



Jesus is Coming

Advent Devotional Booklet



Advent

Advent is a time of preparation and waiting for the coming of Jesus as a baby. It is a wonderful time for families to share in the preparing of our hearts and homes for this coming.

There are usually 4 Sundays in Advent leading up to Christmas, but the days can vary depending on where Christmas falls in the calendar.

This is a booklet of short devotionals, Bible readings and prayers for this advent season. The devotionals continue after Christmas through to Epiphany (January 6th). I would encourage you to read the Bible readings along with the devotion as they lead you through the different aspects of Advent which you can discuss as a family.

May God's blessings rest on you and your family this Advent as we prepare for Jesus' coming.





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In the Word

1st Sunday in Advent

Read: Isaiah 9:2-7

*“The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.”
John 1:9 (NRSV)*

December tends to be a busy time for everyone with the comings and goings of gatherings, celebrations, and end of year functions. There are the sales and advertising of Christmas, all expressing a need to come and buy! There is one coming though which excels all others – the coming of Jesus in Bethlehem. This is what the season of Advent is all about.

Jesus’ first coming was rather a simple event, with just a stable and a manger, shepherds and animals, but there was recognition from God in a star and from the heavens with the heralding of the angels. It was a birth foretold by Isaiah the prophet, 700 years before Christ.

We read about Jesus coming to us in the Word of God, the Bible. In that, he comes as our Redeemer and Lord bringing peace and love to a troubled world.

The Word of God is reliable and reveals the very heart of God himself – telling of His love for everyone. It was because of God’s love that Jesus came. He came to share his love by his words and actions and ultimately give his life so that we also can have life, now and in eternity. This message comes to us in God’s Word. It is a living book that has the power to transform and change lives through sharing who Jesus is and what he did. So, come, Lord Jesus, come!

***Prayer:** Dear Jesus, thank you for coming into the world for me. You come to me every day in your Word, the Bible, to share, and teach me how to grow in love for you and other people. Amen.*

Bringing Good News

1st Monday in Advent

Read: Isaiah 61:1-4

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." Luke 4:18a (NIV)

There is something about good news that excites and interests us. We immediately want to share the news with others. The very nature of good news is that it demands telling and sharing.

The good news of Jesus is that He came. But even more, the good news is that Jesus Himself is the Good News. If Jesus did not come into the world, all we would have is bad news. The bad news is that we sin against God and that we are not who God intended us to be. More often than not we do not accept that we are bad news, and so need to be told again and again that we are not worthy of God's love. But into this bad news comes Jesus to clean us from all the bad.

Jesus said: 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' [John 14:6 NIV]

Jesus came to us in poverty and humble circumstances, to show us that the poor shall become rich in God's eyes – that's what makes it all Good News. This Good News of Jesus will be shared again and again in the weeks to come, culminating in the proclamation of Christmas Day: *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."* [Luke 2:10-11 NIV]

Prayer: *Lord, I am in need of your Good News. Thank you that you come for me and bring me the Good News of life and forgiveness in you. Amen.*



Releasing the Prisoner

1st Tuesday in Advent

Read: Galatians 5:1-6

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me... He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners..." Luke 4:18b (NIV)

There are two sorts of prisoners: those who are in physical imprisonment, and those in spiritual imprisonment. In the above text Jesus is referring to those who are captive spiritually – those who feel trapped and condemned for breaking God's laws and feel that their relationship with God has been broken. Jesus has come to restore this relationship.

Jesus came to provide release for the captives: those in bondage to sin, Satan and self... basically everyone! This release was not an easy one, as the trial was unfair and biased, and there was no amnesty declared. It was a release that was obtained through the compassionate heart of God. It involved the death of an innocent – God's own Son, Jesus. This release has no parallel in the history of the world. It is a full and complete pardon for all captives; a worldwide amnesty.

It would be tragic if a person in prison were told they were free, but refused to believe it. Instead, they still sit in their prison cell. If that happened we would probably feel like shaking the person and saying: "Don't be silly. You're free!" Jesus came to proclaim release to the captives, but more than that he made the release possible. At this time of Advent let us remember this and celebrate our release through Jesus coming and proclaim this release also to others.

Prayer: How can I thank you for your loving kindness to me? Even though I have been in darkness and captive to my sins you came to liberate me from all my wrongdoings. Help me to share this freedom. Amen.



Today

1st Wednesday in Advent

Read: Luke 4:16-30

"...and He (Jesus) began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'" Luke 4:21 (NIV)

Advent brings with it also the beginning of the bushfire season. Temperatures soar and cinder-dry forests and grasslands can become roaring infernos in next to no time. Fire-fighters are on the alert for immediate action today and each day. Tomorrow is not good enough!

Today is an important word in Luke's Gospel. His emphasis is on the immediate action of the Kingdom in contrast with some future apocalyptic revelation. God is revealing Himself right here and now in the person of Jesus, the Messiah.

There is always a matter of urgency when we are dealing with spiritual matters. The only time is right now. We cannot repent when we feel like it. We can only repent and turn to the Lord when his call comes to us. His call comes in his Word. When we hear the Word of God, his call to repentance and faith comes too. You are hearing that Word right now, in this devotional. You hear the call of the Lord in church, in Bible Studies, devotion groups and now, today, as you hear God's Word the call comes to you.

Today is the time to think again about the coming of Jesus. Today is the time to take up the call of Advent. Today is the time to consider the Good News that God loves you in Jesus Christ despite who you are and what you may have done. Today Jesus comes to you.

"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near."
Isaiah 55:6 (NIV)

Prayer: *Come, Holy Spirit and lead me to Jesus. Forgive my negligence and indifference and grow in me a sense of urgency to come to you today. Amen.*



Rejected

1st Thursday in Advent

Read: Luke 13:31-35

“They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.”

Luke 4:29 (NIV)

Rejection is a tragic thing. There are times when each of us has experienced rejection and it can be a very lonely and painful time, even causing emotional scars. The world today bears the scars of its rejection of God. We see it in broken relationships, in wars, in the cruelty between nations and people and so many other problems.

