

ADVENT

HOPE
HAS
COME



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HOPE
— HAS —
COME



Introduction

What is Advent?

Think of a time when you had to wait for something. Maybe it was for your birthday. Maybe it was for a special trip with your family. How did you feel during these times of waiting? Before Jesus was born, the Jewish people had been waiting a long time for God to keep his promise of sending them a Savior. The people prayed and believed that God would keep his promise. Through prayers and songs, they asked God to help them. Even when the time felt long and they were growing impatient, they never stopped praying.

God kept his promise to send a Savior. Advent is a season before Christmas that focuses on the period of waiting before the arrival of the Savior. During Advent, we get ready to celebrate and prepare our hearts to be captivated once again by the virgin birth of Jesus, the Savior of the world. Along with the idea of waiting, Advent can also remind and point us to the second coming of Christ, when he will return.

How to Use This Guide

Use this reading plan journal to study God's Word as we set aside time this Christmas season to focus on Jesus' coming. Read through the passages each week and respond to questions to help you apply God's Word to your life.

Before each reading, take time to pray and ask God to open your heart to receive his Word.

If you feel like you're having trouble following this reading plan, consider studying and praying in these ways:

- Underline and circle words or phrases in the passage.
- Write out your prayers as you reflect on what you've read.
- Turn your phone off or use focus mode.
- Listen to a recording of the passage while following along.
- Consider completing this study with a group.

READ PASSAGES

LISTEN TO VIDEOS OR SONGS

ANSWER THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE READ

PRAY FOR GOD'S HELP IN APPLYING HIS WORD

Week I | Lineage

Matthew's genealogy
includes the outcast, scandalous,
and foreigner.

The family Jesus
COMES FROM
anticipates the family he has
COME FOR.

Context

The Old Testament prepares us for Christmas morning. All of it. And the New Testament opens with a genealogy (Matthew 1:1–17) that brings significance to our lives. Matthew's genealogy gives us name after name of those intricately and purposefully used over the course of history to further the line that paved the way for Jesus. It's a list of real people—all sinful, some faithful—who endured trials and valleys and shaped the course of Israel's history, bringing us to the story of the virgin birth.

What is a genealogy?

Why do you think we should know Jesus' genealogy?

Glance through Matthew 1 to see how Matthew shows us Jesus' genealogy.

Context

This week, we are going to learn about the women who are a part of Jesus' genealogy. These women represent the people Jesus came from, as well as the people Jesus came for. The Son of God chose to enter this particular family line, knowing full well its contrariness and sin. Matthew lists these names intentionally, with the promise of the Messiah in mind.

Jesus' Lineage

Fill in the blanks to identify the names in Jesus' lineage we will be reading this week.

Matthew 1:5a

Salmon fathered

_____.

Matthew 1:6b

David fathered Solomon by

_____ 's wife.

2 Samuel 11

The man said, she is

_____ , the

daughter of Eliam and the

wife of _____ ,

the Hitite.

Matthew 1:8

Each day of this week, you will read a portion of the names mentioned in the lineage in Matthew 1 and the book of 2 Samuel.

Lineage

identify the women of
will study this week:

new 1:1-29

Matthew 1:3

Judah fathered Perez and Zerab
by _____.

Matthew 1:5b

Boaz fathered Obed
by _____.

Matthew 1:16

And Jacob fathered Joseph, the
husband of _____.

will read the story of one of the women
new 1 above. Today, we will look at Tamar.

Read Matthew 1:1–3

This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).

Read Genesis 38:6–30

In the course of time, Judah arranged for his firstborn son, Er, to marry a young woman named Tamar. But Er was a wicked man in the Lord's sight, so the Lord took his life. Then Judah said to Er's brother Onan, "Go and marry Tamar, as our law requires of the brother of a man who has died. You must produce an heir for your brother."

But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with his brother's wife, he spilled the semen on the ground. This prevented her from having a child who would belong to his brother. But the Lord considered it evil for Onan to deny a child to his dead brother. So the Lord took Onan's life, too.

Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, "Go back to your parents' home and remain a widow until my son Shelah is old enough to marry you." (But Judah didn't really intend to do this because he was afraid Shelah would also die, like his two brothers.) So Tamar went back to live in her father's home.

Some years later Judah's wife died. After the time of mourning was over, Judah and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnah to supervise the shearing of his sheep. Someone told Tamar, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

Tamar was aware that Shelah had grown up, but no arrangements had been made for her to come and marry him. So she changed out of her widow's clothing and covered herself with a veil to disguise herself. Then she sat beside the road at the entrance to the village of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. Judah noticed her and thought she was a prostitute, since she had covered her face. So he stopped and propositioned her. "Let me have sex with you," he said, not realizing that she was his own daughter-in-law.

"How much will you pay to have sex with me?" Tamar asked.

"I'll send you a young goat from my flock," Judah promised.

"But what will you give me to guarantee that you will send the goat?" she asked.

"What kind of guarantee do you want?" he replied.

She answered, “Leave me your identification seal and its cord and the walking stick you are carrying.” So Judah gave them to her. Then he had intercourse with her, and she became pregnant. Afterward she went back home, took off her veil, and put on her widow’s clothing as usual.

Later Judah asked his friend Hirah the Adullamite to take the young goat to the woman and to pick up the things he had given her as his guarantee. But Hirah couldn’t find her. So he asked the men who lived there, “Where can I find the shrine prostitute who was sitting beside the road at the entrance to Enaim?”

“We’ve never had a shrine prostitute here,” they replied.

So Hirah returned to Judah and told him, “I couldn’t find her anywhere, and the men of the village claim they’ve never had a shrine prostitute there.”

“Then let her keep the things I gave her,” Judah said. “I sent the young goat as we agreed, but you couldn’t find her. We’d be the laughing-stock of the village if we went back again to look for her.”

About three months later, Judah was told, “Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has acted like a prostitute. And now, because of this, she’s pregnant.”

“Bring her out, and let her be burned!” Judah demanded.

But as they were taking her out to kill her, she sent this message to her father-in-law: “The man who owns these things made me pregnant. Look closely. Whose seal and cord and walking stick are these?”

Judah recognized them immediately and said, “She is more righteous than I am, because I didn’t arrange for her to marry my son Shelah.” And Judah never slept with Tamar again.

When the time came for Tamar to give birth, it was discovered that she was carrying twins. While she was in labor, one of the babies reached out his hand. The midwife grabbed it and tied a scarlet string around the child’s wrist, announcing, “This one came out first.” But then he pulled back his hand, and out came his brother! “What!” the midwife exclaimed. “How did you break out first?” So he was named Perez. Then the baby with the scarlet string on his wrist was born, and he was named Zerah.

Context

Tamar is the first woman mentioned in Matthew's genealogy. She was the daughter-in-law of Judah, married in turn to his two oldest sons, both of whom were evil men who died under God's judgment. Judah then promised to give Tamar to his youngest son once he came of age—a promise he never intended to keep, hoping instead that Tamar would just go away and die a widow's death.

In a world where women had almost zero hope, outside of marrying well and bearing children, Tamar was desperate. Taking matters into her own hands, she disguised herself as a prostitute, slept with her father-in-law, and bore him twin sons. One of the twins, whom she named Perez, would become an ancestor of Jesus.

Tamar was a complicated person with a messy life, whose presence in the lineage of Jesus shows precisely the kind of people he came to save. In place of desperate acts and broken hopes, the coming Messiah would bring real hope into the world.

Reflection Questions

In Genesis 38, what do we see Tamar do? Why do you think Tamar did this?

