

The Surprises of Christmas

An Advent Devotional



December 1, 2025 – January 1, 2026

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 1
Monday, December 1, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Genesis 3:15 – “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Today's Reading:

Genesis 3:1–19 (ESV)

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. ⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” ¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” ¹⁶ To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” ¹⁷ And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Today's questions

1. Whose heel is going to be bruised?
2. Whose head is going to be bruised?

Today's Quote:

“Yet the greater curse upon the serpent is upon that old serpent, the devil. To Satan the Lord God promises, I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Here is the initial messianic prophecy of the Bible. “The traditional Christian interpretation ... is that it is the first direct expression of the gospel. It recognizes the essential conflict between Satan and the Lord and indicates that this conflict also will involve the people of God and the followers of Satan (cf. Jn 8:44; Acts 13:10; 1 Jn 3:10). The seed of the woman is a clear reference to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus (cf. Gal 3:16, 19; Rev 12:1–5), who came ‘to destroy the works of the devil’ (Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8). The prote - evangelium prophesied that Christ would deliver a death blow to Satan but in so doing would suffer death himself” – KJV Bible Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 1
Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Genesis 12:1-3 - Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Genesis 49:1-27

¹ Then Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come. ² "Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father. ³ "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. ⁴ Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch! ⁵ "Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. ⁶ Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen. ⁷ Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. ⁸ "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. ⁹ Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? ¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. ¹¹ Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. ¹² His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk. ¹³ "Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall be at Sidon. ¹⁴ "Issachar is a strong donkey, crouching between the sheepfolds. ¹⁵ He saw that a resting place was good, and that the land was pleasant, so he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant at forced labor. ¹⁶ "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. ¹⁷ Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that his rider falls backward. ¹⁸ I wait for your salvation, O LORD. ¹⁹ "Raiders shall raid Gad, but he shall raid at their heels. ²⁰ "Asher's food shall be rich, and he shall yield royal delicacies. ²¹ "Naphtali is a doe let loose that bears beautiful fawns. ²² "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall. ²³ The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely, ²⁴ yet his bow remained unmoved; his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), ²⁵ by the God of your father who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. ²⁶ The blessings of your father are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents, up to the bounties of the everlasting hills. May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers. ²⁷ "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey and at evening dividing the spoil."

Today's questions

1. Who is Judah described?
2. What promise is made to Judah by Jacob?

Today's Quote: "The scepter is an ornate staff or rod that is a symbol of royal authority. A lawgiver is the one who issues statutes. With these words, Jacob predicted that a royal line would rise from Judah's descendants. Shiloh is an obscure word, probably meaning the one "To Whom It Belongs." That is, until the One to whom all royal authority belongs comes, the tribe of Judah will always have a lawgiver in its ranks (Is. 9:1-6). Shiloh, like Seed (3:15), is a name for the coming Messiah" – The Nelson Study Bible

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 1
Wednesday, December 3, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Numbers 24:17 - *I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star will go out from Jacob, and a scepter will rise from Israel; it will crush the foreheads of Moab and destroy all the children of Seth.*

Today's Scripture Reading

Numbers 24:1–20 (ESV)

¹ When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face toward the wilderness. ² And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him, ³ and he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, ⁴ the oracle of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: ⁵ How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! ⁶ Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. ⁷ Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. ⁸ God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox; he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows. ⁹ He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." ¹⁰ And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together. And Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have blessed them these three times. ¹¹ Therefore now flee to your own place. I said, 'I will certainly honor you,' but the LORD has held you back from honor." ¹² And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, ¹³ 'If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the LORD, to do either good or bad of my own will. What the LORD speaks, that will I speak'? ¹⁴ And now, behold, I am going to my people. Come, I will let you know what this people will do to your people in the latter days." ¹⁵ And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, ¹⁶ the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: ¹⁷ I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. ¹⁸ Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly. ¹⁹ And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!" ²⁰ Then he looked on Amalek and took up his discourse and said, "Amalek was the first among the nations, but its end is utter destruction."