Still, the loving patience of God abounds. Why does He still love us and not give up on us? The only answer for this is that God does it because He is God. We reject Him and He still loves us. We reject Him and He offers us forgiveness. We reject Him and He sacrifices His only Son as payment for our shocking rejection. That’s just the way God is and how he works.

Jesus is also rejected when he comes to Nazareth. He announces who he is and what he has come to do... the result: rejection! In the life of Jesus, success alternates with rejection, just as it does with us. Many reject the birth of Jesus at Christmas – it’s a rejection that fails to recognise the presence of God or celebrate the birth of His Son.

This Advent Season let us recognise the love of God in sending His Son to us at Christmas and celebrate this joy with those around us. God still comes. He comes in Jesus. He comes with His love and forgiveness.

***Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you never reject me even though I may reject you. You always reach out to me with your love, thank you. Amen.*



In Baptism

1st Friday in Advent

Read: Romans 6:1-11

"All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus. And when you were baptised, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes." Galatians 3:26-27 (CEV)

When you were baptised you became a child of God. You had no say or control over that. It was all God's doing. God is at work in baptism. He makes you His own in union with Christ Jesus. Baptism is all good news, for it is how Jesus comes to us. We are born into a bad situation (sin); simply because we are human beings and not perfect. But God makes us perfect in the waters of Baptism and we are washed clean from all the sin of our human condition.

Without God's grace in Baptism we are cut off from God – we are sinners by nature, choice and actions. The Good News of baptism is that Jesus comes to us in the middle of our sin and frees us from the condemnation it holds on us.

Jesus has claimed you as his own in your baptism. You are His. You are clothed with His righteousness. The celebration of Christmas should never be separated from the celebration of our baptism. Jesus came at Christmas to die on the cross. The benefits and blessings of the cross are brought to us by Jesus as He comes to us as a tiny baby at Christmas.

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, you claimed me as your own at my baptism. Forgive me when I fail to appreciate the blessings you bring to me as your special child. Amen.*



In the Lord's Supper

1st Saturday in Advent

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:23-32

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?" 1 Corinthians 10:16 (NIV)

Sometimes strange things happen. Perhaps the strangest of all (or so it must seem to those who do not understand) takes place in the Lord's Supper. If the real treasure of the Lord's Supper consisted in eating bread and drinking wine, there wouldn't be too much treasure in it. But, the treasure lies elsewhere. The bread and the wine are simply the earthly elements, the means through which God brings the greatest treasure and blessing of all time – the body and blood of His Son, Jesus.

In the Lord's Supper we are linked with Jesus in a close, personal and tangible way. We receive His very body and blood which was put to death on the cross to put us right with God and give us forgiveness and salvation. All the blessings of Jesus' death and resurrection are ours – given to us in the Lord's Supper. This is what Paul means when he says we 'participate' in the body and blood of Christ when we drink the cup and break the bread.

There is treasure in the Lord's Supper where Christ gives himself to us. Jesus comes to us in the Lord's Supper with all His blessings! This Advent take time to reflect on the meaningfulness that the Lord's Supper has for each one of us as His precious children who are loved and accepted.

Prayer: *Thank you my Lord Jesus that you come to me continually in the gift of the Lord's Supper. Help me to understand and appreciate this incredible gift of love. Amen.*



When will Jesus Come?

2nd Sunday in Advent

Read: Luke 12:32-40

"...the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'"
Matthew 24:3b (NRSV)

Farmers in the drought regions of Australia are often heard to say, "When will it rain?" Even with all the forecast knowledge and indications available, there is still no definite answer until the drops of rain begin to fall. The only thing certain is that eventually the rains will come.

'When will Jesus come?' is the question asked by the first disciples of Jesus and by all His followers down through the ages since. The only answer that can be given is: we don't know when, but we do know that he **will** come again.

Advent celebrates the continual coming of Jesus. He came. He comes. He will come again. Most Christians don't have too many problems concerning Christ's first coming. Most don't seem to have too many problems over His constant coming in the Word and Sacraments. But there are more problems when His second coming is concerned. Why should we be preoccupied with the details of His second coming when we can celebrate His coming to us right now? We need to look to the Jesus who has come and who is coming to us right now.

Jesus comes to forgive. He comes to bring us eternal life despite our sinfulness. Then, because we are His, let us look to His return not with terror, but with eager expectation.

***Prayer:** May your kingdom come to me, Lord Jesus. Help me to see that you come to me each day in your Word, love and forgiveness. Amen.*



What are the Signs?

2nd Monday in Advent

Read: Matthew 24:30-36

“Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.” Matthew 24:44 (NRSV)

Driving along a country road in Australia, it is not unusual to see a ‘Kangaroo Crossing’ warning sign for the next few kilometres. The sign is not there for the fun of it, but it is there as a warning to watch and take care that there may be danger bounding across the roads.

The disciples asked Jesus for a sign as to when he will return and even many of us look to signs in nature and humankind to warn us of the return of Jesus. They hope to then have time to be prepared and repent and so be assured of eternal life. But in the above Bible readings we are told that no one knows when Jesus will return – only our Heavenly Father.

Jesus makes all of history the sign of His coming. We are in the New Testament era, all the events that happen now, in our past, and in the future are a sign to Christ’s coming again. Jesus is not concerned with providing us with a detailed plan of what is to come. He is more concerned with equipping us to be the kind of people who will be ready for the end when it does come. He fixes our attention and hope, not on **what** is to come, but on **who** is coming. Jesus Himself is coming and we are reminded of it this Advent season. Why be preoccupied with the signs? Our preoccupation should be with Jesus. Jesus is coming – that is for sure! He who is our Lord and Saviour is with us now, and is coming to take us to be with Him in an even more special way.

***Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for your love for me and give me your Holy Spirit to point me to you. Give me an eager heart and an earnest expectation of your coming. Amen.*

Be on your Guard

2nd Tuesday in Advent

Read: 2 John 4-11

"Jesus answered them, 'Beware that no one leads you astray.'"