What are some areas in your current season of life in which you feel like you are living off of your own selfish desires?

What do you need to give to God so that you can be obedient to him, instead of acting out of your own foolishness?

Week 1

Rahab

Peace

Day 2

Context

Rahab, a prostitute, hid Israeli spies in Jericho because she trusted God's power to save. Her place in Jesus' lineage is a powerful reminder that even in the face of certain judgment, peace with God is available through faith in the coming Christ.

Read Matthew 1:5

Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).
Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).
Obed was the father of Jesse.

Read Joshua 2: 1-21

Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, “Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho.” So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night.

But someone told the king of Jericho, “Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.” So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: “Bring out the men who have come into your house, for they have come here to spy out the whole land.”

Rahab had hidden the two men, but she replied, “Yes, the men were here earlier, but I didn’t know where they were from. They left the town at dusk, as the gates were about to close. I don’t know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them.” (Actually, she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath bundles of flax she had laid out.) So the king’s men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossings of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king’s men had left, the gate of Jericho was shut.

Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. “I know the Lord has given you this land,” she told them. “We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.

“Now swear to me by the Lord that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families.”

“We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety,” the men agreed. “If you don’t betray us, we will keep our promise and be kind to you when the Lord gives us the land.”

Then, since Rahab's house was built into the town wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. "Escape to the hill country," she told them. "Hide there for three days from the men searching for you. Then, when they have returned, you can go on your way."

Before they left, the men told her, "We will be bound by the oath we have taken only if you follow these instructions. When we come into the land, you must leave this scarlet rope hanging from the window through which you let us down. And all your family members—your father, mother, brothers, and all your relatives—must be here inside the house. If they go out into the street and are killed, it will not be our fault. But if anyone lays a hand on people inside this house, we will accept the responsibility for their death. If you betray us, however, we are not bound by this oath in any way."

"I accept your terms," she replied. And she sent them on their way, leaving the scarlet rope hanging from the window.

Main Idea

Rahab was a prostitute, and she lived in the hopeless city of Jericho, destined to be overrun and destroyed by the armies of Israel.

Recognizing the God of Israel as the one true Sovereign of heaven and earth, Rahab made a separate peace with the people of Israel (God's favored people group) and with God. She sheltered the Israelite spies during their observation mission and helped them escape, asking that she and her family be spared in return.

To an outside observer, everything would've seemed to be against Rahab. She was not only a prostitute but also a Canaanite, the member of a people group marked by God for outright judgment. And yet, not only did she save herself and her family, but she eventually joined the faith community of Israel, married into the royal tribe of Judah, and became the mother of Boaz and a notable ancestor of Jesus.

Her place in Jesus' lineage is a powerful reminder that even in the face of certain judgment, peace with God is available through faith in the coming Christ.

Reflection Questions

How did God use Rahab's life to bring Jesus into this world?

Despite Rahab's worldly identity (prostitute, rejected), God saved her and her family, and she would ultimately continue to pave the lineage for Jesus. What does this say about God?

Rahab was willing to sacrifice her public reputation for God's mission, despite how the community might reject her even more. Where are some areas in your own life in which you care more about peer acceptance than living out obedience to God? Take some time to really think about question 3 and what repentance may look like for you.

Pray about what you wrote and ask the Holy Spirit for help as you trust in God's plan and purpose over your own wants and desires for your life.

Week 1

Bathsheba

/// Love ///

Day 3

Context

Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of King David's most trusted military officers. But then one day, David spotted Bathsheba bathing from the roof of his palace, slept with her, got her pregnant, and had her husband murdered to cover up the affair. The baby born of their union died as a consequence of God's judgment on their illicit relationship.

Read Matthew 1:6

Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).

Read 2 Samuel 11

In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites. They destroyed the Ammonite army and laid siege to the city of Rabbah. However, David stayed behind in Jerusalem.

Late one afternoon, after his midday rest, David got out of bed and was walking on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. He sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." Then David sent messengers to get her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. She had just completed the purification rites after having her menstrual period. Then she returned home. Later, when Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant, she sent David a message, saying, "I'm pregnant."

Then David sent word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent him to David. When Uriah arrived, David asked him how Joab and the army were getting along and how the war was progressing. Then he told Uriah, "Go on home and relax." David even sent a gift to Uriah after he had left the palace. But Uriah didn't go home. He slept that night at the palace entrance with the king's palace guard.

When David heard that Uriah had not gone home, he summoned him and asked, "What's the matter? Why didn't you go home last night after being away for so long?"

Uriah replied, "The Ark and the armies of Israel and Judah are living in tents, and Joab and my master's men are camping in the open fields. How could I go home to wine and dine and sleep with my wife? I swear that I would never do such a thing."

"Well, stay here today," David told him, "and tomorrow you may return to the army." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next. Then David invited him to dinner and got him drunk. But even then he couldn't get Uriah to go home to his wife. Again he slept at the palace entrance with the king's palace guard.

So the next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and gave it to Uriah to deliver. The letter instructed Joab, "Station Uriah on the front lines

where the battle is fiercest. Then pull back so that he will be killed.” So Joab assigned Uriah to a spot close to the city wall where he knew the enemy’s strongest men were fighting. And when the enemy soldiers came out of the city to fight, Uriah the Hittite was killed along with several other Israelite soldiers.

Then Joab sent a battle report to David. He told his messenger, “Report all the news of the battle to the king. But he might get angry and ask, ‘Why did the troops go so close to the city? Didn’t they know there would be shooting from the walls? Wasn’t Abimelech son of Gideon killed at Thebez by a woman who threw a millstone down on him from the wall? Why would you get so close to the wall?’ Then tell him, ‘Uriah the Hittite was killed, too.’”

So the messenger went to Jerusalem and gave a complete report to David. “The enemy came out against us in the open fields,” he said. “And as we chased them back to the city gate, the archers on the wall shot arrows at us. Some of the king’s men were killed, including Uriah the Hittite.”

“Well, tell Joab not to be discouraged,” David said. “The sword devours this one today and that one tomorrow! Fight harder next time, and conquer the city!”

When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. When the period of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her to the palace, and she became one of his wives. Then she gave birth to a son. But the Lord was displeased with what David had done.

Main Idea

The text makes no suggestion that Bathsheba was doing anything wrong or unusual in bathing the way she was. Rather it appears that David was where he shouldn't have been, allowing his eyes to linger and his heart to follow. Moreover, the Scripture is silent about any involvement on Bathsheba's part and lays the blame squarely on David. Given the times and the culture in which she lived, Bathsheba almost certainly had no power to refuse the advances of an absolute ruler.

After the affair, Bathsheba became one of David's wives and gave birth to Solomon, David's chosen heir and a forerunner of the Christ to come. While David is the most significant name in the genealogy of Jesus, the inclusion of Bathsheba prevents him from being put on an unwarranted pedestal. Indeed, her presence insists upon the grace of the coming Messiah, who would redeem people caught in relationships of unequal power and tainted love and restore them in the true love and freedom offered by God.

Reflection Questions

David was where he shouldn't have been, allowing his eyes to linger and his heart to follow. What situations, friendships/relationships, or actions are you involved in that you shouldn't be and where your eyes or thoughts may be leading to sin?

What was David's consequence to his sin? What do you think may be a consequence of the sin you are choosing now in three years and ten years if you keep pursuing that sin?

3 Years:

10 Years:

When Bathsheba was sinned against, how did she take matters into her own hands? Where are areas in your life where you are taking matters into your own hands because you think that is what's best?

How did God still redeem this broken story? Is there sin in your life that you need God to redeem for you?

How does the gospel of Jesus offer you hope this Advent season?

