



# **KISS THE SON**

**Family Devotionals for Advent**

## **Introduction**

*“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.” (John 5:39)*

This book is a humble attempt to help you and your family celebrate the Christmas season by rejoicing in the Son of God who came into the world to save sinners. Before Jesus came, God's people were nearly bursting with excitement and anticipation because God had given them numerous promises that the Messiah was going to come. Even those who failed to recognize Jesus as that Messiah were full of expectation – looking and hoping for “the One to come” (Matt. 11:3). Because of this hope and anticipation, there was much joy at the coming of Christ – at least for those who recognized Him. The reactions of Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45), Mary (Luke 1:46-55), Zechariah (Luke 1:67-79), and Simeon (Luke 2:29-32) – among others – can only be described as full of joy. And that joy was only magnified because the wait had been so long.

In that spirit, this booklet seeks to help you understand that sense of anticipation by highlighting ten specific promises God made to His people in the Old Testament. Over and over again, God told His people that “someone was coming”. He gave them glimpse after glimpse and hint after hint so that when He arrived, they would recognize Him, listen to Him, love Him, and believe in Him. He did this far more than ten times, but these ten promises serve as a helpful preparation for the Christmas celebration.

My hope is that you will read through these ten promises in the days between Thanksgiving and Christmas – either by yourself or with your family. Historically, this “season” between Thanksgiving and Christmas is referred to as “Advent” - which is from a Latin word that means “coming”. In the history of the Church, this has been a time in which God's people prepared themselves for the celebration of Christmas. Why prepare ourselves? Such preparation – as it did with God's people in the Old Testament – serves to increase our anticipation of, and joy in, the celebration.

This booklet is designed to be read out loud, and it is written in relatively simple language so that even children might (hopefully) be able to follow along with, and understand, the story. If you are a parent or grandparent, engage the children in your life with these promises and truths. Help them understand the reason we celebrate Christmas at all. Help them understand the glory of Christ – even from their youngest days. And if you would like to dig deeper, take some time to meditate on the verses listed in the footnotes.

If you are anything like me, you will find that trying to help your children treasure Christ will result in your own heart treasuring Him more as well. I pray that this booklet might be of benefit to you. I pray that you might understand the Bible better. I pray that your joy for, and anticipation of, Christmas might increase. But most of all, I pray that you will love the Son with all of your heart and soul – as well as the Father who sent Him – because you understand more and more who He was and what He came to do. Amen.

*“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” (Psalm 2:12)*

Advent Devotional Written by Chad Davis

## **Day 1 - “All Things Were Made For Him”**

How did this world begin? That is an important question, and the Bible begins by providing the answer for us.

*Read Genesis 1:1-2:3*

This world began when God created it. But that is not the moment when *everything* began, because God was already there. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit already existed – and they loved and enjoyed each other perfectly. They did not need anything because they were already perfect. It was wonderful.

Then, God the Father chose to create this world. Light and dark, day and night, sky and sea, plants and trees – God formed them all. Then He filled the world He had made with stars and fish and birds and animals. He made people to protect and take care of this world for Him. He even put those people in a special place which had everything they needed. He told them exactly what He wanted them to do. Everything He made was very good.

But why did the Father do this? If He was perfectly happy before the world was made, why did He make it? The Bible says the Father made it for one very special reason: He wanted to give it to the Son that He loved so much. God made everything *for* His Son (Col. 1:16). The Father wanted the Son to have a kingdom – and a people – of His own. He wanted His Son to rule over a group of people and take care of them and provide for them and bless them.

But why would the Father want such a thing? That answer is actually found at the *end* of God's story (see Rev. 19-22). God the Father wanted to show His greatness – and the greatness of His Son – through the world He made. Even more, He wanted others to *experience* His greatness – and the greatness of His Son – forever and ever. God wanted others to know He was mighty, wise, gracious, and loving. He also wanted others to know His Son was mighty, wise, gracious, and loving. And He wanted others to enjoy a relationship with them just as they had enjoyed relationship with each other before the world was ever created.

That is the reason this world was made. And that is where the story of Christmas begins. God made this world and everything in it, and He made it for His Son.