Matthew 24:4 (NRSV)

Apparently the difference between a crocodile and an alligator is that the tooth of the crocodile protrudes outside the mouth. This gives the crocodile a very deceptive 'smile'. A 'mirage' in the desert has the same sort of effect. If you cross the desert and are deprived of water, you will become more and more convinced that there is water ahead of you. Such is the deceptive nature of the mirage.

Jesus warns his disciples and us to also be aware of such deceptions. Not that he is talking about crocodiles and mirages, rather to being aware of people who are out to deceive and draw us and others away from the love of God and Jesus His Son.

Jesus warns: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit."

Matthew 7:15-17 (NRSV)

Jesus tells us to 'Beware' and be ready and to only listen to Him. He does not want you to be led astray. He wants you and me in His kingdom for that is why He came in the first place. That is why He died. Because of His love, He gives us a stern reminder to be on our guard. It is part of His loving care and concern for us. The season of Advent calls us to be prepared and ready... fix your eyes on Jesus!

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, send your Holy Spirit into my life to show me what is right and true. Teach me to be discerning and help me to remain alert and prepared for your coming. Amen.*



Pains of Childbirth

2nd Wednesday in Advent

Read: Romans 8:18-30

"All these are the beginning of birth pains." Matthew 24:8 (NIV)

Birth pains point to one thing: the imminent coming of a child, another human being, into this world of ours. A woman knows that as soon as she is aware of her pregnancy that she will experience birth pains. Yet, throughout the months of pregnancy, she is not awaiting or expecting the coming of pain but of a child.

Jesus obviously uses the words 'birth pains' quite deliberately. The troubles we experience (wars, wickedness, famine, earthquakes and the like) do not mean that God has deserted us or His creation. There are steps on the way in the waiting period, just as there are steps on the way for the pregnant woman. The mother knows there is going to be pain and suffering. But during her period of waiting, her gaze is not concentrated on the pain, but on the birth. Her attention centres, not on what will happen but on who is coming.

Jesus uses these words and this example to build up our hopes. As believers in Christ, we know that the times are going to be tough, but we can hope in Jesus that it is He who is coming to bring us salvation and eternal life. We wait in eager expectation during this Advent season.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, send your Son to redeem me from all my sin. Give me the strength to endure the difficulties along the way and to look with hope to the coming of your Son. Amen.



Burying your Head

2nd Thursday in Advent

Read: Matthew 24:9-28

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Matthew 24:14 (NIV)

A metaphor for someone who ignores problems are people who ‘bury their heads in the sand’ like an ostrich. This is in fact a fallacy as ostriches don’t bury their heads but lay them flat until the danger has departed. The emu tends to be a lot more aggressive charging at the danger or producing a deep booming noise in its throat. As Christians do we like to ‘bury our heads in the sand’ when talking of the ‘end of the world’ or are we aggressive in spreading God’s Word?

The picture painted by Jesus of our future history is not a bright one. It is not going to be the wonderful time people delude themselves into thinking it will be. And yet, in spite of everything, the church of true believers will survive. *“But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (vs 13 – NRSV)* Despite false prophets, lawlessness, hatred and opposition, the Gospel will be preached throughout the whole world. Falsity and lawlessness are a force, but so is the Gospel. It is an **even greater force!** Godlessness may and will increase. But so will the impact and the spread of the Gospel. True, the number of Christians may diminish. But there will always be believers. There will always be the church.

With the technology we now have, the whole world has the opportunity to hear the Good News that the end need not come as a terror but as a blessing because it is the coming of our Saviour and Redeemer. If we are genuine in our concern for Christ’s coming, we shall be genuine in our concern for the spread of the Gospel.

***Prayer:** Lord Jesus, give me a stirring within my heart to tell others of your coming and presence among us. Bless every word of yours that is shared and spread in your name. Amen.*



Business as Usual

2nd Friday in Advent

Read: Matthew 24:36-44

“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.” Matthew 24:37 (NIV)

In 1974, a cyclone hit Darwin with such terrific force on Christmas Eve that much of the city was flattened. The people of Australia were devastated that something could be so utterly destructive with relatively no warning. A few years after the cyclone, things were back to normal – it was ‘business as usual’. Such it is with natural disasters – bushfires destroy, but months later with rebuilding it is ‘business as usual’.

So it was in the days of Noah. Noah may have been building an ark, the world may have been moving headlong into the greatest natural disaster that has ever occurred, but still the people kept on eating and drinking, working and sleeping, as if nothing was going to happen. It was ‘business as usual’ for all of them. But Jesus reminds us, the days that we are now living in are like the days before the first flood. We are living in deceptively-normal times. It’s a ‘business as usual’ time.

This type of ‘normality’ tempts us to outgrow the idea that all of history is moving towards the end. As believers we are fully aware of the fact that Jesus is coming and that all of history is moving towards this great event; the unbeliever though is totally ignorant and indifferent towards this end. The greatest tragedy of our day is that despite all of God’s warnings and invitations, the response is of total unconcern. Life goes on as usual. But, Jesus tells us that he is coming and we need to heed his warning.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for your Word, which reminds me who I am, why I am here, where I am going, and who is coming. Amen.

Be Ready...

2nd Saturday in Advent

Read: Matthew 24:40-51

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come." Matthew 24:42 (NIV)

As a youth, just finished year 12, I remember waiting by the letterbox (before the days of the internet) with the news of the results of my exams, and whether I would get into the University of my choice. This was a stressful time, the waiting and the wondering! I knew it was coming... just not exactly when.

Jesus asks you and me to be watchful and ready, faithful and wise. We are to be watchful and ready, not for what is coming (like my results) but for the Lord, who is coming. We are to be faithful to our Lord and wise in our discipleship of Him. The question of the time of Jesus' return, the exact day and hour cannot be known. Jesus wants us to fix our gaze and rivet our attention solely on Him and His coming. He knows that we shall experience hardships. He knows that there will be tragedies in the world and in our lives. That is why He warns and urges us to watch. It is part of our Saviour's love and concern. This means that we need not worry. The Saviour's call to us is a call to watchfulness and preparation for the return of the Saviour and Messiah.