Pray and offer these hard challenges and situations to God. Talk with a mentor or parent for help and guidance.

Week 1

Mary

Fulfillment

Day 4

**Watch the Video attached
to the QR Code below:**



And Mary,
the mother of
Jesus,
was scorned
for being pregnant
and unmarried.

Read Matthew 1

This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham:

Abraham was the father of Isaac.

Isaac was the father of Jacob.

Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.

Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).

Perez was the father of Hezron.

Hezron was the father of Ram.

Ram was the father of Amminadab.

Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.

Nahshon was the father of Salmon.

Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).

Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).

Obed was the father of Jesse.

Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).

Solomon was the father of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.

Abijah was the father of Asa.

Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram.

Jehoram was the father of Uzziah.

Uzziah was the father of Jotham.

Jotham was the father of Ahaz.

Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.

Manasseh was the father of Amon.

Amon was the father of Josiah.

Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).

After the Babylonian exile:

Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel.

Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.

Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.

Abiud was the father of Eliakim.

Eliakim was the father of Azor.

Azor was the father of Zadok.

Zadok was the father of Akim.

Akim was the father of Eliud.

Eliud was the father of Eleazar.

Eleazar was the father of Matthan.

Matthan was the father of Jacob.

Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.

Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.

This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy

Spirit. Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:

“Look! The virgin will conceive a child!

She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,
which means ‘God is with us.’”

When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Read Luke 1:39–55

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, “God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.”

Mary responded,

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.

He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.

His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.

He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.

For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever.”

Reflection Questions

Describe what you learned about Mary.

Are there any ways that you are similar to her?

God used Mary, a young and frail person, to birth the Savior of the world. What kind of hope does this offer to you?

How can you worship Jesus today, knowing that there is hope for us, broken people?

You have learned a lot this week—congrats! Take some time to flip back through this week and write some of the things you learned about how God used broken/sinful people to be included in Jesus' story.

Take some time to pray.

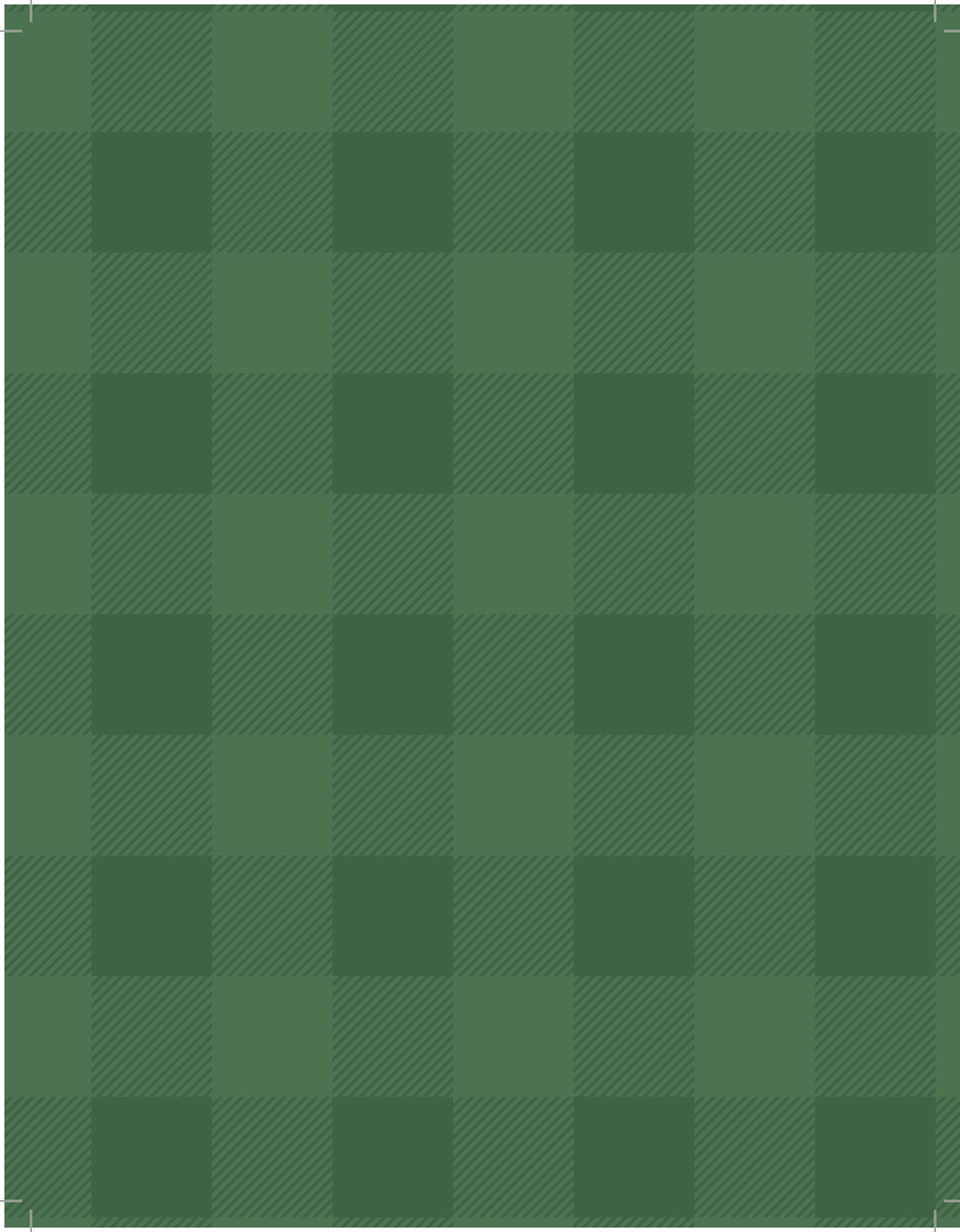
- Pray about this Advent season; thank God for his redeeming power through Christ.
- Pray for unbelieving family members that do not know Jesus.
- Pray for God to continue to use his Word and the power of the Holy Spirit to allow you to worship and serve him well this Christmas season.