**Main Point:** God made everything, and He made it for His Son.

**Suggested Song:** “All Creatures of Our God and King”

**Decoration Ideas:** On this night, we take the opportunity to put up the Christmas tree and begin decorating it. The tree reminds us that God made everything. And we put lights and other ornaments on the tree that also remind us of many of the things God made: animals, planets, and other “created things”.

## **Day 2 - “Someone is Coming to Crush the Serpent”**

We saw last time that God made the world and everything in it for His Son. And when God did this, everything He made was very good. But then, something bad happened: the people God made to protect and take care of His world turned against Him.

*Read Genesis 3:1-24*

This is a sad story. God’s enemy – Satan – came and convinced God’s people to stop listening to God. He told them things would be better if they stopped obeying God and did what they wanted instead. He told them they could be like God themselves (Gen. 3:1-6). And when the people listened to Satan and did what God told them not to do, everything went terribly wrong. Instead of loving God and wanting to be with Him, the people were afraid of Him and ran away from Him. Instead of saying, “I’m sorry,” the people blamed each other (Gen. 3:7-13). And because of the people’s sin, God cursed the world He had made, and it became a very hard place to live. God even kicked the people out of the special place He made for them so that they could not be with Him anymore. And He promised the people that they would die because they had disobeyed Him (Gen. 3:14-24). The good world God made was broken. It was a very sad day.

But even though so many bad things happened that day, something good happened also: God promised that someone would come and fix what had been messed up.

*Read Genesis 3:15 again.*

God promised that someone would come from the woman and defeat the enemy who had deceived God’s people. Even on that sad day, God promised to send someone to make it better. And even though people had to wait a long, long time, God kept His promise.

The Bible tells us that Jesus became a person and was born just like the rest of us (Gal. 4:4) so that He could destroy Satan (Heb. 2:14). And Jesus came not only to destroy Satan but to get rid of all the trouble he caused as well (1 John 3:8). And because of what He did while He was on the earth, Jesus *has* defeated Satan (John 12:31; Col. 2:15). Now, Jesus is simply waiting in heaven – waiting until the day when Satan is not just defeated but destroyed (Heb. 10:12-13; Rev. 20:1-3, 7-15).

*Read Revelation 12:7-11 and 20:7-10*

This is one reason we celebrate Jesus. He came to fix what was broken when God’s people sinned. He came to crush Satan’s head so God’s people could be saved.

**Main Point:** Jesus is the seed of the woman who came to crush the great serpent, Satan, and remove God’s curse.

**Suggested Song:** “Joy to the World” (notice especially verse 3)

**Decoration Ideas:** On this night, we add apples and toy snakes to our tree to remind us of Adam and Eve’s sin and God’s promise to send someone to fix it.

### **Day 3 – “Someone is Coming to Bless the Nations”**

After Adam and Eve rebelled against God, things continued to get worse for human beings. Even though God made people to honor Him, they continued to reject Him – murdering each other, doing what *they* wanted instead of what God wanted, and trying to make themselves look great. Clearly, God's special creatures were at war with Him.

However, after some time had passed, God stepped in and did something amazing – He set in motion a plan to fix everything that had gone wrong.

*Read Genesis 12:1-9*

God called a man named Abram to leave his home and family and travel to a far-off land. And God also made some really big promises to Abram – promises that involved fixing what Adam and Eve had broken. When Adam and Eve sinned, they experienced God's curse, but God promised that Abraham would have His blessing. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were kicked out of God's special place, but God promised to give Abraham a “special place” of his own.

Clearly, God was using Abram (whose name was later changed to Abraham) to fix what had been messed up when people rebelled against God. God even told Abraham: “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). This was another big promise – not just that Abraham's nation would be blessed but that *all* nations would be blessed. And God promised that this would happen through one of Abraham's offspring (Gen. 22:18). God was working – through Abraham – to restore what had been lost.

God was promising that someone would come – one of Abraham's children – to remove the curses of Genesis 3 and bring blessings instead.

How did God do this? How could God use one man to bring blessing to the whole world? The Bible tells us God did this by sending Jesus. Jesus came from Abraham's family – even though He came a long time after Abraham died. And Jesus clearly taught that even people who were not part of Abraham's family could be blessed through Him (Matt. 8:11; John 10:16). And before He left the earth, He told His followers to go to the nations and tell them they could be blessed also (Matt. 28:16-20). God kept His promises to Abraham, and He did it by sending Jesus.