It is Jesus who is coming again. It is the same Jesus, the one who comes to us now as a baby at Christmas. This same Jesus grew up to bring us the Word and Sacraments and to die for the sins of all people in order to put us right with God. This Jesus is coming!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to be ready for the coming of your Son as a baby in Bethlehem, and to also be ready for the Son to return in glory. Amen.



No worries, mate?

3rd Sunday in Advent

Read: Psalm 51

"The time has come," Jesus said. "The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:15 (NIV)

The characteristic philosophy of Australians themselves is summed up in the saying, "She's right, mate." This has then changed to, "No worries, mate." What this attitude is saying is: 'Why worry? Everything's OK. You're OK and I'm OK. So why worry?'

No worries, mate? That's certainly not the call of the Lord. 'She's not right, mate,' is our Lord's verdict. Deep down we know that to be true! We know that we are not in a right relationship with the Lord in our natural condition, nor are our relationships with other people always what they ought to be. We have messed things up. That is part of the human predicament. Adam and Eve went their own way and blew it. And we have blown it ever since. That is why Jesus first came saying, "Repent and believe..."

To repent is to turn away from your sins and to turn back to God. In Jesus Christ, God is reaching out to you and me to take us back. That's what Jesus was doing there on the cross. He paid the price. He died to put us right with God. He died to earn our forgiveness. God is saying to us (in Aussie terms): "No worries, mate. I forgive you. I want you back. I want you to turn away from yourself and turn to me. I want you in my kingdom. I want you as mine. That's what I did for you in your baptism. And that's what I've been doing for you ever since in Word and Sacrament."

This repentance is an ongoing call to acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Jesus is coming, ready or not!

Prayer: *Jesus come to me in your Word and lead me to repentance so that when you come I may be ready. Amen.*



Grass Withers

3rd Monday in Advent

Read: Romans 8:28-39

"All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades..." Isaiah 40:6b-7a (NRSV)

Droughts in Australia are a constant threat to the livelihood of those who work on the land. Crops fail, animals are in threat of dying without grass or water, our waterways become low, plants and vegetation become dry and brittle – it's a dismal experience. Our earth though seems to know how to live when all around is dying. Trees draw on water deep below the surface, and fish and animals seem to live in the dry mud or lay dormant.

After a long drought, I experienced the life-giving rain to nourish the earth; it did not take long for the fish and the animals thought dead to come back to life.... the river thrived with the yabbies, the earth brought new growth in plants seemingly dead, animals reproduced in abundance and greenness abounded. Life itself seems to have been restored.

Our world also lives in drought: wars, famine, conflict – again all seems dismal and in despair. People are dying from disease, accidents, conflicts, old age, infancy... people are compared to the grass which withers and dies. But, all is not lost and we need not despair. Jesus is coming..! In our Bible reading we read that "If God is for us, who can be against us?" In our humanness of sin we brought death and condemnation to ourselves and our world, but the love of God prevails like a life-giving rain. In His love he sent His one and only Son to save us in our despair and death. The same Jesus, who is coming at Christmas as a baby, also comes at Easter to bring us life by dying on the cross so that we can never again be separated from God and His love.

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, you are the Spirit of life. Breathe life into me that I may not despair but know that you will sustain me in all ways and bring me closer to you and your love. Amen.*



God's Word lasts Forever

3rd Tuesday in Advent

Read: Isaiah 40:1-9

"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever." Isaiah 40:8 (NIV)

Isaiah first spoke these words in the situation where the Assyrian army was at its most powerful and fearsome... but it was like grass. It would pass away. Where is the Assyrian army today? These words of Isaiah are repeated in the New Testament by the Apostle Peter writing to the people suffering and threatened with persecution. That persecution very likely came from the Romans and the Roman army. The Roman army was great, awesome, and powerful. But where is the Roman army today? Where is the Roman Empire? Yet, the Word of God is still here. The Word of God lasted right through the Assyrians, Babylonians and Romans and all the armies that ever occupied the land of Palestine.

Our world might be a dying world, but into this dying world comes the breath of life. It is the same breath the Lord breathed into people to give them life in the first place. It's the same breath breathed into us at our Baptism. Wherever and whenever we point to Jesus, there the Spirit of God is at work, breathing the breath of life into people. It's all about Jesus who came from God into our dying world to die like the rest of us. The only difference is that he didn't have to die but died willingly. He died to bring about the great exchange. The Word, who is life, died so that by the power of the Word of God, we who should die may have eternal life.

***Prayer:** Ever living God, you gave me life; help me to hope in your Word. Continue to give me that Word of life and forgiveness which can only come from you. Amen*



God is Here!

3rd Wednesday in Advent

Read: Isaiah 60:1-5

"There is good news for the city of Zion. Shout it as loud as you can from the highest mountain. Don't be afraid to shout to the towns of Judah, 'Your God is here!'" Isaiah 40:9 (CEV)

At the birth of Jesus at Christmas we know 'God is Here' among us! This is the Good News given to us by the prophet Isaiah, just after he has described the people as grass that withers and fades away. 'God is here' – the people were told to shout this message from the highest mountain and to not be afraid.

Today we are told the same message given to the people so long ago – GOD IS HERE! We don't have to shout it from mountains, but we do need to share the news that God sent his Son to earth as a baby to be one of us; to live as we live and experience all the trials of being human. God is here and knows all that we go through. This is a God who cares and loves us so much that he did all these things to save us and that we may be forgiven and be God's children forever.

The angels sang 'Glory to God' and shared the news with the shepherds, the shepherds then went away from the manger glorifying God and telling all they came to about the wonderful news of God coming to earth as a baby. Let us also have the courage and joy of the shepherds to tell all we meet about Jesus and God's love for the world.

Shout it from the 'mountain tops' in your neighbourhood and with your family!

Prayer: *Help me heavenly Father to have the courage to share your love and Good News with all people that I meet. You are here with me always! Amen.*

He is my God!