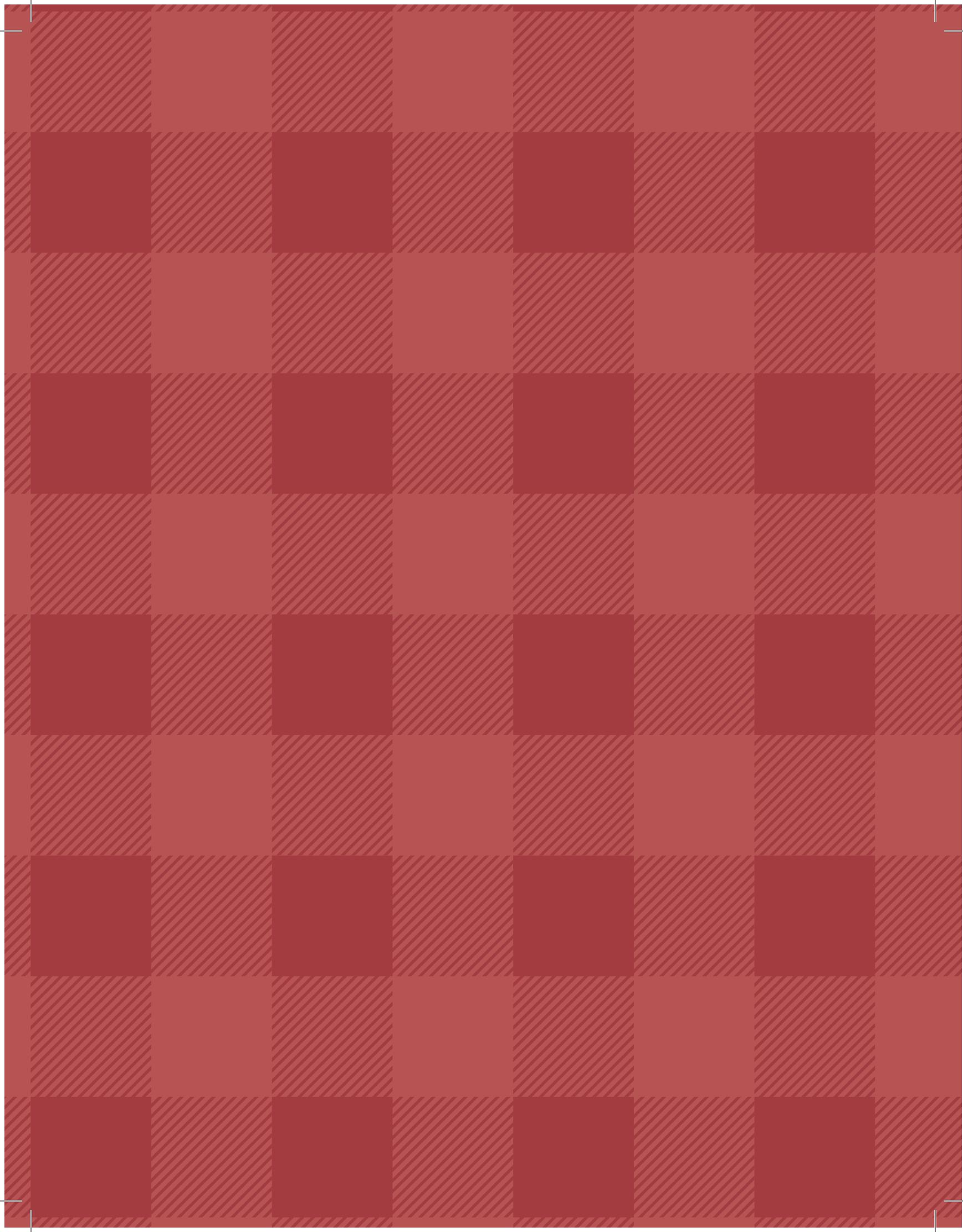
Going Deeper

In addition to the women we learned about this week, Jesus' lineage is full of people with complicated histories, and God worked through them in powerful ways. To go deeper, read through all of Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1:1–17 and research some of the people mentioned there.

Scripture references for people in Jesus' genealogy:

Abraham	Gen. 12:1–8
Boaz/Ruth	Ruth 1–4
David	2 Samuel 7
Hezekiah	2 Kings 18–20





2

Prophecies

Overview of Week

This week, we'll read about the Old Testament prophecies of the birth of the Messiah and how they were fulfilled in Jesus in the New Testament. The Old Testament is full of prophecies that look forward to the coming of the Messiah, a Hebrew word meaning the "anointed" one. A prophecy is knowledge given by God of something that will happen in the future.

Since sin entered the world in Genesis, God's people looked forward to the day that God would redeem his people.

God's people, the Israelites, looked forward to this Messiah through oppression in Egypt, through deliverance to the Promised Land, and through judges, kings, wars, and exile. Through all this, God spoke to his people through the prophets and told them not to lose heart as they waited for the Savior to come. Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted how the coming Messiah would be born, suffer, and die.

It's important to remember that God did not fulfill his promise right away. His people waited a long time. They spoke of the promised Messiah from generation to generation, enduring cycles of war, rebellion, captivity, and restoration. They watched and waited—anxiously, expectantly—for God's promise of the Messiah.

The main idea this week is that God fulfills his promises on his timeline and in his specific ways. As you read in the Old Testament, consider the context of what was written and how the people of Israel felt while waiting on the Messiah who would bring peace and hope.

Week 2

Born of a Virgin *God Does the Impossible*

Day 1

Context

Isaiah was a prophet who lived when the nation of Israel was divided and under threat from kingdoms around them. Isaiah spoke of the coming fall and exile of Israel but also looked ahead to the coming of the Messiah who would deliver humanity from the oppression of sin.

Last week we read about Mary; this week we will see how she was chosen by God to fulfill the prophecy given in Isaiah.

Read Isaiah 7:14

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All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means “God is with us”).

Read Luke 1:26–35

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In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” “

How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

Main Idea

Jesus' coming to earth begins in a miraculous way. The book of Luke details a conversation that an angel has with Mary, the mother of Jesus. The angel informs Mary that she will soon be pregnant with a son and that she should call him Jesus.

Considering the fact that Mary is a virgin, you can imagine her confusion. The angel assures her that the Holy Spirit will work in her in a miraculous way to conceive "the Son of God."

Mary is the virgin who had been prophesied about hundreds of years earlier, and the baby in her womb was "Emmanuel," which means, "God with us." (Look at Matthew 1:18–23, where an angel says this to Joseph as well.)

Since Adam and Eve, all of humanity has been born with a father and mother and inherited a sinful nature that has been passed down for generations. Jesus, being born from a virgin, proves that Jesus was born without sin because the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary instead of another sinful-natured man. With Jesus, God broke the curse of sin with the Holy Spirit working in Mary to conceive Jesus, fully God and fully man without sin. In this way, God began to redeem humanity by being born as a human and living with us.

Listen to the song "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" and consider Israel's long wait for the promised Savior to come.



Reflection Questions

Emmanuel means “God with us,” and when the angel first visits Mary, the message he brings is, “God is with you.” What does it mean for you that God is with you through Jesus?

Jesus was born hundreds of years after the prophecy of Isaiah was given. How do you think God’s people fought against doubt, discouragement, and the temptation to believe God forgot them?

How do you fight against doubt or discouragement when it comes to trusting God and his promises?

What is a situation in your life where you need to depend on God’s presence?

Week 2

Born in Bethlehem

God Fulfills His Promises

Day 2

Context

Micah, similar to Isaiah, is writing just before Israel is invaded by surrounding nations. Micah's prophecies urge Israel to turn from their evil ways, but they also look ahead to the coming Savior.

Read Micah 5:2

—

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf.

Read Luke 2:1–7

—

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

Main Idea

God gave a very specific promise about the coming Messiah through Micah: that he would come from a small town called Bethlehem. Bethlehem is a small village a few miles outside of Jerusalem whose history was well known among the Israelites.

In 1 and 2 Samuel, God chose a man from the same town of Bethlehem to bless and make him king over Israel, a man named David. David was the youngest of all his brothers, from the least of all the towns of Judah, and God chose him to rule over Israel. God promised to continue to bless David's descendants (2 Samuel 7:16).

Fast forward a couple hundred of years to Joseph and pregnant Mary. God orchestrates the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem to fulfill Micah's prophecy. Consider the things that had to happen for Mary and Joseph to even travel to Bethlehem in the first place: the Roman emperor, Augustus, chose to have a census throughout the empire, which meant all the Jewish families had to return to their ancestral home. So even though Joseph and Mary lived in another part of the country and even though Mary was very pregnant, they traveled to Joseph's ancestral home, Bethlehem, and on that trip Mary gave birth to Jesus.

Reflection Questions

Read through these promises and how God fulfilled them in Jesus:

OT Prophecy	NT Fulfillment
Genesis 3:15	Romans 5:6–8
Galatians 4:4–7	Colossians 2:13–15
Isaiah 9:2	Matthew 4:12–17 John 1:4–5; 12:46
Isaiah 53:10–11	Romans 5:1–2
Isaiah 53:4	Matthew 8:14–17
Isaiah 61:1–4	Luke 4:16–21

Knowing that God fulfills all his promises, what does that teach us about who he is?