*Read Galatians 3:7-14*

This is another reason we celebrate Jesus' coming. He came to save us from our sins. And everyone who trusts in Jesus is saved. Everyone who trusts in Jesus also gets to be part of Abraham's family and they get to receive the same promised blessings as Abraham (Gal. 3:14, 29).

**Main Point:** Jesus is the offspring of Abraham who came to restore God's blessing for all people – Jews and Gentiles.

**Suggested Song:** “All Glory Be to Christ”

**Decoration Ideas:** On this night, we decorate our tree with ornaments that are either from – or represent – different countries to remind us that Jesus brings God's blessing to every nation and not just ours.

## **Day 4 - “Someone is Coming to Rule the Nations”**

After Abraham died, the promises God made to him passed to his son, Isaac, and then to Isaac's son, Jacob (Gen. 26:1-5; Gen. 28:10-15). Eventually, God gave Jacob twelve sons of his own. And before Jacob died, God revealed to Jacob what was going to happen to each of his sons in the future. So at the very end of his life, Jacob gathered his sons and told them what was going to happen (Gen. 49:1-27). And as part of his speech, God used Jacob to make some more very big promises about Jacob's fourth son, Judah.

*Read Genesis 49:8-12*

As he spoke to each of his sons, Jacob said that Judah's brothers would eventually bow down to him. He said Judah was like a lion cub – ready to pounce on its prey. Then Jacob made clear that this was going to happen because a king would come from Judah who would be obeyed not just by Jacob's other sons but by all people (Gen. 49:8-10). Clearly, this was not just a promise about a normal king or ruler but a very special – and great – King who would rule not just over one nation but over all of them. God promised – through Jacob – that someone would come like a lion from Judah to reign as King over the whole world.

As the story of the Bible continues, there are lots of kings that come to power. Eventually, there is even a king from the family of Judah that comes to power (David), but it becomes clear pretty quickly that none of them – not even David – are the great King that Jacob promised.

So who is this great King? The second half of the Bible declares that it is Jesus. Jesus was part of Judah's family – a direct descendant of him, in fact (Matt. 1:2-3; Luke 3:33). While Jesus lived on the earth, He did not look like a king to most people. And when He died on the cross, He *really* did not look like a King. But the Bible says that after Jesus was raised from the dead, God made clear to everyone that there was no one greater than Jesus by bringing Him back to heaven and letting Him sit at God's right hand. And God did this so that eventually everyone will bow down before Him and proclaim Jesus as the great King and Lord of everything (Phil. 2:9-11). This is exactly what Jacob promised would happen. John – one of Jesus' disciples – even had a vision about this Lion and tells us what he saw.

*Read Revelation 5:1-14*

Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Through His death and resurrection, He has conquered all enemies. Everyone who trusts and obeys the Lion will be delivered by Him. Everyone who refuses to obey Him will be devoured by Him. So as we celebrate, let's celebrate the Lion of Judah – the King not just of a jungle or a nation but of the world.

**Main Point:** Jesus is the Lion of Judah who came to rule over all the nations as King of Kings.

**Suggested Song:** “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing”

**Decoration Ideas:** On this night, we put toy lions on our tree to remind us of the image of Jesus as the Lion of Judah – the true King who reigns.

## **Day 5 - “Someone is Coming to Light Up the Darkness”**

After Jacob and his sons died, something terrible happened to God's people – they became slaves in Egypt. No doubt, it probably seemed like God had forgotten about them and the promises would never come to pass. However, God miraculously delivered them – destroying their enemies and setting them free in the process. He then used Moses to lead the people toward the Land that He had promised to give them. But on the way, another terrible thing happened – the majority of God's people decided they did not trust God and they did not want to obey Him. The result was predictable – God's people endured much suffering and trouble because they would not obey. In fact, God made them wander around in the wilderness for 40 years until those who refused to obey died and their children grew up.

And yet, even as the people struggled to obey and suffered the consequences for that, God gave them yet another promise of hope in the future. As the people were wandering in the wilderness, a foreign king named Balak hired a prophet named Balaam to curse them. However, God did not want the people cursed, so He caused Balaam to *bless* the people instead of *cursing* them (Num. 22-24). This happened three times, and the third time, God caused Balaam not only to promise blessing on Israel but to make yet another promise about someone who would bring that blessing in the future.