3rd Thursday in Advent

Read: Colossians 1:15-20

"The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him all the kindness and all the truth of God have come down to us." John 1:14 (CEV)

What or who is the 'god' of Australia? What do Australians 'worship'? Koala bears or kangaroos? Ayers Rock, Sydney Opera House, MCG, house, work, beach, sport or food? Do Australians worship an attitude of life that can be summed up by "No worries, mate"?

Christians point to Jesus Christ and say, 'There is my God. He is my God because he has claimed me as His own.' Christmas is a time to confess: "He is my God." The little baby in the manger is our Almighty God who was born for us and our salvation. This same little helpless infant had to run away from Herod and his jealousy to Egypt. This same man hung helplessly on a cross of pain. He is my God!

What or who is the 'god' of Australia? Or any other country of the world? Whether people recognise it or not, whether people confess it or not, the only true God is Jesus Christ. The world belongs to Him because he came from the heart of the Father, to redeem the world. The world belongs to Him even though it rebelled against Him and refuses to own Him as God. He paid the price for the sins of the whole world. He is God and Lord even though often ignored, rejected, ridiculed, betrayed and deserted.

In these days of Advent, look at the Christ of Bethlehem. This is why we celebrate Christmas. God has come. Jesus is here. Christ is Lord. He is my God!

Prayer: I thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have come and that you are God. Help me to be able to confess to all who need to hear: 'He is my God!' Amen.



You are Forgiven

3rd Friday in Advent

Read: Colossians 2:11-15

*"This is what love is: it is not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven."
1 John 4:10 (GNB)*

Have you ever gone the wrong way? If so, you will know what it is to admit that you went wrong and have to turn around. The thing about going the wrong way is that it's no good trying harder or running faster ... you just get to the wrong destination more quickly!

We can go the wrong way in our lives. Actually, it is in our nature to go the wrong way (or sin). It's no good trying harder or forgetting it happened. We will still be on the wrong track. We need to start afresh, right from the beginning. This is called 'rebirth' in the Bible. You can't give birth to yourself – you are born. When Christ really finds a place in your heart, you are born again. It's all God's doing!

God does this through forgiveness. To each one of us He says, "You are forgiven". Our sin goes a lot deeper than a series of "dos" or "don'ts". Sin is being altogether in the wrong, altogether on the wrong track, altogether heading in the wrong direction away from God, altogether cut off from our Lord. The forgiveness of sins offers reconciliation for this situation, and can turn us around, doing a 180° turn-around. It means heading God-ward, in fellowship with Him, going in the direction He wants us to go. Jesus came to put you right with God and to put you on the right track. Jesus states: "You are forgiven, follow me!"

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank you that you have forgiven me all my sins. Lead me to go the way you want me to so that I may walk closely with you. Amen.*



Jesus is the Greatest

3rd Saturday in Advent

Read: Luke 3:7-17

"But one more powerful than I will come... He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with his fire." Luke 3:16b (NIV)

In 1964, a man by the name of Muhammad Ali said to a reporter covering his world title boxing match: "I am the Greatest". In 2016, he died of septic shock and Parkinson's. His greatness ended in death. Even today there are many who declare, "I am it. I am Number One."

Jesus Christ, whose coming we celebrate at Christmas, is the Greatest because He is Lord. He always has and always will be Lord. One day it will be seen and recognised by everyone.

Jesus came to undo the damage caused by all people's sins when Adam and Eve rebelled against God. We became the lords of our own lives, claiming for ourselves the title "greatest", "number one" or "the centre of everything". Jesus came so that the "I" in our lives might be dethroned and so that He might rule as Lord of our lives.

People lay claim to greatness in many ways. Some do it through power and possessions. Others do it through position and prestige. The title "lord" can be obtained in a number of different ways. You can buy the title in some countries. You can inherit it. You can have it bestowed upon you in an honorary capacity. Jesus came upon the title by way of a cross. He who is the greatest died a shameful death on a cross; He who didn't have to die gave His life into death; He who is Lord suffered and was crucified. The greatest person in history dies the worst possible death. But, that is the kind of Lord we have... He is the greatest and He is coming!

Prayer: Forgive me Lord when I act as if I am the lord of my life. Help me to see you as Lord and Saviour and ruler of my life. Amen.

God's Glory

4th Sunday in Advent

Read: 2 Chronicles 5:11-14

"An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them..." Luke 2:9a (NIV)

'God's Glory' is mentioned many times through the Bible. The dictionary definition of "glory" often describes it as great praise, splendour, or honour. The glory of God is the splendour that comes from Him. It refers to God's greatness, His honour, His beauty, His power and His light. In every case, the glory of God acknowledges the Lord's supreme strength and our need to both acknowledge and serve Him.

God's presence is mentioned when the angel appeared at the birth of Jesus. God is present in a special way on the plains of Bethlehem when the angels announce to the shepherds the news of the coming of Jesus. It is the climax of God's plan for the rescue of the human race. It is truly an occasion for glory.

The high point of this glory is on a cross. Jesus said on the eve of His crucifixion, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him." (John 13:31b NIV). He was referring to His death on the cross which was to be His real moment of glory.

There is the glory of Bethlehem and the glory on the mount of transfiguration. There is the real climax of the glory in His suffering and death on the cross. And then there is the glory of His resurrection, His ascension and His appearing at God's right hand. All this is a part of God's glory because it says: God is present. He is here. Emmanuel, God has come. Christ is born. The Saviour has come to suffer and die. Let us rejoice because we have seen the glory of the Lord.

Prayer: *Shine into the darkness of my heart dear Lord, with the glorious light of your presence. Let me see your glory in Jesus who was born for my salvation. Amen.*

Christ, the Lord

Christmas Eve

Read: Philippians 2:5-11

"Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11 (NIV)

The world at the time of Jesus' birth was familiar with the title 'Lord'. In fact, 'lords' were in abundance. Kings were known as 'lords', some of them as 'divine lords.' In Egypt, at the beginning of the Christian era, sacrifices were offered for 'the god and lord Emperor', Augustus.