Take a minute to reflect on and remember what God has done in your life. What promises has God already fulfilled in your life?

Reflection Questions

It seems that God has been orchestrating this story all along in order to fulfill this prophecy. Even if Mary and Joseph didn't completely understand, they still were obedient and trusted God when things didn't make sense.

- Is there a situation you can think of where you were obedient and when you look back, you realize that it was God that was orchestrating things when it didn't make sense?
- What are some similarities to this story and your own life? What are some situations or directions that have been given that might not make sense?
- What would it look like to still trust God and be obedient in this situation?

Week 2

Flight to Egypt

Obedience of Joseph and Mary

Day 3

Context

Hosea and Jeremiah were both prophets during difficult times in Israel's history. Hosea and Jeremiah warned Israel of the consequences of their sin if they didn't change. Like other prophets, they looked ahead to the day that God would redeem his people. The verses below prophesy about the events that would happen after Jesus' birth.

Read Hosea 11:1

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and I called my son out of Egypt.

Read Jeremiah 31:15

This is what the Lord says:

“A cry is heard in Ramah—
deep anguish and bitter weeping.
Rachel weeps for her children,
refusing to be comforted—
for her children are gone.”

Read Matthew 2:13–18

After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, and they stayed there until Herod’s death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my Son out of Egypt.”

Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men’s report of the star’s first appearance. Herod’s brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

“A cry was heard in Ramah—
weeping and great mourning.

Rachel weeps for her children,
refusing to be comforted,
for they are dead.”

Main Idea

Joseph and Mary's obedience to God's instruction saves them and Jesus from Herod's command to kill all children who were two and younger. An angel appears in a dream to Joseph again to warn him of the coming danger.

They flee to Egypt for a time, until an angel appears to Joseph in a dream again, to tell him it's safe to return (Matthew 2:19–23).

The escape to Egypt not only fulfills the prophecies in Jeremiah and Hosea, but also mirrors the journey of the people of Israel in Genesis and Exodus. God's people grew in Israel until a famine caused them to move to Egypt (something God worked out through Joseph, as we read earlier this fall). God then takes his people back home in Exodus and provides safe passage for them.

Throughout the Christmas story, Joseph and Mary obey God's commands with humility and immediacy.

Reflection Questions

How does Joseph respond when the angel speaks to him?

Why is it important for us to respond to God quickly and directly?

What does quick and direct obedience look like for you? What is an area of your life where you need to move and obey?

MOVE: Start a conversation in your small group group message and share what your step of obedience is and how your group can keep you accountable.

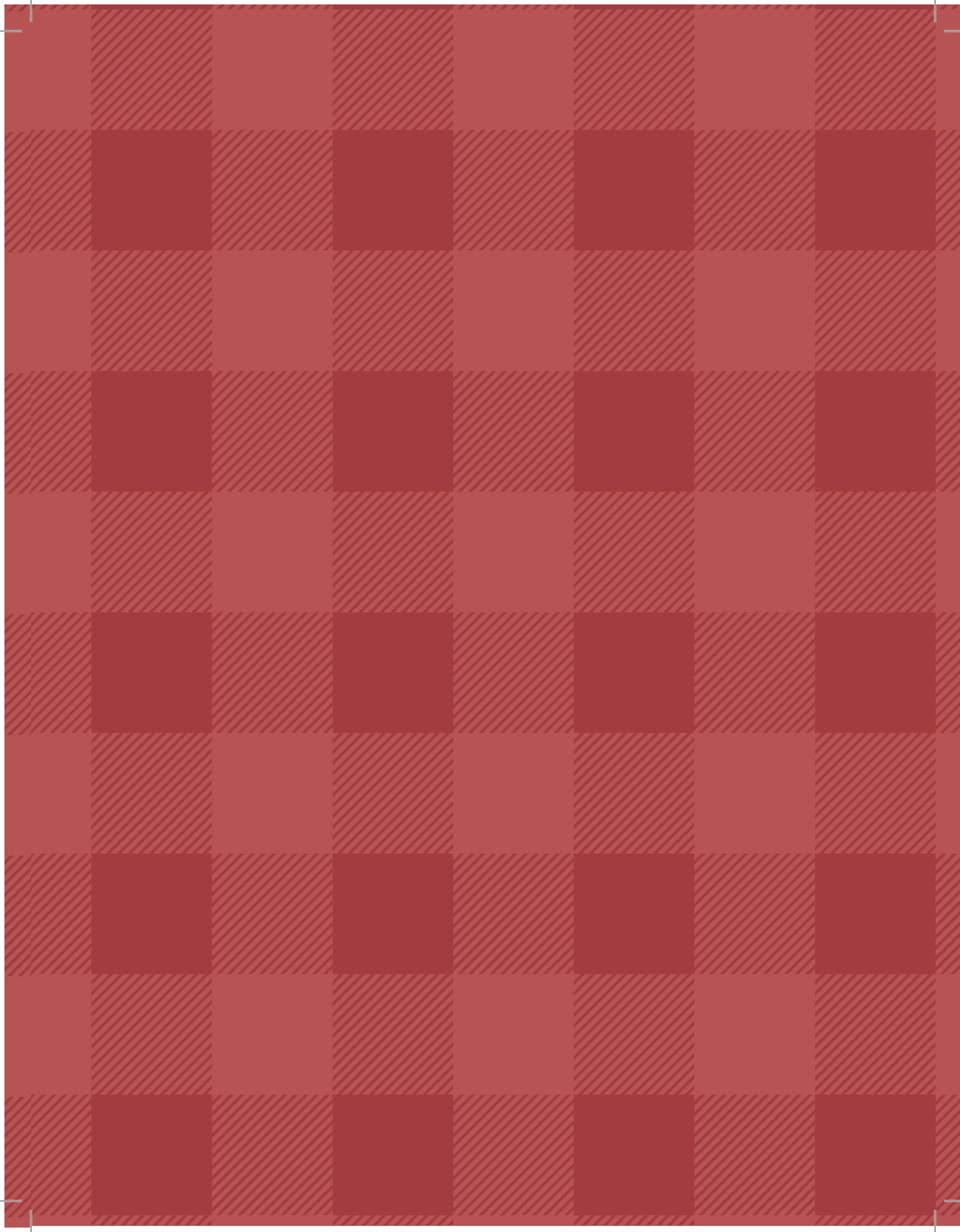
You have learned a lot this week—congrats! Take some time to flip back through this week and write a few things down you learned about.