*Read Numbers 24:15-19*

Once again, God promised that someone was coming – a King (just like Genesis 49 promised) who would crush God's enemies (just like Genesis 3 promised) and who *also* would rise like a star in the darkness. This King would not only rule – He would be a light. In the Bible, darkness is a symbol for sin and despair and death. Darkness is a sure sign that something is wrong. God promised that a King would come who would bring light into the world. He promised a King who would drive the darkness away.

And once again, the rest of the Bible makes clear God kept this promise by sending Jesus. Interestingly, when Jesus was born, a star appeared and showed some wise men where they should go to find the “king of the Jews” (Matt. 2:2). But the Bible says even more – Jesus actually is called a “star”.

*Read Revelation 22:16*

Obviously, Jesus is not a real star, but He did come into the “darkness” of the world as a “light” (John 1:5, 9). He is the light of the world and whoever trusts Him can have light in them as well instead of stumbling around in darkness (John 8:12). And Jesus is the light in the darkness of this world because He is the victorious King who defeated all the powers of darkness (Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:13, 2:15). So here is yet another reason to celebrate Jesus. The light has come and the darkness has been defeated.

**Main Point:** Jesus is the star from Jacob who came to rescue us from darkness by defeating all God's enemies.

**Suggested Song:** “O Holy Night”

**Decoration Ideas:** On this night, we put stars on our tree to remind us that Jesus is the Star from Jacob who shines like a light in the middle of the night.

## **Day 6 - “Someone is Coming to Speak God's Words”**

Once the people that had refused to enter the Promised Land died, their children gathered on the eastern edge of the Jordan River and prepared to enter the Promised Land. As part of this preparation, Moses “retold” Israel's history as well as much of the Law God had given the people at Sinai. This “sermon” is recorded for us in Deuteronomy. As Moses neared the end of his life, he gave a final word to the people – reminding them of the truth and encouraging them to obey. And guess what? As part of this final word, Moses gave the people yet another promise about One who would come in the future.

*Read Deuteronomy 18:15-19*

In the Old Testament, the prophets were those who spoke for God and declared God's will to the people. Such words were not to be taken lightly because they came directly from God. And if a prophet spoke a word that God had not said, it was such a serious offense that he was to be put to death. God was promising that another prophet would come speaking God's words to God's people.

After Moses, the Bible tells us about lots of prophets God sent – people like Deborah, Elijah, Nathan, Isaiah, and many others, but it also makes clear that none of them were the great Prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18. In fact, when John the Baptist started preaching, the Jewish leaders asked if he was “the Prophet” - because they were still expecting such a Prophet to come (John 1:21). But when Jesus came, it became clear that He was the Prophet – just like He was the Lion and the Star.

Over and over again, the Bible tells us that Jesus spoke the words that God gave Him to speak (John 7:16, 8:28, 12:49, 14:10, 24). He did this because He got His words directly from God (John 17:8). When Jesus taught, He was teaching God's words. Even more, just like Moses and the other prophets of the Old Testament, when Jesus was speaking, God was speaking. He was – and is – the great Prophet that God promised in Deuteronomy. And God sent Him to speak the truth and deliver us from our sin. Even Jesus' earliest disciples told people Jesus was the One Moses had talked about.

*Read Acts 3:22-26*

So as we continue to celebrate, we can celebrate that God has given us His words by sending His Prophet to speak them to us. We do not have to wonder what is true. We do not have to wonder what God wants. We do not have to figure out how to be saved from our sins. God's Prophet has made all of that clear. The only issue now is whether we will listen to Him or not. As we celebrate, let's be faithful children of God who listen to His beloved Son (Matt. 17:5).

**Main Point:** Jesus is the Great Prophet who came to speak God's words to us.

**Suggested Song:** “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

**Decoration Ideas:** On this night, we hang miniature trumpets on our tree. In times past, a “herald” or ambassador – particularly one with a message from a King – would be announced by the blowing of a trumpet to draw everyone's attention. These trumpets remind us of the Great Prophet who brought God's words to us.