Today's Questions

1. Who is prophesying here?
2. What is he saying about the Messiah in ***Numbers 24:17***

Today's Quote: "The Star from Jacob and the Scepter from Israel point forward to Christ Himself, who is the fulfillment of these wonderful words. To say this is not of course to minimize or call in question earlier and partial fulfillments of the prophecy. Noth is right when he says, "It is highly probable that what is conceived of here is the future glory of King David and that it is the historical emergence of David that forms the background of this discourse," some three hundred years after this time. But as Wenham observes, "traditional Jewish and Christian interpreters have seen another and fuller realization of these prophecies in the Messiah." Thus early in history, therefore, the gospel was proclaimed in prophecy—not to Israel, but to the Gentile nations. One can only marvel that such clear vision should have come so anciently, and through such a man!" - The Preacher's Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 1
Thursday, December 4, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Isaiah 7:14- Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Isaiah 7:1-14 (ESV)

¹ In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. ² When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. ³ And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. ⁴ And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. ⁵ Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, ⁶ "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," ⁷ thus says the Lord GOD: " 'It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass. ⁸ For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people. ⁹ And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.' " ¹⁰ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹ "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." ¹³ And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Today's Questions:

1. Who is giving the sign?
2. What exactly is the sign?

Today's Quote: "Isaiah 7:14 has become one of the most controversial verses in Scripture because of the prophecy concerning the virgin birth. Unbelievers have quite naturally discounted it and have sought desperately, but in vain, for a loophole to reject the virgin birth. The battle has been waged about the meaning of the Hebrew word "almah", which is translated "virgin." The fact that the angel quotes this prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 to Joseph as an explanation for Mary's being with child before her marriage to him is satisfactory evidence that the prophecy referred to an unmarried woman who had a son without physical contact with any man. The word used by Matthew (see Matt. 1:23) is the Greek word parthenos, which definitely means "virgin." The same Greek word was used for the Parthenon, the Greek temple to the goddess Athena, which the Greeks characterized as being a virgin." - J. Vernon McGee

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 1
Friday, December 5, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Isaiah 9:6-7 - *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Isaiah 9:1-7 (ESV)

¹ But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. ³ You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. ⁴ For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Today's Questions:

1. What is the Messiah called?
2. What is the Messiah's reign said to be like?

Today's Quote: "The Gift-Child in this passage is the same divine Child as Immanuel. Again, using the prophetic perfect, the prophet sees Him as though He were already born. Wonderful, Counselor (pele· yō·ēts) is actually one term in Hebrew. A wonder is indicative of a miracle. Counselor is often used in parallel with king (cf. Mic. 4:9). Thus miraculous counsel is given by this God-like King. The mighty God (El Gibōr) is the strongest of these titles. In Isaiah, El is always used of God and never refers to man. Gibōr means "Hero." Together they describe One who is indeed God Himself. Everlasting Father (abī·ad) literally means Father of Eternity. He alone is the source of eternal life. Prince of Peace (Sar-Shalōm) indicates that the mighty God will be a benevolent ruler bringing eternal peace on earth through the establishment of His kingdom. Thus the obscure figure of Immanuel is now brought to clear light: He is Himself God incarnate!" – Dr. John MacArthur

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 1
Saturday, December 6, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Micah 5:2 - *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you one will go out for me, to be ruler in Israel; and his origins are from of old, from ancient days.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Micah 5:1–15 (ESV)

¹ Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. ² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. ³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴ And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. ⁵ And he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men; ⁶ they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border. ⁷ Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. ⁸ And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver. ⁹ Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off. ¹⁰ And in that day, declares the LORD, I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots; ¹¹ and I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds; ¹² and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes; ¹³ and I will cut off your carved images and your pillars from among you, and you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands; ¹⁴ and I will root out your Asherah images from among you and destroy your cities. ¹⁵ And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey.

Today's Questions

1. How is Bethlehem described?
2. How is the Messiah's reign described?

Today's Quote: "The focus is on Israel's Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Two cities (1–2). Micah contrasts great Jerusalem, experiencing the Babylonian siege, and humble Bethlehem, where the Eternal One will step into time to save His people. The future of God's plan of salvation lay in lowly Bethlehem (Luke 2:1–20; see also Isa. 9:6). Two births (3–4). The birth of Messiah brought hope to Israel, but the nation would not receive Him. He had to give them up (Luke 13:34–35) until the day He returns to restore them (Rom. 9). Their salvation will be the birth of a nation (Isa. 66:8), and there will be peace to the ends of the earth. Two victories (5–15). Messiah will win a victory over His enemies and will make His people victorious (the lion) and fruitful (the dew). But He will also win a victory over His own people and purge them of their sins (vv. 10–15). The things they trusted will then be removed—armaments, fortresses, sorceries, and idols—and they will learn to trust the Lord. Perhaps God wants to remove some things from your life so you can enjoy His peace." - Dr. Warren Wiersbe

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 1
Sunday, December 7, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Haggai 2:7 - And I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the Lord of hosts.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Haggai 2:1-9 (NKJV)