And now in a small village of the Roman Empire, is born He 'who is Christ, the Lord.' For Christians, there is and was only one Lord – Jesus, the Christ.

'Jesus is Lord' was probably the first Christian confession, the earliest baptismal creed of the Church. Yet Christians also recognise and call God the Father "LORD". For Christians everything we expect from God the Father we equally expect from Jesus. Jesus Christ is Lord. God is LORD. There is no difference. The God who is LORD and revealed Himself as LORD in Old Testament times is the same God who has shown His hand in New Testament times in the person of Jesus. Christ is come. The Lord is at hand.

'The Lord is my Shepherd' of the Old Testament has become 'Jesus is the Good Shepherd' of the New Testament. The LORD who revealed Himself as 'I AM' in the Old Testament now reveals Himself in Jesus who claimed to be the 'I am – I am the Vine, Life, Good Shepherd, etc.' Jesus who comes at Christmas is the same Lord who gives his life for you and me on the cross at Easter. This really is the miracle and mystery of Christmas. Our God has come to earth to be a human, showing that our God is a God of love and Lord of our lives.

Prayer: Jesus you are my Lord. You come to me this Christmas as a tiny baby being Your Father's gift to me. Come Lord Jesus, Come!



Looking for a Sign

Christmas Day

Read: Matthew 1:18 – 2:11

“This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Luke 2:12 (NIV)

There were a couple spectacular events which occurred at the time of Jesus’ birth. There was the star which appeared in the sky as a sign for the wise men, and there was the ‘multitude of the heavenly host,’ which appeared to the shepherds. The shepherds did not ask for a sign, unlike many others who did. Some were expecting a King to arrive in all his glory, with the announcement of Good News. They did not expect a little baby!

Sign-seekers are typical of the unbelieving response to Jesus’ ministry. The only sign the Bible ever gives is Jesus. Everything points to him. Jesus is all we need. His death and resurrection is the sign He himself gave. We have Jesus. We have this gift of God. We have the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation from Him.

When you are tempted to look for some miraculous event, some special sign, some spectacular outpouring, look to Jesus. This is the most amazing gift that God has ever given us. God gave us the sign of the star shining in the sky which points to this baby given to us today – this baby born in a stable in Bethlehem. In Him we have the miraculous event itself, the Person to whom all signs point, and God’s own spectacular outpouring which still goes on with His gift of the Spirit. Jesus has come!

Prayer: *Dear God, point us to Jesus who is our hope and salvation, now and forever. Amen.*



Why Fear?

26th December

Read: 1 John 4: 11-21

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid.'" Luke 2:10a (NIV)

To be filled with fear is a natural human response to a sudden and unexpected occurrence. The appearance of a bright aurora in Australia was cause for alarm as reported in the *"Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate"*. The following article appeared on Friday 13th July 1928, though this aurora was viewed on the 9th.

"On Sunday night last, about 11 o'clock, people all over the town were startled by the apparent failure of the electric lighting service, and the sounding of the "buzzer" at the power house. People rushed from their dwellings expecting to find a big fire raging in some part of the town. Upon searching the sky for a reflection of the fire, they were rewarded by seeing in the southern sky a most, beautiful phenomenon — one of the most glorious heavenly constellations ever seen in the west. Residents who saw the Aurora Australis were well rewarded by the sight."

The people in Dubbo were startled and I'm sure were afraid with the appearance of the aurora, but consider the shepherds the night of Jesus' birth, imagine their fear. Fear is part of our human predicament, and the worst part is that we fear the presence of God. Guilt sometimes makes us reject, ignore or hide from His presence. The wonderful thing is that the words of the angel are intended to get rid of fear by bringing the message of the Good News. Jesus is born. He is Saviour of the world, and is Christ the Lord. So, do not be afraid; do not fear for Jesus is coming!

***Prayer:** Fill my life with your love and peace and get rid of all the fear I may have. Let me rejoice with the angels and the shepherds at the coming of your Son. Amen.*

God's Good News

27th December

Read: Isaiah 52:7-10

"But the angels said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.'" Luke 2:10-11 (NIV)

We live in a world of turmoil, where people die every day from starvation, accidents, heart attacks, war; it's a world where humans reject God. Into this world, God sent his one and only Son to be the Good News in a world of hate; to be the joy in a world of heartache and sadness. The Good News of the angels didn't come to take away all the troubles and difficulties of life. The Good News of Jesus came to ease the burden of everyday life by changing our focus and seeing the good where there is only evil. Knowing that there is someone who loves each person unconditionally no matter their circumstances can bring a sense of peace and purpose to life where it can feel that there is none!

This message of Good News of great joy was first spoken to some shepherds. It didn't change their physical circumstances one bit. After they had gone to Bethlehem and had seen the Christ-Child, they went back to their sheep. Their sheep were the same. They would continue to get foot-rot and other diseases. And yet everything was different for them. They were given a message of Good news of great joy. Joy had entered the monotony of their humdrum existence.

The Good News of Christ's coming is never appreciated until we admit the bad news of our human condition. A Saviour isn't needed if there is no sin or death we need rescue from. Just because our human plight is so desperate, the Good News of God's gift of a Saviour is so great.

***Prayer:** God my father, I thank and praise you for your incredible gift of Good News which came to me in the birth of your new-born Son, Jesus. Change and refocus my life. Amen.*



A Great Joy

28th December

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-9

"But the angels said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.'" Luke 2:10-11 (NIV)

The Good News of Christ's coming is intended to bring us joy. Christ's coming brings joy. This is not for one moment intended to suggest that Christ's coming and Christianity do away with tears and sadness. The followers of Jesus experienced tears and sorrow. Jesus didn't come to take away the bad situations of life in which we find ourselves, situations which often cause heartache, pain and sadness. But He did come to bring us joy in spite of them. In fact, it's just because of our lost and fallen condition that it is such great Good News; and that its impact on our lives is one of great joy.