## **Day 7 - “Someone is Coming to Reign as King Forever”**

Eventually, God's people finally entered the Promised Land and took possession of it. Unfortunately, they then fell back into their sinful ways. They failed to drive out the people living in the land as God had instructed, and then they failed to walk according to God's rules. Instead of submitting to the Lord, they did whatever they wanted (Judges details the downward spiral of the nation; Judges 7:6, 21:25) – and this rebellion led (just like God promised it would) to defeat and disaster for them (note particularly the ark of the covenant - the symbol of God's presence with His people - being stolen by the Philistines; 1 Sam. 4). Eventually, because of this defeat and disaster, the people demanded a king like the nations around them. And even though the first king – Saul – disobeyed God and was rejected (1 Sam. 13 & 15), God eventually raised up a better king – named David – who loved and obeyed Him (1 Sam. 13:14; 1 Sam. 16). David was not perfect, but he tried to honor God rightly. Eventually, he expressed a desire to build a permanent temple for God. David lived in a very fancy house, and He would to build an impressive house for God as well. However, God told David that He did not want that, and instead, God took the opportunity to make yet another big promise to David.

*Read 2 Samuel 7:8-16*

In response to David's desire to build God a house, God actually promised to build David a house! God was not talking about a real house but rather about David's family and descendants. God promised David that his kingdom would last forever because one of his offspring would rule forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16). In the years following David's reign, this became a very important promise for God's people, and God Himself repeated it over and over again so that the people would not forget it (Ps. 89:3, 35-37; 132:11; Jer. 33:14-22). So how did God fulfill this promise? The very first verse of the New Testament provides the answer: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). Jesus was a direct descendant of David, and the Bible makes it abundantly clear that He is the promised King who reigns forever (Luke 1:32, 69; Acts 2:30, 13:23; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 22:16).

*Read Luke 1:30-33*

Mary could hardly believe her ears! But the angel was clear: God gave Jesus the “throne of David”. He lived and died and then rose from dead, and now He reigns at God's right hand as the Lord of all creation. And as God promised, that will never cease, and nothing will ever change it. His reign is secure, and He will reign forever and ever.

So once again, this gives us yet another reason to celebrate. The Son of David has come, and no one will ever defeat Him. He reigns, and He is building God's house – not with bricks but with people whom He is drawing to Himself. We celebrate the “forever King” and honor Him as He deserves.

**Main Point:** Jesus is the Son of David who reigns forever.

**Suggested Song:** “Crown Him with Many Crowns”

**Decoration Ideas:** On this night, we put miniature thrones on our tree to remind us of the “forever King” who sits on the throne forever – never to be defeated.

## **Day 8 - “Someone is Coming as a Child to Bring Perfect Peace”**

During the reigns of David and his son, Solomon, Israel reached the peak of its influence and power. However, after Solomon died, the nation split into two separate kingdoms: Israel and Judah. Eventually, both kingdoms chose to walk in terrible wickedness, and as a result, God punished them both by letting them be conquered by other nations (the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Assyria, 2 Kings 17:6-23; the southern kingdom of Judah was destroyed by Babylon, 2 Kings 25:1-21). However, even as the people kept disobeying, God kept sending His prophets to speak His word to them (2 Chron. 36:15-16). Even though the people did not want to listen, God kept speaking to them. And part of the task of these prophets was to talk about a better day that was coming in the future – a day when God would change and save and bless His people. One of these prophets was Isaiah. Among the many things he said, he spoke often about God's future blessing of His people. Interestingly, one of the promises God made was that a child was going to come and bring the blessings of God by ruling God's people. He promised that this child would bring perfect peace.

*Read Isaiah 9:1-7*

The promises are incredible, and Isaiah gave them to God's people so they would have hope. Isaiah promised that a child would come and become a King, and He promised that this child-King would rule exactly as God wanted – with perfect righteousness and justice (Isaiah 7:14, 9:1-7). And, once again, we see that God kept this promise by sending Jesus. Matthew tells us clearly that Jesus' birth happened like it did so that the words of Isaiah would be proven true.