¹ *In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying:* ² *"Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying:* ³ *'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?'* ⁴ *Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the Lord; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the Lord, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the Lord of hosts.* ⁵ *'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'* ⁶ *"For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land;'* ⁷ *and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the Lord of hosts.* ⁸ *'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts.* ⁹ *'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the Lord of hosts.'*

Today's Questions:

1. Who will the nations come to according to verse 7?
2. How is the fulfilled by the Magi?

Today's Quote: "When they realized that the work of their hands was far inferior to the temple that was built by Solomon, the repatriates became pessimistic about their efforts. Haggai assures them that "the glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former" (v. 9) because "the Desire of All Nations" shall come to it (v. 7). The latter phrase may mean that all which is desirable and valuable among the nations shall be brought into the temple (cf. Is. 60:5, 11). Some have estimated that the gold inlay alone in Solomon's temple was worth over \$20,000,000. There is no question that the Lord could bring in the precious metals and stones (v. 8; cf. Ps. 50:12), but Haggai's message means more than that. Jewish tradition and early Christian literature identify "the Desire of All Nations" as the Messiah. Although Zerubbabel's temple was probably leveled to the foundations during Herod's renovation, a continuity exists between the two so that they are both designated as the second temple. Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate, set foot on Herod's temple; and witnesses saw and experienced God's glory in Him (John 1:14-18). The promised peace was effected at Calvary (Col. 1:20), is experienced by the Christian (Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7), and is ultimately found only in the Person of the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6, 7)." - The Believers Bible Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 2
Monday, December 8th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Luke 1:13 - But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John."

Today's Scripture Reading:

Luke 1:5–25 (ESV)

⁵ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. ⁸ Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷ and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." ¹⁸ And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." ¹⁹ And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰ And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." ²¹ And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. ²² And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. ²³ And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. ²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, ²⁵ "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

Today's Questions:

1. How did Zechariah respond to the angel?
2. Why do you think he didn't believe the angel's words?

Today's Quote: "**GABRIEL [GAY brih el]**" (*God is great*) — an ARCHANGEL who acts as the messenger of God; he appeared to Daniel (Dan. 8:16), Zacharias (Luke 1:19), and the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26–38). All appearances of Gabriel recorded in the Bible are connected with the promise about the coming of the Messiah. But one passage may link Gabriel with Christ's return. In Christian tradition, Gabriel is sometimes identified as the archangel whose voice is heard at the Second Coming of Christ (1 Thess. 4:16). Although Gabriel is not mentioned by name in this passage, he is sometimes depicted as the trumpeter of the Last Judgment." – The New Illustrated Nelson's Bible Dictionary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 2
Tuesday, December 9th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Luke 1:26-27 - In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Luke 1:26–38 (ESV)

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Today's Questions:

1. How did Mary respond to the angels?
2. Did she believe the angel?

Today's Quote: In the dialogue that took place between Mary and the angel Gabriel, the angel told her first of all that she was "highly favored with God." Mary was troubled. Perhaps because of her humility, she may have been thinking, "Why me? I'm too insignificant to find favor with God." On the other hand, perhaps she had the innate wisdom to comprehend something at the very heart of the mystery of life and the mystery of God: that those highly favored by God do not have a life of unbroken happiness.

Remember that Mary was a Jew, and the Jews were the chosen people, a people who found favor with God. Jews are still the chosen people. For three thousand years those chosen people have suffered perhaps as no other people. The Auschwitzes and the Dachaus are only the latest in a whole line of indignities and obscenities endured by the chosen people. And I would like to believe that Mary understood at some level that there is a tremendous price to be paid by those who are highly favored by God. [The Preachers Bible Commentary](#)

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 2
Wednesday, December 10th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Matthew 1:20 -Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Matthew 1:18–25 (ESV)

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Today's Questions:

1. How did Joseph respond to the angel?
2. How do we know he believed the angel?

Today's Quote –“The Mosaic Law was very specific at this point. It said that a woman who was guilty of being unfaithful should be stoned to death—that was the extreme penalty. But this man Joseph was a remarkable man. We devote a great deal of attention to Mary, and rightly so. Protestants should not let themselves be deterred from giving Mary a great deal of credit. She was a remarkable person. Remember that she was the one whom God chose to be the mother of our Lord, and God makes no mistakes. He picked the right girl. While all of this is true, we need to remember that God also chose Joseph. God made no mistake in choosing him either. A hotheaded man would immediately have had her stoned to death or would have made her a public example by exposing her. But Joseph was not that kind of man. He was a gentle person. He was in *love* with her, and he did not want to hurt her in any way, although he felt that she had been unfaithful to him. In order to prevent a very tragic situation, the angel appeared to Joseph to make clear to him what was taking place.” - J. Vernon McGee