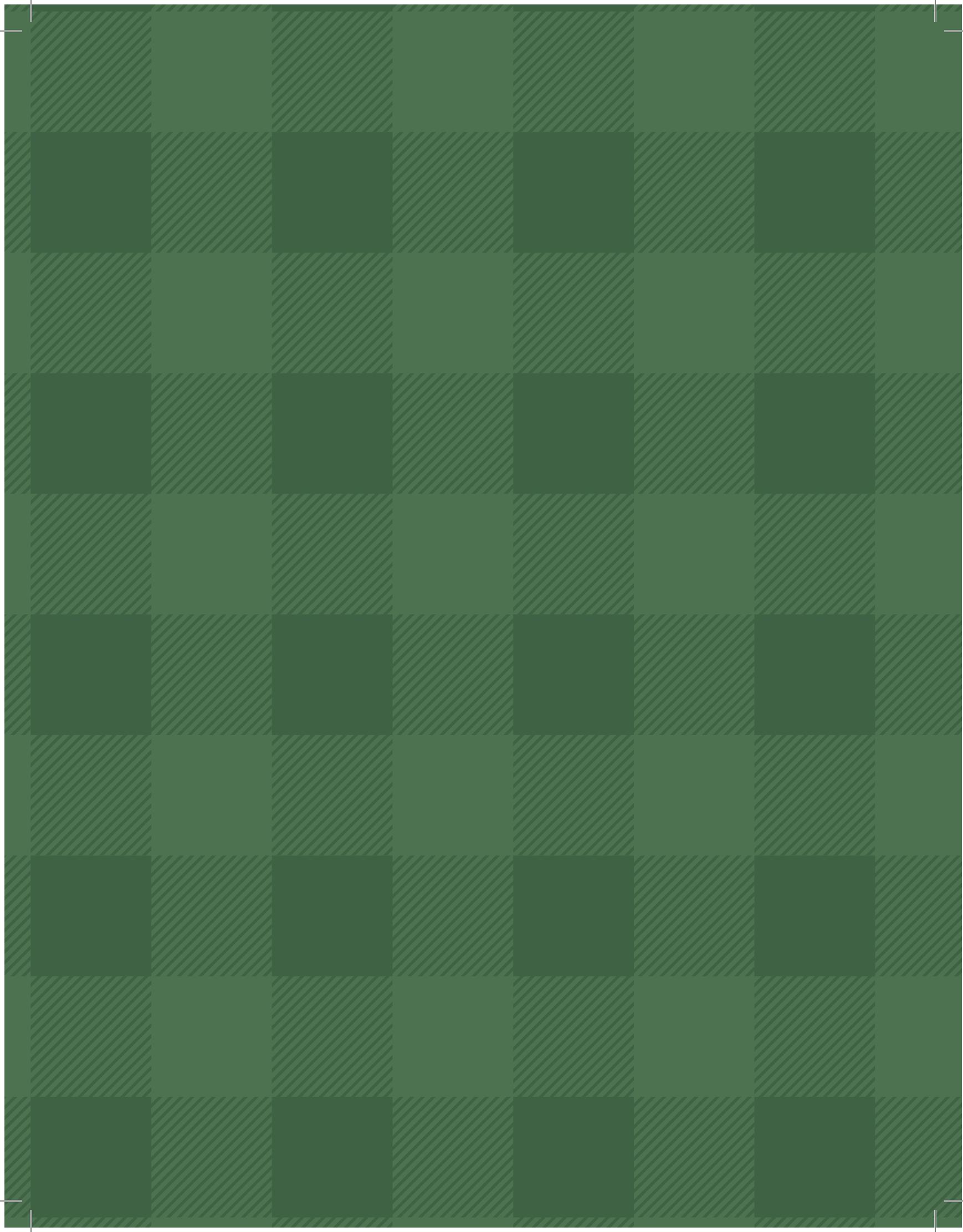
Take some time to pray.

- God kept his promises about the birth of Jesus over hundreds of years. Pray about an area of your life where you need God to work and you have to trust him alone to do that work.
- Write down some situations where God has already worked in your life. Take time to just thank God for the work he has done.

Going Deeper

Isaiah is full of prophecies that point to Jesus' life. Read Isaiah 53 and write down the connections you see in Jesus' life.





3

The Messiah Comes

Overview of Week

After years of prophecy and waiting, the Messiah that has been promised is born in a stable in the town of Bethlehem. This week we'll look at the story of Jesus' birth. Jesus' birth was and is a joyful time for all people and what we're celebrating over 2000 years later.

As we look at the story of Jesus' birth each day this week, we will read about and consider the point of view of those who were present on the night of Jesus' birth.

Read Matthew 1:18–24

This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: “Look! The virgin will conceive a child!

She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,
which means ‘God is with us.’”

When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife.

Main Idea

Why was Joseph afraid? The obvious answer is that he feared Mary was involved with another man and that she was immoral—not the person he'd believed her to be. Since he hadn't heard from God at this time, how could he believe Mary? How could he ever trust her? In addition to that, taking Mary as his wife made him look immoral. What would this do to his standing in the Jewish community? Would his business as a builder suffer?

But the angel quieted this fear. There was no other man. Mary had told him the truth. She was carrying the Son of God.

When Joseph heard that this was God's plan for him, all other concerns faded. Even with the fear of what other people may think, the Scriptures tell us that he married Mary and followed God's instructions. Joseph didn't deny the challenges involved, but he accepted God's plan with courageous faith.

When we know and trust God, we too find the courage to face our fears and follow him.

Reflection Questions

Reread Matthew 1:18–25 and imagine yourself in Joseph’s situation. What would your response be to Mary’s pregnancy? To the angel’s message in a dream?

How does fear of what others think paralyze you?

How does this story lead you to trust God’s plan more instead of trusting in your own control or feelings?

We see in this story that despite some fears and insecurities, Joseph and Mary are willing to move forward with what God has for them. Are there fears or unknowns in your life that you need to move past so you can trust God better?

Wise Men

Seeking Him

Read Matthew 2:1–11

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.”

King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,
are not least among the ruling cities of Judah,
for a ruler will come from you
 who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’”

Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Main Idea

The wise men were like religious scholars who had some sort of governing authority and were possibly kings. Their study of the stars convinced them that a child would be born who would be king of the Jews. They didn't know everything about Jesus, but they understood enough to leave their homes and travel a great distance, at great effort and expense, to find this child.

Though they began without full knowledge of who Jesus was, when the wise men found Jesus, they responded in worship. Without hesitation, they threw themselves on the ground before him in an expression of humility and worship. As we learn more about Jesus through seeking him, we should have the same response. His goodness should invoke honor and praise.

Listen to “Hope Has Come” in the playlist linked below. As you listen, pay attention to the hopefulness of all that Jesus will fulfill, as well as the perspective and awe of those who were present on the night of his birth.



Reflection Questions

As you listened to “Hope Has Come,” what stood out to you about the lyrics?

Consider the faith and trust the wise men displayed in searching for the newborn king. Do we seek Jesus with the same posture, searching for him and expecting to find him?

What was the wise men’s response to Jesus? Why do you think they did that?

What do the wise men teach us about how we should worship Jesus?

Shepherds

Jesus Came for All

Read Luke 2:8–18

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

Main Idea

The life of an ancient shepherd was a difficult one at best. They were outsiders who were often treated as less than. Shepherds were looked down upon, resented, made fun of, and despised by the rest of the community. Their reputation was so bad that they were not permitted to give testimony in a court of law because they were thought to be untrustworthy.

As the shepherds are watching the sheep, an angel of God appears out of nowhere and a brilliant light of the glory of God explodes across the canopy of the sky. Nobody ever brought the shepherds good news. God chose the shepherds to announce the birth of Christ to show that he came for all people. God is always looking out for the lost and the least. Jesus would continue this in his life by “bringing the good news to the poor” (Luke 4) and commanding his disciples to “care for the least of these” (Matthew 25). The good news first came to the lowly shepherds, then went out to the world.

Reflection Questions

Has there been a time in your life when you've felt overlooked? What was that experience like? How does this story offer hope to you in that?

Read Matthew 5:3–12. What does Jesus say about the poor, those in need, and those who are mocked? How do Jesus' words apply to you? Therefore, how can you look to others that a community might label outcasts/loners and show them the love of God we see in this story?

After seeing how God used the lowly shepherds to share the good news of Jesus' birth, how can you also respond to the good news?

Who do you feel compelled to share your story and the good news with?