All of us have our ups and downs. We have those moments when we don't feel joyful. That's how the Christian life is. One day Jesus is born. Soon after, Herod kills all the baby boys of Bethlehem. On Friday Jesus is crucified. A few days later He is alive again. One moment we are down in the dumps, the next we rise to new heights of hope and joy. One day Christ seems far away, the next He seems very near. But always Christ is present. And His coming is a message of Good News of a great joy. That Good News and that great joy is for you, no matter who you are or what circumstances in life you find yourself. This Good News and this great joy of the Saviour's coming is for you.

Prayer: Dear Lord, so often my life is without joy. Help me to hear the Good news and experience the great joy of your coming to me this Christmas. Amen.



Salvation Jane?

29th December

Read: Titus 2:11-14

"Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11 (NIV)

In New South Wales a certain obnoxious weed is called Patterson's Curse. That same weed is called Salvation Jane in South Australia. The difference is due to the fact that the harsh weed is eaten by sheep in barren areas of South Australia especially in times of drought. The result is life for the sheep and their salvation rather than death as a result of drought conditions. Salvation comes in a lowly and unexpected form.

That's how it was with the Saviour of the world. He was born in a small village, of humble parentage, under questionable circumstances. His 'maternity hospital' was a stable and His first visitors were lowly and despised shepherds. Salvation Jane and Saviour Jesus have something in common. Salvation Jane saves sheep in some drought-stricken areas from certain death. Jesus saves starving souls from certain death.

Jesus rescues or saves His people from destruction through spiritual starvation and thirst. This spiritual death is the result of sin. We have a Saviour from sin, death and the power of the devil. God knew that it was impossible for people to save themselves from this sin, which is why he sent Jesus to be our Saviour. Come Lord Jesus!

Prayer: Jesus, you are my Saviour. Forgive me when I stumble and fall. I thank you that you have rescued me from all my sin and brought me the gift of life. Amen.



Peace on Earth

30th December

Read: Romans 5:1-11

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!" Luke 2: 14 (NRSV)

You can be at peace in the middle of a war and you can be at war in times of peace. You can be at peace in the main streets of Sydney surrounded by noise and commotion. At the same time you can be far from peaceful in the very centre of Australia without anything to disturb you.

A prize was once offered to the artist who painted the best picture of peace. One artist depicted a peaceful and beautiful countryside. Another painted a lounge room scene with the family at home in peaceful surroundings. A third artist depicted a turbulent waterfall with a tree growing by its side. A storm was raging and the branches of the tree were blowing all over the place above the rough waters. In one of those branches was a bird's nest with a bird sitting on the nest. The bird was at peace in the middle of the stormy and turbulent surroundings in which it found itself. That artist won the prize.

Peace is being right with God no matter what the external conditions of your life may be. Peace is a gift. Peace is God's gift to restless people who can't find peace through their own efforts or achievements. Peace is God's gift to people "with whom He is pleased." Peace is God's gift to those who trust in Jesus for life and forgiveness. We will still have turbulent and troubled times, but our joy is to know that Jesus is our "Prince of Peace" who we can rely on. Only in Jesus can we be put right with God through forgiveness. The Jesus who came at Christmas is our true peace.

***Prayer:** Lord Jesus, fill me with you peace and forgive me when I do not trust or rely on you for help. Help me to understand and know that only in you can I find true peace. Amen.*

Soon Gone!

New Year's Eve (31st December)

Read: Psalm 90

"The length of our days is seventy years – or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away." Psalm 90:10 (NIV)

Psalm 90 is a psalm that talks about time. God has always been; "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." (vs.2) This establishes the relationship of God to time. He was before time and He will be when time ceases. He is God whether time exists. The psalm also tells about us as humans and the above verse explains it well (vs10). Verse 12 also expresses that our God needs to teach us in this life: "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

It is not the 'time' that is soon gone for us as humans; it is ourselves that will be gone. Another year passes means another year of our lives as humans is gone. Is celebrating the coming of a New Year an endeavour to drown out the truth that we shall soon be gone? Hope seems all but gone as well!

But, there is hope. We might soon be gone as far as this life is concerned, but there is always God. He has always been our place of refuge and our dwelling place. From everlasting to everlasting He is God. He is our God. He made us His people through the atoning death of Jesus Christ and the blessings brought to us by the Spirit in the Word and in the Sacraments. The end of the year needs to drive us closer to our Heavenly Father, who will never pass away.

***Prayer:** Lord, you are my hope. From everlasting to everlasting you are my God. Thank you that you have been in my life this past year and as I enter a New Year – be my God always. Amen.*



Trust in God

New Year's Day (1st January)

Read: Psalm 31

"But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hands..." Psalm 31:14,15a (NIV)

Psalm 31 is a psalm of trust in God. Nowhere is that trust expressed more beautifully than in the above verses. A little child may say to its parents as they walk through the woods, 'I'm not afraid. You are with me. I'm always in your care.' On the other hand the little child may adopt an attitude of independence and wander off on its own, ignoring the presence and protection of the parents. The child has walked out of the care of those who care.

It is possible to reject and ignore the care of God just as it is possible to reject the love and forgiveness of God. It is part of our human condition that we want to assert our own independence and ignore the presence and protection of God both spiritually and physically. God, however, never lets go of our hand. It is we who let go of Him. We then need to repent as we return to the arms that hold us and the hands that guide and lead us.

A good New Year's greeting for you is this: 'I leave you in God's care for this coming year. Your times are in His hands for we can trust in God.'

We know God's care is good. After all He is God. He demonstrated His care and concern and love for us in the most remarkable of all demonstrations of care and love, the sacrifice of His only Son, Jesus for us. If God will do this, won't he also do everything else? In God we trust.

Prayer: Lord, so often I fall away from you, please forgive me for letting go of your loving hand. Take my hand through this New Year and lead me where I should go. Amen.



The Mystery of God

2nd January

Read: Colossians 1:24 – 2:5

"...That they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:2b,3 (NIV)

Saul had things all wrong. Then something happened in his life and things became different. As Paul, he sorted things out and put Christ at the centre of his life. The 'mystery' that Paul learned, was the love of God through Christ's death on the cross. With knowing this mystery and having Christ in the centre of his life, there came a constant flow of power and a passion for living for Christ. This gave him a purpose for living and urgency for sharing the Gospel.