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 2
Thursday, December 11th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Luke 2:10-12 - And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

Today's Scripture Reading

Luke 2:1–12 (ESV)

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

Today's Questions:

1. How did the Shepherds respond to the angels?
2. How do we know that they believed the angels?

Today's Quote: "An angel of the Lord came to the shepherds, and a bright, glorious light shone all around them. As they recoiled in terror, the angel comforted them and broke the news. It was good tidings of great joy for all the people. That very day, in nearby Bethlehem, a Baby had been born. This Baby was a Savior, who is Christ the Lord! Here we have a theology in miniature. First, He is a Savior, which is expressed in His name, Jesus. Then He is Christ, the Anointed of God, the Messiah of Israel. Finally, He is the Lord, God manifest in the flesh." - William McDonald

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 2
Friday, December 12th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Luke 2:13-14 - And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Luke 2:13–21 (ESV)

¹³ *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"* ¹⁵ *When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."* ¹⁶ *And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.* ¹⁷ *And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.* ¹⁸ *And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.* ¹⁹ *But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.* ²⁰ *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.* ²¹ *And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

Today's Questions:

1. What were the words of angelic chorus?
2. What did the shepherds do with the information they were given?

Today's Quote: "The angels praised God at Creation (Job 38:7), and now they praised Him at the beginning of the new creation. The whole purpose of the plan of salvation is "glory to God" (see Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). God's glory had dwelt in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34) and in the temple (2 Chron. 7:1-3), but had departed because of the nation's sin (1 Sam. 4:21; Ezek. 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:22-23). Now God's glory was returning to earth in the person of His Son (John 1:14). That lowly manger was a holy of holies because Jesus was there!" – Warren Wiersbe

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 2
Saturday, December 13th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Hebrews 1:6* – “And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God's angels worship him.”

Today's Scripture Reading:

Hebrews 1:5–14 (ESV)

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? ⁶ And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God's angels worship him.” ⁷ Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.” ⁸ But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” ¹⁰ And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹ they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, ¹² like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.” ¹³ And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? ¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Today's Questions:

1. What does God command the angels to do with reference to the Son?
2. What does God call the Son in verse 8?

Today's Quote: “Quoted from the LXX translation (The Greek Translation of the Old Testament) of Deut. 32:43 (cf. Ps. 97:7). Since the angels are commanded to worship the Messiah, the Messiah must be superior to them. Five of the 7 OT passages quoted in this first chapter of Hebrews are in contexts related to the Davidic Covenant, which emphasizes the concepts of sonship, kingship, and kingdom. Although Deut. 32:43 is not in a Davidic Covenant context, it has an affinity to the teaching of Ps. 89:6 (a psalm of the Davidic Covenant), which declares that the heavenly beings themselves must recognize the lordship of God.” – Dr. John MacArthur

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 2
Sunday, December 14th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Matthew 2:13 - Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Matthew 2:13–23 (ESV)

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more." ¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³ And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Today's Questions:

1. How did God protect the Messiah?
2. What did Herod do because of his paranoia?

Today's Quote: "After the visit of the Magi, Joseph was warned by an angel of the Lord to take Mary and Jesus and flee to Egypt. This warning was given in a dream (the second of Joseph's four dreams: 1:20; 2:13, 19, 22). The reason was Herod would be searching for the Child to kill Him. Under cover of darkness, Joseph obeyed, and his family left Bethlehem (see map) and journeyed into Egypt. Why Egypt? The Messiah was sent to and returned from Egypt so that the prophet's words, Out of Egypt I called My Son, might be fulfilled. This is a reference to Hosea 11:1, which does not seem to be a prophecy in the sense of a prediction. Hosea was writing of God's calling Israel out of Egypt into the Exodus. Matthew, however, gave new understanding to these words. Matthew viewed this experience as Messiah being identified with the nation." – The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 3
Monday, December 15, 2025

Today's Scripture Reading:

Luke 1:26–33 (ESV)

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Today's Question:

1. How is Mary greeted?
2. What will Jesus be called?

Today's Quote – "Mary was humbled and puzzled that the angel should say she was "highly favored" (a correct translation of the word sometimes rendered "full of grace"). The word indicates that Mary received grace, not that she was the source of grace to others." – Reformation Study Bible

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 3
Tuesday, December 16th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Luke 1:38 - And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Luke 1:34–45 (ESV)

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. ³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

Today's Questions

1. What happened when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary?
2. What was Elizabeth's proclamation over Mary?