Week 3

Prayer Journal

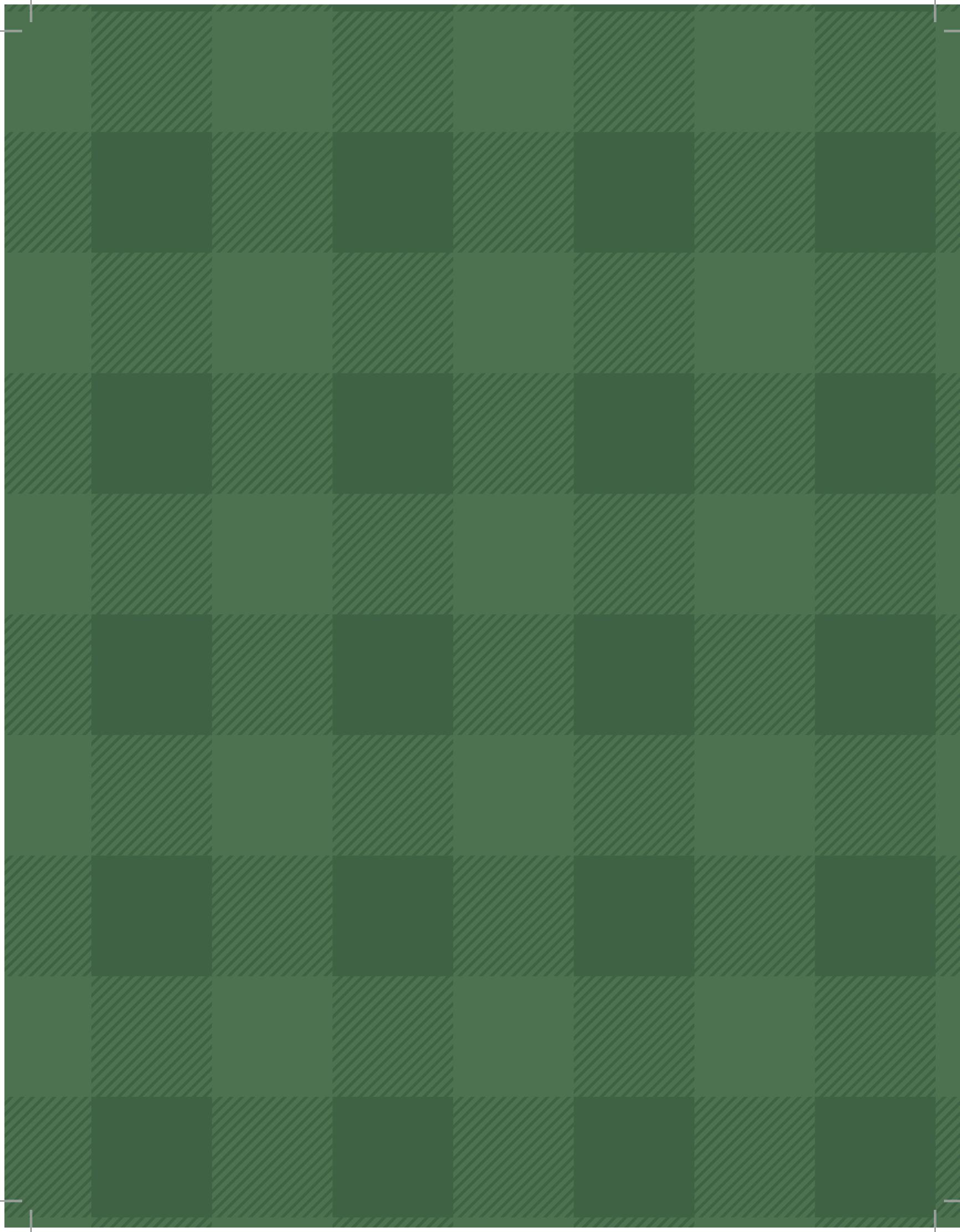
Day 4

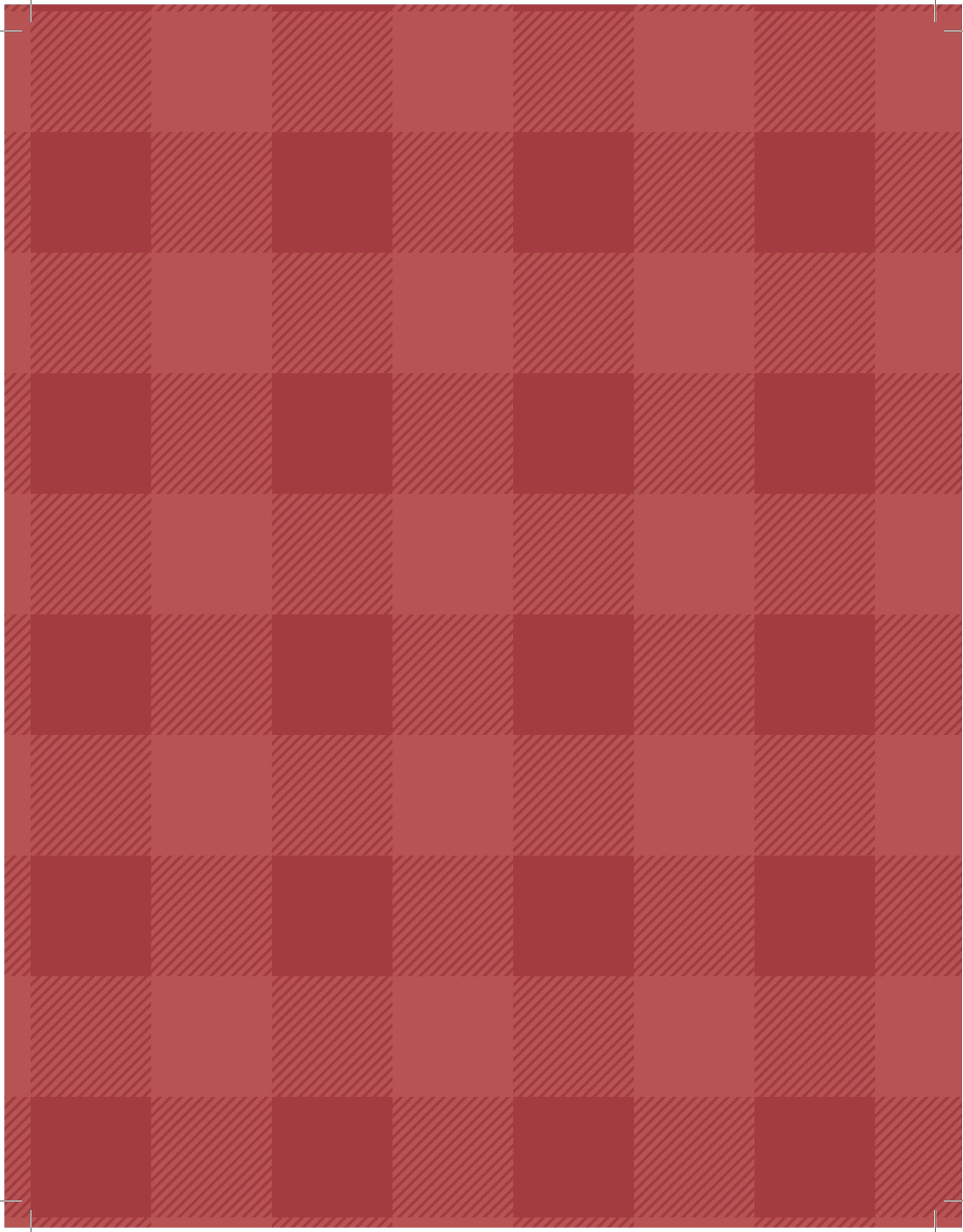
We've covered a lot at this point. Read back through Luke 2:1–20 to read Jesus' birth story. Then watch the video below, which recaps the story of Jesus' birth in the Gospel of Luke. As you read and watch, remember what we've covered and take some time to pray through the prompts.



