those who worshiped the golden calf in the wilderness, unlike David who used his power for his own cravings, and unlike you and me in our willingness to satisfy our sins rather than worship our Creator, Jesus said, "No." In this refusal we have a record of righteousness that will stand in our place before God forever.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your righteousness. Thank you for saying "no" to every temptation so that all of your promises of salvation could be "yes" for us forever.

DECEMBER 17

Who is This?

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Mark 4:35–41

THE EXPERIENCED FISHERMEN WERE FACING A NASTY STORM. Yet to their great consternation, Jesus remained asleep. They could not understand his absolute calm in the midst of this danger—he didn't even wake up!

So they woke him up, and questioned his care for them, and perhaps his sanity as well. "Don't you care that we are perishing?" they asked. So Jesus chose this moment to reveal his identity to them. With a few words he commanded the wind and it ceased and the storm that had been life-threatening a moment before was suddenly calm.

In a few words, this man showed himself to have authority over the forces of nature itself. There was no force in this world mightier than this One who was in the boat with them.

They had thought to rebuke him, but he now questions them. "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"

There is no earthly fear that is appropriate when God the Son is with you. No danger is outside of his control. There is no problem that he cannot solve with a word.

Suddenly, the fishermen's fear of dying was exchanged for another kind of fear—a holy fear, the fear of mortal men in the presence of God. God was

with them in the boat—God the Son; God the Creator; God the all-powerful. His human vulnerability was a moment-by-moment choice and in no way limited the divine power available to him, or the divine holiness that should command the awe and trembling of all those around him.

Who then was this? This is Jesus Christ, God the Son, the mountain-maker and the commander of wind and waves, the sustainer of the universe. In all truth, he is in our boat with us as well. Let us have faith with reverence and joy with trembling, knowing that we are crossing the sea and storm of our life in his mighty presence.

DECEMBER 18

The Fountain

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John 7:37–39

OUR SOULS WERE MADE TO BE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD HIMSELF. That's why God consistently compares himself to water in the Scriptures. In the same way that we cannot be physically healthy or thriving without water, we cannot be spiritually healthy or thriving apart from the presence of God.

Apart from God we are like a man crawling through the desert, seeing one oasis after another that all prove to be mirages.

The terrifying truth is that God could leave us in this condition for eternity. Eternal death includes permanent spiritual dehydration—feeling our souls suffer from the lack of spiritual water we were made to enjoy. But he did not leave his people to this judgment.

Instead Jesus offers to reunite us with the Fountain of Living Water that is God himself.

Jesus provides more than occasional access to the well of fellowship with God. He offers to bring the Spirit of God to all who trust in him. Those who come to Jesus will know the endless abundance of God's Holy Spirit with them, flowing like a stream out of the very center of who they are.

Jesus does not just give us a glimpse of God or a taste of him. He gives the presence of God permanently united to us through his Spirit. He is truly the Fountain of Living Water.

Let us thirst and drink deeply of the presence of God that we have in Christ Jesus.

DECEMBER 19

The Bread of Life

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

John 6:35–51

AFTER THEY WERE RESCUED FROM EGYPT, the people of Israel immediately faced the threat of starvation in the wilderness. Sadly, rather than trust the God who had just conquered Egypt and parted the Red Sea, they began to complain and question his ability to provide food.

Yet God was merciful to them. He provided manna from heaven every day for forty years as they wandered in the wilderness. Their survival depended every day on God's provision. This was the Biblical background when Jesus miraculously provided loaves for the multitude of people listening to his teaching in John 6.

So when Jesus announces that he is the bread of life, he is doing more than using a spontaneous metaphor. Jesus is saying that in the same way that God provided bread in the wilderness and bread on the hillside to meet their physical need, God had provided a spiritual Bread to meet their spiritual need. In the same way that the manna in the wilderness was the salvation of the people, Jesus is God's spiritual salvation for his people. In the same way that bread was the source of their physical life—so Jesus' body would be the source of their spiritual life. They would depend completely, every moment, on Jesus to save them from spiritual devastation. And in dying, his body would provide what their souls needed to live.

Jesus is the Bread of Life because he offered his body in death in our place, and he offered himself as our source of eternal life. He is the true bread of life for our souls—and in him our souls need never go hungry again.

DECEMBER 20

The Willing Sacrifice

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

Mark 10:32–34

JESUS WAS GOING TO JERUSALEM. He was going there intentionally, knowing that the result would be his death. He was not trying to avoid his death. In fact he was intentionally initiating the process. The same resolve that motivated him to preach the good news and heal the sick was now propelling one foot in front of the other up the hill to the city where he would be betrayed, falsely accused, mocked, flogged, and crucified.

To see the glory of our Savior, we must see the willingness of his death. Jesus did not miscalculate his popularity or presume he would get a fair trial. His life was not taken from him by powers outside of his control. He willingly laid down his life. He willingly brought his betrayer with him to the final meal with his disciples. He willingly made himself a lamb silently led to the slaughter. This willingness was all out of obedience and affection for his Father and love and mercy toward his people.

Jesus would go to Jerusalem because he was determined to go to the cross. He was determined to face the death sinners deserved so that the sinners he loved could be saved. He was determined to obey his Father and redeem a people by the sacrifice of his own blood. He was a resolute sacrifice.