Today's Quote: "Mary was in an extremely embarrassing and difficult position. Betrothed to Joseph, she faced the stigma of unwed motherhood. Joseph would obviously have known that the child was not his. She knew she would be accused of adultery—an offense punishable by stoning (Deut. 22:13–21; cf. John 8:3–5). Yet she willingly and graciously submitted to the will of God." – Dr. John MacArthur

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 3
Wednesday, December 17th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Luke 1:46–47 - And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,”⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...

Today's Scripture Reading:

Luke 1:39–55 (ESV)

³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” ⁴⁶ And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

Today's Questions

1. How does Mary respond to Elizabeth's pronouncement?
2. How does Mary refer to God here in these verses?

Today's Quote: “Hers was a joy that compelled her to lift her voice in a hymn of praise. The fullness of the Spirit should lead to joyful praise in our lives (Eph. 5:18-20), and so should the fullness of the Word (Col. 3:16-17). Mary's song contains quotations from and references to the Old Testament Scriptures, especially the Psalms and the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Mary hid God's Word in her heart and turned it into a song. This song is called “The Magnificat” because the Latin version of Luke 1:46 is *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*. Her great desire was to magnify the Lord, not herself. She used the phrase “He hath” eight times as she recounted what God had done for three recipients of His blessing. *What God did for Mary* (vv. 46-49). To begin with, God had saved her (Luke 1:47), which indicates that Mary was a sinner like all of us and needed to trust the Lord for her eternal salvation. Not only had He saved her, but He had also chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:48). He had “regarded” her, which means He was mindful of her and looked with favor on her. No doubt there were others who could have been chosen, but God chose her! The Lord had indeed showered His grace on her (see 1 Cor. 1:26-28).

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 3
Thursday, December 18th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Matthew 1:18–19 - Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Matthew 1:18–25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Today's Question

1. What prophecy was fulfilled by Mary?
2. Who actually named Jesus?

Today's Quote: "The fact that Jesus was born "of Mary" only, as indicated in the genealogical record (v. 16), demanded further explanation. Matthew's explanation can best be understood in the light of Hebrew marriage customs. Marriages were arranged for individuals by parents, and contracts were negotiated. After this was accomplished, the individuals were considered married and were called husband and wife. They did not, however, begin to live together. Instead, the woman continued to live with her parents and the man with his for one year. The waiting period was to demonstrate the faithfulness of the pledge of purity given concerning the bride. If she was found to be with child in this period, she obviously was not pure, but had been involved in an unfaithful sexual relationship. Therefore the marriage could be annulled. If, however, the one-year waiting period demonstrated the purity of the bride, the husband would then go to the house of the bride's parents and in a grand processional march lead his bride back to his home. There they would begin to live together as husband and wife and consummate their marriage physically. Matthew's story should be read with this background in mind." – The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 3
Friday, December 19th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Luke 2:4–5 - And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Today's Scripture Reading

Luke 2:1–7 (ESV)

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Today's Questions

1. Why did Joseph have to go to Judea?
2. How is Bethlehem described?

Today's Quote: Luke 2:1–7 - The decree of Augustus brought **Joseph** and **Mary** to **Bethlehem** at exactly the right time in order that the Messiah might be born there in fulfillment of prophecy (Mic. 5:2). Bethlehem was crowded when they arrived **from Galilee**. The only place they could find to stay was the stable of an **inn**. That was an omen, a preview of how men would receive their Savior. It was while the couple from **Nazareth** was there that Mary **brought forth her firstborn Son**. Wrapping **Him in swaddling cloths**, she lovingly **laid Him in a manger**. Thus did God visit our planet in the Person of a helpless Baby, and in the poverty of an ill-smelling stable. The wonder of it! Darby expressed it nicely: He began in a manger, and ended on the cross, and along the way had not where to lay His head. – Bible Believers Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 3
Saturday, December 20th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Luke 2:18–19 - And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

Today's Scripture Reading:

Luke 2:15–21 (ESV)

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. ²¹ And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Today's Questions