Take some time to pray about these specific things.

- Take some time to reflect on all that Christ gave up freely to come to the world, live among us, and save us from our sins.
- Pray and thank God for his goodness in sending a Savior. Confess places where your confidence in his faithfulness is weak and ask him for increased trust, belief, and hope.





4

Second Advent
(Acts, Revelation)

Overview of Week

The story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection only begins with the Christmas story. After his birth, Jesus then lived a perfect life, taught, performed miracles, and ultimately sacrificed himself on the cross for the sins of all.

The goal this week is to look ahead to Jesus' second coming and remember that Christmas is just the beginning of the story of reconciliation and redemption through Christ. As we wait for Jesus' return, we wait expectantly and eagerly.

Week 4

The Great Commission and Jesus' Ascension

Day 1

Context

At the end of Mark and Matthew, Jesus has died on the cross, has been resurrected, and speaks to his disciples about what they're to do after he ascends to heaven.

Read Mark 16:9–20

After Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, the first person who saw him was Mary Magdalene, the woman from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went to the disciples, who were grieving and weeping, and told them what had happened. But when she told them that Jesus was alive and she had seen him, they didn't believe her.

Afterward he appeared in a different form to two of his followers who were walking from Jerusalem into the country. They rushed back to tell the others, but no one believed them.

Still later he appeared to the eleven disciples as they were eating together. He rebuked them for their stubborn unbelief because they refused to believe those who had seen him after he had been raised from the dead.

And then he told them, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages. They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed.”

When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. And the disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs.

Read Matthew 28:18–20

Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Main Idea

Jesus tells his disciples to make more disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey his commands. Then, just before ascending to heaven, Jesus reminds his disciples that he will look after them and will be with them forever.

As we've just celebrated the birth and first coming of Jesus, we must look at the work he did and the life he lived. Jesus came to bring life and forgiveness of sins through his death on the cross. In celebrating Christmas, we must also look ahead to the cross and celebrate what Jesus has done for us through his death and resurrection.

These verses in Matthew and Mark are called "the Great Commission." The Great Commission has been the mission of believers for centuries as the gospel has spread around the world. This command that Jesus left his disciples, he commands us with today as well.

With the joy of the coming of Christ, we are commanded to fulfill the mission he gave his disciples: to go and make disciples.

Reflection Questions

In what ways has the gospel been taught to you? How have you been discipled up to this point? Take a minute to reflect and write down your discipleship journey up to this point.

Have you been baptized? If so, has your life been different after baptism? If not, why not?

How can you help fulfill the Great Commission in your context? Who do you need to share the gospel with in your life? How does your serving role at church help fulfill Jesus' commands?

Context

Jesus has ascended into heaven and has left his disciples with the Great Commission. In Acts 1, Jesus has promised that the Holy Spirit will come to empower them to do his work and remind them of his teaching. Acts 2 details the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church.

Read Acts 2:1–12

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!” They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other.

Read Acts 2:41–47

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.

A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Main Idea

The Holy Spirit comes and gives birth to the Church in an awesome way. The Holy Spirit empowers believers to speak in other languages and, through this, to spread the message of the gospel. God does this not just to show his power but to begin building the Church.

Reflect on where we started this Advent season—with the genealogy of Jesus, going all the way back to Adam and Eve—and now where we are in Acts 2.

Reflection

God has been working through people to fulfill his mission and bring the gospel to this moment in the story, where God establishes the Church. This Church that was established 2000 years ago has been working through the Holy Spirit's power to bring the gospel message to each new generation and now to us, in 2022. God's plan and power are always at work through every generation to fulfill his mission and work.

As the Church is born, something amazing happens in verse 41:

A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need

The believers are in awe of what God is doing. They meet together, share what they have, and live in community together. The early Church is a picture of what God wants for the Church today—people living in community with one another, sharing with each other to meet needs, and depending on God for all things.

Reflection Questions

In the upcoming year, how can you more fully commit to being a part of biblical community through your small group? Write down some specific ways you can share more or be a leader in your group.

Then text your leader how you plan to commit to your group and how they can hold you accountable with this.

The early Church in Acts 2 is a picture of people who are dependent on God for their every need. Where do you need to depend on God more fully in your life? How can you go about doing that daily?

How can you share your gifts, money, talents, and time to help build the church? Write down some goals for this next year in how specifically you're going to do this.

Week 4

The Promise of Jesus' Return

Day 3

Context

Jesus promises to return again to save those who believe and trust in him. As believers, we look forward to that day when Christ will return and make all things right. As believers, we wait expectantly for Jesus.

Read Luke 21:27–28

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

Read 2 Peter 3:8–14

But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.

Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight.

Main Idea

We spend months preparing to celebrate and remember Christ's first coming. How much more should we seek to be ready for his second coming? That day, too, is a reality, an absolute certainty. Unlike Christmas Day, which happens every December 25, only the Father knows the day and hour his Son will return. But he is coming. At the right time, he will split the sky and descend to destroy all wickedness, receive the worship that is rightfully his, and usher in a new age—the beginning of unbroken, unending fellowship with him. We should believe in, think about, look to, and prepare for that day.

The day of Jesus' return is certain and coming, but—so far—it is not today. We find ourselves much like the Israelites long ago—waiting. Which begs the question: How then shall we wait?

Peter asks and answers this very question in his second letter. In love, he reminds his readers that, though the days seem long and weary in the waiting, God is not slow in keeping his promise. He assures them of the absolute reality of the appointed day when Jesus will return. And he then tells them exactly what kinds of lives they are to live in light of this coming day—lives of holiness, godliness, and hopeful expectation.

Peter's exhortations are just as much for us today as they were for the believers he wrote to long ago. We too are living in the days of God's patient mercy. We need to be reminded that really believing in and looking toward the reality of Jesus' return changes the way we live. It reorients our hope and perspective. It creates a sense of urgency and sobriety, as well as giddy anticipation, just like a child who cannot wait for Christmas morning.

Reflection Questions

As much as “Joy to the World” reminds us of Jesus’ first coming, much of the song points to his future second coming. Listen to the song lyrics and reflect on how Jesus’ second coming will bring true joy to the world.

Listen:



Think of a time where you’ve waited expectantly for something to come or something to happen. What did you feel during the time you were waiting? What did it feel like when that thing or event finally arrived?

Re-read 2 Peter 3:8–14. What stands out to you in this passage and why? What questions does it leave you with?

Reflection Questions

How does your life reflect your belief that Jesus will return? Is it something you think about and long for? If not, why do you think that is?

What do you think of when you hear or read the words “be diligent”? What does it look like for you to be diligent in pursuing holiness and godliness? In what areas do you need to fight and flee from sin? In what areas do you need to cultivate love for God and love for others?

You have learned a lot this week—congrats! Take some time to flip back through this week and write down a few things you've learned.

Take some time to pray.

- Read back through your guide. We've covered a lot of topics and you've had time to reflect. What are some themes you see in your answers to the reflection questions or prayer prompts? Write down and pray about what God is teaching in this season of your life.
- What are some of the practical takeaways for you from reading the Advent story? Pray about how you will start putting these into practice in this upcoming year.

Going Deeper

Read Matthew 24:3–51 to see more of what Jesus says about when he comes again. What does Jesus say about being vigilant? How can you practically live a life that is expectant and waiting on God?

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