*Read Matthew 1:18-25*

Mary gave birth to a baby boy who grew into a man who eventually sat down at God's right hand as the Great and Mighty King of all things (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36). And the Bible says that one day, all the enemies of God will be defeated and the earth will be full of everything God wants – everyone will obey Him and honor Him all the time (Habakkuk 2:14; Rev. 21:22-27). When that day comes, there will be perfect peace. But why did the King have to be born as a baby? The Bible says it happened this way because the King wanted to save human beings – so He became a human being. Jesus became like us so that He could save us (Heb. 2:14-16). And because He became like us, He understands our struggles, can help us in those struggles, and can ultimately save us from those struggles (Heb. 4:14-16).

So, as we continue to celebrate, let's celebrate the King who came as a child to save His children who had gone astray and rebelled against Him. The child has come and now He reigns, and everyone who believes in Him can become a child of God.

**Main Point:** Jesus is the child who came to rule in righteousness and bring perfect peace.

**Suggested Song:** “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

**Decoration Ideas:** Set up a nativity to remind us that Jesus came as a child. We put doves on the tree to remind us that he came to bring peace.

## **Day 9 - “Someone is Coming as a Branch to Bring Forth Much Good Fruit”**

After speaking about the child who would come and reign as King in Isaiah 7 and 9, Isaiah uses a different image to speak about the same person in Isaiah 11. Using an image from nature, Isaiah promised that a “shoot” would come from the “stump” of Jesse and bear fruit. Isaiah was looking into the future – after Judah was going to be destroyed – and speaking about the time when there would not be a person from David's family reigning as King. In a very real sense, David's family – descended from Jesse – would be a stump that had been “cut down”. But Isaiah promised that new growth would come from that stump – a branch that would bring new fruit.

*Read Isaiah 11:1-16.*

Very quickly, it becomes clear that Isaiah is talking about a person. This “branch” will have God's Spirit on Him and delight in doing what God wants. As a result, He will walk in righteousness – doing only what is good and right and just. And because of His faithfulness, Isaiah says true peace will come. And this “branch” will bring peace not only to Israel but to the nations as well – at least those nations that will submit to Him. Those who refuse to submit are destroyed. Once again, this was a glorious promise of someone who would come fix all the things that were broken because of sin. God was promising – through Isaiah – that someone would come as a branch from Jesse who would do exactly what God wanted and, by doing that, produce abundant fruit by bringing God's blessing to the world (the same image of a “branch” is used in similar promises in Jer. 23:5-6, 33:14-16; Zech. 6:9-15).

And, once again, as the Biblical story moves forward, it becomes clear that Jesus is this promised “branch”. Even though that specific word is never used to describe Him, Jesus does use the image of a vine to describe Himself.

*Read John 15:1-11*

Jesus is the vine who brings forth much fruit. It is also clear that He accomplishes everything Isaiah promised would happen. As the One sent from God, He is the One who makes it possible for many people – both Jews and Gentiles – to be part of God's people. He is the One who ultimately brings peace and makes it possible for us to have peace with God (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14-17). He is the One who brings all the wonderful peace and prosperity promised throughout the Old Testament. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has indeed brought about much good fruit.

So as we continue to celebrate, we can celebrate Jesus as the Branch who has come and brought good fruit. God brought Him forth from the “stump” of Jesse. And all the glory and praise and honor belongs to Him. So let's give Him that praise during this season. The branch has come, and if we have trusted Him, we are the fruit God promised.

**Main Point:** Jesus is the Branch who has come to reign in righteousness and bring forth much fruit.

**Suggested Song:** “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

**Decoration Ideas:** On this night be place decorative grapes on the tree to remind us that Jesus is the true vine who brings forth much fruit.

## **Day 10 - “Someone is Coming to Shepherd God's Sheep”**

Another of the prophets God sent to speak His word to His people was Ezekiel. He spoke God's word to the Kingdom of Judah just like Isaiah, but he came about 100 years after Isaiah. By that time, God's people had fully turned away from Him and were about to be destroyed by Babylon. Ezekiel saw this destruction happen, and even more, he experienced the destruction himself and was sent off to Babylon as a captive. Through his ministry as a prophet, God used him to explain the suffering to the people as well as to remind them that a better day was coming in the future. When that day came, the people would be restored, and God would be with them again.