1. At what speed to the shepherds head to Bethlehem
2. What did Mary do with all she experienced?

Today's Quote: "After seeing the Baby, the shepherds were the first messengers to proclaim the arrival of the Messiah: **they spread the word**. Those **who heard ... were amazed** (*ethaumasan*). The theme of amazement at the proclamation of the Messiah runs throughout the Book of Luke. (The Gr. verb *thaumazō*, "to be amazed, to wonder, to be astonished," occurs in Luke 1:21, 63; 2:18, 33; 4:22; 8:25; 9:43; 11:14, 38; 20:26; 24:12, 41. Two other words for amazement were also used by Luke; see 2:48.) **Mary** reflected on this momentous event in history. Of all the women of Israel *she* was the mother of the Messiah! **The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God**, much as the angels had done" – The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 3
Sunday, December 21st, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Matthew 2:14–15 - And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Today's Scripture Reading:

Matthew 2:13–23 (ESV)

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more." ¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³ And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Today's Question

1. What was the command to Joseph?
2. What political leader was the problem?

Today's Quote: "A special divine revelation in the form of a warning was given both to the wise men and to Joseph in the form of a dream. Thus instructed, the wise men did not return to Herod, and Joseph and Mary fled with the baby into Egypt. It should be remembered that there was a large Jewish population in Egypt at that time, especially in and around the city of Alexandria. The holy family would have been inconspicuous during their stay and would have been welcomed by members of their own race. **The death of Herod** occurred in 4 B.C. It should be remembered that our present calendar is off in its calculation by about six years (this would place the birth of Christ at ca. 6–5 B.C.). Herod's death is recorded in detail by Josephus (*Antiq.* xvii.6.5). The flight to Egypt by Jesus' family is related by Matthew to the statement in Hosea 11:1 which refers historically to the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt. Matthew records that this was done that it **might be fulfilled**. Since the Old Testament statement is not a direct reference to Christ, it is apparent that the writer saw this prophecy as a type of Christ." – Believers Bible Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 4
Monday, December 22, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *John 1:1-2 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

John 1:1–18 (ESV)

¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. ⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.' ") ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

Today's Questions:

1. Who is the Word identified as?
2. The law came through Moses, what came through Jesus Christ?

Today's Quote: "In the beginning was the Word. He did not have a beginning Himself, but existed from all eternity. As far as the human mind can go back, the Lord Jesus was there. He never was created. He had no beginning. (A genealogy would be out of place in this Gospel of the Son of God.) The Word was with God. He had a separate and distinct personality. He was not just an idea, a thought, or some vague kind of example, but a real Person who lived with God. The Word was God. He not only dwelt with God, but He Himself was God.

The Bible teaches that there is one God and that there are three Persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three of these Persons are God. In this verse, two of the Persons of the Godhead are mentioned—God the Father and God the Son. It is the first of many clear statements in this Gospel that *Jesus Christ is God*. It is not enough to say that He is "a god," that He is godlike, or that He is divine. The Bible teaches that He *is* God." – The Believers Bible Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 4
Tuesday, December 23, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Philippians 2:6–7 - Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Philippians 2:1–11 (ESV)

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Today's Questions

1. What name is above every name?
2. What will every knee do at his name?

Today's Quote: "Paul affirms that Jesus eternally has been God. The usual Gr. word for "being" is not used here. Instead, Paul chose another term that stresses the essence of a person's nature—his continuous state or condition. Paul also could have chosen one of two Gr. words for "form," but he chose the one that specifically denotes the essential, unchanging character of something—what it is in and of itself. The fundamental doctrine of Christ's deity has always encompassed these crucial characteristics (cf. John 1:1, 3, 4, 14; 8:58; Col. 1:15–17; Heb. 1:3). **not ... robbery.** The Gr. word is translated "robbery" here because it originally meant "a thing seized by robbery." It eventually came to mean anything clutched, embraced, or prized, and thus is sometimes translated "grasped" or "held onto." Though Christ had all the rights, privileges, and honors of deity—which He was worthy of and could never be disqualified from—His attitude was not to cling to those things or His position but to be willing to give them up for a season. **Equal with God.** The Gr. word for "equal" defines things that are exactly the same in size, quantity, quality, character, and number. In every sense, Jesus is equal to God and constantly claimed to be so during His earthly ministry (cf. John 5:18; 10:33, 38; 14:9; 20:28; Heb. 1:1–3)." – Dr. John MacArthur

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 4
Wednesday, December 24, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Hebrews 1:1-2 – Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Hebrews 1:1–14 (ESV)

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? ⁶ And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” ⁷ Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.” ⁸ But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” ¹⁰ And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹ they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, ¹² like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.” ¹³ And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? ¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Today's Questions:

1. How did God speak in times past?
2. How did He speak in these last days?

Today's Quote: “But the One who is both Creator and Heir is also a perfect reflection of the God who has spoken in Him. Moreover **His Word** is so **powerful** that all He has made is sustained by that Word. And it is this Person who has **provided purification for sins** and taken His seat **at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven**). In doing so it is obvious He has attained an eminence far beyond anything **the angels** can claim.” – Dr. John MacArthur

The Surprise of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 4
Thursday, December 25, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Luke 2:12 - And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger*

Today's Scripture Reading

Luke 2:1–12 (ESV)

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

Today's Quote:

1. Why was Jesus born in a manger?
2. What was Jesus' attire in the manger?

Today's Quote: "Again Dr. Luke is emphasizing His humanity. He came into this world as a human being. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

God knows about mankind. He knows you, and He knows me. He understands us because He came into this world a human being. This also means that we can know something about God, because He took upon Himself our humanity." – Dr. J. Vernon McGee

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 4
Friday, December 26, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Luke 2:15 – “When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

Today's Scripture Reading:

Luke 2:13–21 (ESV)

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” ¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. ²¹ And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Today's Questions:

1. What was the response of all of those who heard the shepherds?
2. When did Jesus get his name?

Today's Quote: The phrase “even unto Bethlehem” suggests that these men were located some distance away, but they were willing to make the trip in order to see the newborn Messiah. Certainly they arranged for others to care for their flocks while they hastened to Bethlehem. Halford Luccock called this “the first Christmas rush,” but it was certainly different from the Christmas rushes we see today! The verb *found* in Luke 2:16 means “found after a search.” The shepherds knew what to look for: a newborn Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And they found Him! They worshiped Him and marveled at God's grace and goodness and the miracle He had wrought for them.

These shepherds are good examples for us to imitate today. They received by faith the message God sent them and then responded with immediate obedience. After finding the Baby, they reported the good news to others, “glorifying and praising God.” *They took the place of the angels!* (Luke 2:13-14) Then they humbly returned to their duties, new men going back to the same old job.

For some reason, shepherds were not permitted to testify in court, but God used some humble shepherds to be the first human witnesses that prophecy had been fulfilled and the Messiah had been born. The angels have never experienced the grace of God, so they can't bear witness as we can. Telling others about the Savior is a solemn obligation as well as a great privilege, and we who are believers must be faithful. – Warren Wiersbe

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 4
Saturday, December 27, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *1 Corinthians 1:27-28 - But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

1 Corinthians 1:18–31 (ESV)

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Today's Questions:

1. What did God choose to confound the strong?
2. What did Christ Jesus become to us?

Today's Quote: "God hath chosen ... the foolish, ... the weak, ... and things which are not. The selection of God is designed to bring to silence the wisdom of man. He selects the foolish to shame the wise; the weak to shame the strong; and the "nobodys" to shame the "somebodys." – KJV Bible Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional – Week 4
Sunday, December 27th, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: Revelation 12:1-2 - And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

Today's Scripture Reading:

Revelation 12:1–11 (ESV)

¹ And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. ⁵ She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days. ⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Today's Questions:

1. Who did the woman give birth to?
2. What happened to the great dragon and his angels?

Today's Quote: “The woman clothed with the sun cannot be the church. Christ gave birth to the church, not the church to Christ. The 12 stars upon her head are a certain indication that she should be identified as Israel. The Child which she delivers is the Christ (v. 5). The dragon who drew a third of the stars, probably a reference to the angelic hosts, from heaven is Satan (v. 4). Thus, a panorama of messianic history from the birth and the ascension of Jesus to the three and one-half years of persecution of the nation of Israel is revealed.” – The Believers Study Bible

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 5
Monday, December 29, 2025

Today's Verse Focus – Matthew 2:2 - Saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

Today's Scripture Reading:

Matthew 2:1–8 (ESV)

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶ “ ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’ ” ⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”

Today's Questions

1. What was the question from the Magi to King Herod?
2. What was Herod's question to the chief priests and scribes?

Today's Quote – **“Bethlehem.** A small village on the southern outskirts of Jerusalem. Hebrew scholars in Jesus' day clearly expected Bethlehem to be the birthplace of the Messiah (cf. Mic. 5:2; John 7:42). **in the days of Herod the king.** This refers to Herod the Great, the first of several important rulers from the Herodian dynasty who are named in Scripture. This Herod, founder of the famous line, ruled from 37–4 B.C. He is thought to have been Idumean, a descendant of the Edomites, offspring of Esau. Herod was ruthless and cunning. He loved opulence and grand building projects, and many of the most magnificent ruins that can be seen in modern Israel date back to the days of Herod the Great. His most famous project was the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem (see note on 24:1). That project alone took several decades and was not completed until long after Herod's death (cf. John 2:20). See note on v. 22. **wise men from the East.** The number of wise men is not given. The traditional notion that there were 3 stems from the number of gifts they brought. These were not kings, but Magi, magicians or astrologers—possibly Zoroastrian wise men from Persia whose knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures could be traced back to the time of Daniel (cf. Dan. 5:11).” – Dr. John MacArthur