There were no surprises waiting for him at the end of this journey. There was only utter abandonment and unthinkable pain—and rescuing us. Jesus was going to Jerusalem. He was going to rescue his people.

Come now, people of the crucified and Risen One, to worship and adore Him.

DECEMBER 21

The Anointed One

Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

John 12:1–8

THE PASSOVER WAS APPROACHING and the lambs would be sacrificed in Jerusalem, just up the road from Bethany. In a beautiful literary and theological parallel, John sets the stage for the cross by reminding his readers that the sacrifice of lambs without blemish—that sacrifice that caused God to pass over his people in his judgment of Egypt—was about to take place. Here, in the shadow of the ultimate sacrifice by the ultimate Lamb, the story pauses for a moment of deep emotion and profound worship.

There at the table sits Lazarus—who was rescued from death by the Savior who is about to lay down His life. Also present is his sister Mary, full of affection and gratefulness for her Lord. The extravagance of her gift is beyond comprehension—and yet Jesus applauds her actions. Judas is appalled, looking to use the money for himself.

But Jesus accepts Mary's gift because he knows that Mary rightly understands his true value and his impending death. In truth, Mary's gift is actually not extravagant but appropriate in light of the glory of Jesus Christ and the miracle of His death on behalf of sinners.

Mary's affection is what should fill all of our hearts as we consider this Incarnate One who came to live and die in our place. Mary's worship should likewise flow out of our hearts and our lives as we consider this Lamb who was slain for the sins of the world and who will rescue so many of us, like Lazarus, from the grip of death. May our hearts overflow and our songs rise as we tell of our love for the Savior.

DECEMBER 22

The Crucified King

As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping

watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"
Matthew 27:32–54

THE COMING OF JESUS AS A MAN gave him the ability to suffer and die as a man, for mankind. God in his divine nature cannot bleed, cannot be pierced, cannot gasp, or choke, or suffocate.

So God the Son gave himself a nature that could experience a long and tortuous death. He gave himself eyes that could see the mocking crowds and ears that could hear their scorn. He gave himself skin that could be lacerated and nerves that could feel the agony.

Most importantly, he gave himself a human nature that could be rejected by God the Father—a human nature that could be cursed. He took on the ability to stand in Adam's place, to stand in David's place, to stand in your place and my place.

He was born to live and then to die. He came to be sacrificed. He became vulnerable to suffering, so he could take our punishment. He became a man, so that he could face man's unutterable condemnation.

There he is—the glory of Heaven, the healer of the sick, the teacher of multitudes, the King on the cross, and the Lamb on the altar. There he is—born to obey, born to die, born to save.

Let us repeat, in love and truth, the words that were first spoken as mockery from his enemies. He is the King of the Jews, the King of all Kings! He is our King! He is our Lord! Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth, goodwill toward men. He is raised now to life, yet still scarred from death. Come, let us adore him!

DECEMBER 23

The Resurrection

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

Matthew 28:1–10

JESUS MET THEM. Here is the hope of every Christian: to meet with Jesus face to face. The Crucified One is now risen. The One who died in weakness is now alive with supernatural, invulnerable power. Jesus met them, and one day we will meet him as well. One day, he will meet us in the clouds as he takes us home.

We will see the scars on his hands and the power in his eyes, the glory brighter than the sun will shine from his face. We will see the One we have adored and remembered Christmas after Christmas, Easter after Easter, and day after day.

We will see the One who has loved us with an undying love and who has carried us through every valley and spoken his comfort to us in every trial.

We will see our Shepherd who has always led us to green pastures and our Master who has called us to follow him. We will see our King, receiving the

worship of the nations in the adoration of his people. We will see our Lamb standing as a Lion in complete victory and angelic acclaim.

He will meet us, and we will live in the glory of his presence forever. The Divine Man, the Mediator, the Lion Lamb, the Shepherd King—by faith and with joy let us meet him now as we wait to meet him when he returns. O come, let us adore him.

DECEMBER 24

The Glorious King

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

Revelation 1:4–16

LET US GLIMPSE THE END FROM THE BEGINNING. In celebrating the child in the manger, let us anticipate the King in his resurrection power. The eternal glory of our Lord is beyond all human comprehension.

The Revelation picture of him communicates absolute wisdom—there is nothing outside of his gaze or his knowledge. It communicates absolute power—there is no enemy that will not be subdued, including sin, Satan, and death.

This King has a particular people on his heart—his church, his precious bride. We are not forgotten by him, but rather always at the center of his gaze. His wisdom and power and love are directed toward us—guaranteeing our perseverance and our protection from the evil one.

Christmas is a time for worship, a time for exultation, a time for anticipating heaven. Glory to the newborn King—the King who even now reigns in glory forever. Glory to the Risen King—whose beauty and majesty will overwhelm our senses and give us, for the first time, complete and unblemished joy.

The sight of him will change us to make us like him and we will gladly live with him forever. We will be studying him and learning of him and enjoying him until our souls are saturated with the glory of it all, and we will overflow in mind-exploding, heart-thrilling worship.

Here we are to worship. Here we are to bow down. Here we are to say that You are our God. Oh Come! Let us Adore Him! Come soon, Lord Jesus!