Paul had a purpose in life when he was Saul and he pursued that purpose diligently in persecuting Christians. But now, knowing Christ gave him a different purpose. He knows the mystery of God and why he was alive.

On one occasion he was sitting in a prison cell. He had been beaten and flogged. But he wrote:

"Nothing is as wonderful as knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have given up everything else and count it all as garbage. All I want is Christ and to know that I belong to him. I could not make myself acceptable to God by obeying the Law of Moses. God accepted me simply because of my faith in Christ. All I want is to know Christ and the power that raised him to life. I want to suffer and die as he did, so that somehow I also may be raised to life."
Philippians 3:8-11 (CEV)

We also have learned this mystery: 'Christ is Lord'. Now it is up to us to put Christ at the centre of our lives and live our New Year with that flowing through everything.

Prayer: *Please help me to place you, Lord Jesus, at the centre of my life. Lead me to know that all other things will fall into place under your blessing. Amen.*



An Attitude of Christ

3rd January

Read: Philippians 2:1-11

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..."

Philippians 2:5 (NIV)

She was angry, very angry, this woman who was staying at a certain hotel. "I'm leaving your hotel immediately," she told the manager, "unless that piano player in the room next door to me moves. He makes an awful racket. He..." "Madam," replied the hotel manager, "I do hope you can be patient a little bit longer. The man in the room next door to you is Elton John, and he is practising for his concert tomorrow night." Elton John! That made everything different. Now she invites her friends and neighbours and relatives into her room. "What do you know?" she says, "You can hear Elton John play next door. He's practising for his concert tomorrow night."

What had changed? The room? The hotel? The noise? No, the only thing that had changed was her attitude. Attitude can make the whole world look different. All sorts of things can build attitude – friends, media, books, news. The Word of God can also build an attitude.

The attitude we are to have is the attitude of Christ – an attitude that tries to serve and to give of oneself in the interests of others. It is an attitude that wants to reach out to others with the compassionate heart of the Saviour.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus," Philippians 2:3-5 (NRSV)

Prayer: Lord, continue to mould me and shape me by the power of the Holy Spirit so that I can have the attitude of Christ. Amen.

A Great Responsibility

4th January

Read: Deuteronomy 6:1-9

"So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt..." Matthew 2:14 (NIV)

Joseph must have realised the responsibility that was his in taking the Christ Child and Mary to Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod. The angel had made it plain that this Child was conceived by the Holy Spirit; that he would save His people from their sins; that this was Immanuel, God with us. Mary knew that her child was the Son of the God. Here were two ordinary people fleeing to Egypt with this little child, who was God's Son.

We do not have this responsibility, but every time God gives the gift of a child to parents, God entrusts them with something precious. It is a great responsibility to be a father or a mother. What their child will be in life depends greatly upon what the parents do. When God places a child into a parent's arms, He also places a great responsibility; for the child's future is in their hands. Joseph carried this great responsibility, and this baby was our Saviour and Lord. The reading from Deuteronomy stresses the importance of parents in teaching their children:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Deuteronomy 6: 5,7 (NIV)

God's gift should not be taken lightly!

***Prayer:** Lord, help me to be a good parent to my children. Give me the words and actions to bring them up knowing and loving you first and foremost. Amen.*



Let's Celebrate!

5th January

Read: Psalm 95:1-7

"Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our Salvation." Psalm 95:1 (NIV)

This is the last day of the Christmas cycle. Celebration is still very much in order, even though every day of our lives should be a day of celebration, a time to sing and make a joyful noise to the Lord. God gave us life for us to love and serve Him.

At Christmas we were able to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour who came to earth as a human being to be one of us, but still be God. God becoming human is the central message of the Christian faith, because Jesus became a man in order to give his life for us. After that came His resurrection and ascension. This great mystery and miracle of God becoming human is what we celebrate! God reveals himself in Jesus not to explain himself but to accomplish the larger purpose, our salvation.

You don't need to understand or explain God and His dealings to get His blessings. A child can get the blessings of water whether it understands that water is H₂O or not. There is a kind of mystery which can't be investigated; it can only be celebrated. We still need to seek to understand Biblical truths and wrestle with them to grow in our faith, but the truth of the Bible is for the life and celebration of God's people.

*"Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."
Psalm 95:6 (NIV)*

Prayer: *You are my Saviour; in you is my hope and refuge. Your coming to earth as a human needs to be celebrated and praised. Thank you for Jesus! Amen.*



Led by a Star

Epiphany (6th January)

Read: Matthew 2:1-12

“Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we have observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.’” Matthew 2:1b-2 (NRSV)

The Bible tells us that wise men, led by a star, came to Jerusalem to inquire where the King of the Jews had been born. They were directed to Bethlehem where they found the Child, worshipped him, offered him their gifts and then returned home. That’s all the Bible says about them.

Many stories have been invented to embellish this simple account. We don’t know how many wise men there were, nor their names, nor the exact country from which they came. The Bible does not describe them as kings, nor as sorcerers or soothsayers. The Bible attaches no symbolic meaning to the gifts they presented to Christ. People have been intrigued by the account, and have supplied many details, which have no scriptural basis.

One thing though that does stand out, is that God very definitely guided these wise men. They were acquainted with the prophecies of the Messiah, and God led them by a miraculous star, which finally stood over the house where the Christ Child was. God directed them to return home another way to frustrate Herod’s sinister plans.

In this time of religious confusion, we need a star to lead us directly to Jesus. We have one – the Bible. The Bible focuses on Christ as the star once led the wise men directly to Christ. When the wise men followed God’s directions, they found Christ. So will everyone who lets God’s Word guide, lead and direct them.

Prayer: *Lord God, let your Bible be the bright star that guides me to knowing my loving Saviour. Help me to find rest and comfort in His arms through the year. Amen.*



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Lutheran Tract Mission

175 Archer Street North Adelaide SA 5006

Phone: (08) 8360 7222

Web: www.ltm.org.au

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