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 5
Tuesday, December 30, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Matthew 2:11 - And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Matthew 2:9–11 (ESV)

⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Today's Questions:

1. What did the Magi do when they came upon the Christ Child?
2. What were the treasures they offered him?

Today's Quote: **"When they entered the house, the magi saw the young Child with Mary His mother. They fell down and worshiped Him, offering costly gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.** Notice that they saw Jesus with His mother. Ordinarily mention would be made of a mother first, then her child, but this Child is unique and must be given first place (see also vv. 13, 14, 20, 21). The wise men worshiped Jesus, *not* Mary or Joseph. (Joseph is not even mentioned in this account; he will soon disappear entirely from the Gospel record.) It is Jesus who deserves our praise and worship, not Mary or Joseph....The treasures they brought spoke volumes. **Gold** is a symbol of deity and glory; it speaks of the shining perfection of His divine Person. **Frankincense** is an ointment or perfume; it suggests the fragrance of the life of sinless perfection. **Myrrh** is a bitter herb; it presages the sufferings He would endure in bearing the sins of the world. The bringing of gifts by Gentiles is reminiscent of the language of Isaiah 60:6. Isaiah predicted that Gentiles would come to the Messiah with gifts, but mentioned only gold and frankincense: "... they shall bring gold and incense. And they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord." Why was myrrh omitted? Because Isaiah was speaking of Christ's second advent—His coming in power and great glory. There will be no myrrh then because He will not suffer then. But in Matthew the myrrh is included because His first coming is in view. In Matthew we have the sufferings of Christ; in this passage of Isaiah, the glories that shall follow." – William McDonald

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 5
Wednesday, December 31, 2025

Today's Focus Verse: *Matthew 2:12 - And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.*

Today's Scripture Reading:

Matthew 2:13–18 (ESV)

¹² *And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.* ¹³ *Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."* ¹⁴ *And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt* ¹⁵ *and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."* ¹⁶ *Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.* ¹⁷ *Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:* ¹⁸ *"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."*

Today's Questions:

1. What prophesy was fulfilled by Jesus going to Egypt?
2. What prophesy was fulfilled by Herod's horrific action?

Today's Quote: "This is a reference to Hosea 11:1, which does not seem to be a prophecy in the sense of a prediction. Hosea was writing of God's calling Israel out of Egypt into the Exodus. Matthew, however, gave new understanding to these words. Matthew viewed this experience as Messiah being identified with the nation. There were similarities between the nation and the Son. Israel was God's chosen "son" by adoption (Ex. 4:22), and Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son. In both cases the descent into Egypt was to escape danger, and the return was important to the nation's providential history. While Hosea's statement was a historical reference to Israel's deliverance, Matthew related it more fully to the call of the Son, the Messiah, from Egypt. In that sense, as Matthew "heightened" Hosea's words to a more significant event—the Messiah's return from Egypt—they were "fulfilled." – The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The Surprises of Christmas Advent Devotional - Week 5
Thursday, January 1, 2026

Today's Focus Verse: *Matthew 2:23 - And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.*

Today's Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:19–23 (ESV)

¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³ And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Today's Questions:

1. When Joseph his family returned to Israel, was Joseph afraid?
2. Ultimately why according to our verse did he chose to settle?

Today's Quote: "He shall be called a Nazarene." The Hebrew word for Nazareth was *Netzer*, meaning a branch or shoot. The city of Nazareth was so called because of its insignificance. The prophecies of Isaiah 11:1; Isaiah 53:2–3; and Psalm 22:6 are involved in the term *Nazarene*. But the Lord Jesus was given that term not only because He was a root out of the stem of Jesse, but because He grew up in the city of Nazareth, and He was called a Nazarene, which fulfilled the prophecies. Now we have seen all four of the prophecies dealing with locations in the birth of Christ: born in Bethlehem, called out of Egypt, weeping in Rama, and called a Nazarene were fulfilled in a very normal way. He touched base in all of these places, and what seemed rather strange prophecies became very sane realities. – J. Vernon McGee