As Ezekiel spoke God's word to the people, one of the problems he highlighted was the way that the leaders of God's people were abusing the people instead of taking care of them. God called these leaders “shepherds” because they were supposed to feed and care for God's “sheep” - His people. The problem was that the leaders refused to do this. Instead of feeding God's sheep, they fed themselves. Instead of caring for the sheep, they let them get destroyed. This sinful behavior made God angry – but it also caused Him to make another grand promise.

*Read Ezekiel 34:11-24*

Through Ezekiel, God promised that He would take care of His sheep. And He promised that He would do this by giving a good shepherd to take care of them. He calls this good shepherd “David” - not because it really would be David (who had been dead for a long time by the time Ezekiel came along) but because the shepherd would be from David's family. God promised that this shepherd would feed the sheep and care for the sheep as God always wanted. This is another promise that clearly points forward to Jesus. When Jesus came, He made clear that He was the good shepherd God had promised.

*Read John 10:10-18*

Jesus is the One who came to provide for, and protect God's sheep. And, interestingly, He does this primarily by dying for them. Jesus laid down His life for God's sheep, so that the sheep could have abundant life (John 10:10-11). The good shepherd was “struck down” and died – because we had gone astray like silly, disobedient sheep (Zech. 13:7; Isaiah 53:6). And because He died, we can come to Him and find life and provision and protection. He is able to save us, give us life, keep us safe, and provide us with everything we need.

So as we draw near to the day when we celebrate Jesus' birth, let's remember that He is the good shepherd who came to save us by laying down His life for us. We can live because He died, and we know we will live because He lives. Let's celebrate the Good Shepherd by trusting Him, listening to His voice, and following Him.

**Main Point:** Jesus is the Good Shepherd who came to care for, and provide for, God's sheep.

**Suggested Song:** “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus”

**Decoration Ideas:** On this night, we put miniature sheep on our tree to remind us of the Good Shepherd who came to care for God's sheep.

## **Christmas Day**

Today is the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. After thousands of years of promising that someone would come, when the time was finally right, God sent the Promised One to us (Gal. 4:4). God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son so that whoever believed in the Son could have eternal life (John 3:16). Even though Satan tried his best to stop God's plan and the people God made sinned against Him and refused to help Him with His plan, God's plan to make a kingdom for His Son still came to pass. Jesus came into the world so that the world could be saved.

*Read Luke 2:1-20*

Jesus is the Promised One. And He has done everything God promised. Jesus is the seed of the woman who defeated the serpent, Satan. Jesus is the offspring of Abraham who has brought God's blessing to every country and people. Jesus is the Lion of Judah who sits ready to rule all people. Jesus is the Star from Jacob who shined light into the darkness of this sinful world by defeating the darkness as the victorious King. Jesus is the Great Prophet who has told us God's words so that we can know the truth. Jesus is the Son of David who reigns as King forever. Jesus is the one who came as a child so that He could save us and help us because He became one of us. Jesus is the Branch who came from David's family to bring peace and justice. Jesus is the good Shepherd who came to take care of, and save, God's sheep.

All God's promises are true. And all God's promises are true because Jesus came. This is the reason we celebrate this day. If Jesus had not come, there would be no reason to celebrate. If God had not given us the gift of His Son, there would be no reason to give gifts at all. But Jesus has come. And that means we can rejoice and have hope. Jesus came to save us from our sins, to defeat Satan and all his followers, and to make this world everything God wants it to be by reigning over it as King.

But as wonderful as all of that is, it also reminds us that the story is not over. Jesus came to earth and did everything necessary to make God's plan come true. But the Bible also says that He is coming again – to finish the work God gave Him to. The first time He came, He made sure it would happen. The second time He comes, He will make it happen. He will save God's people and destroy God's enemies. And on that day, there will never again be a reason to be sad or to cry, and there will not be any pain anymore for God's people. There will only be joy. Jesus is going to make it happen (1 Thes. 4:13-18; Rev. 21:1-8).

So as we celebrate today, let's thank God for His wonderful plan. Let's thank God for sending His Son. Let's sing some songs to celebrate that Jesus came. But let's also remember that Jesus is coming again. Let's make sure that we are trusting the King and following the King so that we don't have to worry about being enemies of the King. As you celebrate, worship the King today. Everyone who runs to Him for refuge is blessed (Ps. 2:12). Amen.