

# “Christmas: What Does The Bible Actually Say?”

## *Advent Bible Readings and Reflections*

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### Season of Advent 2017

Luke 1 & 2, Matthew 1& 2, John 1: 1-18

#### WEEK 1

December 3                      Luke 1: 1-4                                      First Sunday of Advent

- How did Luke go about writing his gospel?
- How does this make you feel about what you are about to read?

December 4                      Luke 1: 5-7

- What kind of people were Zechariah and Elizabeth?
- How do you think they were feeling by verse 7?

December 5                      Luke 1: 8-17

- We see God speaking in two ways here—through the angel (v.11) and through John’s ministry to come (v.17). How does God speak today?
- How is the ministry of John the Baptist summarized in v. 17?

December 6                      Luke 1: 18-25

- Zechariah’s silence (v.20) is understandably seen as a punishment. What do you think might have been the positive side of this condition for these months?
- What role does silence play in your life? Consider the Advent hymn, “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” (included in most hymnals or easily searchable on-line)

December 7                      Luke 1: 26-34

- How would you respond if you saw an angel? What was Mary’s response?
- How have the angel’s words been fulfilled and how will they yet be fulfilled in the future?

December 8                      Luke 1: 35-38

- The work of the Holy Spirit is emphasized throughout Luke’s gospel. See 1:15 and 1:35 thus far. How does the Holy Spirit work in your own life? How might He want to work in your life in this Advent season?
- How is Mary’s response in v.38 exemplary for us?

December 9                      Luke 1: 39-45

- Mary and Elizabeth were soul-mates or spiritual confidants. Do you have such a spiritual friendship in your Christian life?
- How can the words regarding Mary in v.45 be applied to your life today?

#### MEMORY VERSE FOR WEEK 1

*“For nothing will be impossible with God.”*

*Luke 1:37*

## WEEK 2

December 10                      Luke 1: 46-56    Second Sunday of Advent

- Most Bibles have these verses clearly set off in poetic form. “Mary’s Song” is the first of four songs in Luke’s birth narratives. (See also 1: 68-79, 2: 14 and 2: 29-32)
- How does music and poetry speak to the human heart? How have the songs and carols of this season spoken to your own heart?
- How might the phrase, “The Great Reversal” summarize Mary’s words here?

December 11                      Luke 1: 57-66

- What kind of words did Zechariah first speak after his long period of silence (v.64)?
- The general population saw “the Lord’s hand” at work in this situation (v.66). Where do you see the Lord’s hand at work in and around you?

December 12                      Luke 1: 67-80

- Two more times we have seen specific reference to the Holy Spirit at work (v.41 and here in v.67)
- What activities of God are highlighted in vv.68-75?
- How is John’s ministry described in vv.76-79 and how might we take on that role for others today?

December 13                      Luke 2: 1-7

- Luke is a historian and a journalist, having done his homework fixing Christ’s birth clearly in the unfolding of history (v.1-2).
- Setting aside much of Christmas lore, what do we know, what might we reasonably assume and what DON’T we know about Christ’s birth based on Luke’s words here?

December 14                      Luke 2: 8-12

- Why shepherds? Of all people, why might God have sent this good news of Christ’s birth to shepherds first of all? Why not kings and monarchs?
- What is significant about the titles given Jesus in these verses—Savior and Christ/Messiah (v.11)?

December 15                      Luke 2: 13-20

- After seeing the Christ child, what did the shepherds do? What does this say to us today?
- Where do you think Luke got all the details of this story to write it up? (v.19)

December 16                      Luke 2: 21-27

- What do verses 22-24 tell us about Mary and Joseph?
- What kind of man was Simeon? (Note--Again, three times in three verses specific mention is made of the Holy Spirit at work.)

## MEMORY VERSE FOR WEEK 2

*“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.’”*

*Luke 2:10*

## WEEK 3

December 17                      Luke 2: 28-35    Third Sunday of Advent

- This is the last of four songs in Luke's Christmas story. Simeon's is a brief but profound encounter with the Living Lord, though just a babe, as verses 29-32 powerfully indicate.
- What would you like your life to look like in order to be able to say with Simeon at the end, "Now, Lord, may you dismiss your servant in peace"?

December 18                      Luke 2: 36-40

- Luke gives us incredible detail based on eye-witness accounts (1:2, 2:19, 51b), including the names of two giants of faith—Simeon & Anna—who would have otherwise disappeared in oblivion. What kind of woman was Anna (v.37, 38)?
- Who is one person you know who reminds you of Anna?

December 19                      Luke 2: 41-50

- What in these verses indicates that Jesus and his parents were like any ordinary family? What indicates that Jesus was extra-ordinary?
- The incarnation means that Jesus was 100% human and 100% divine.

December 20                      Luke 2: 51-52

- Verse 52 summarizes over half of Jesus' entire earthly life from age 12 to 30. What are the four aspects of life spoken of in v.52? Like Jesus, how would you like to continue to GROW in each of these areas?

December 21                      Matthew 1: 1-17

- "A long list of names...let's just skip these verses..." Not so fast! Matthew's genealogy begins with Abraham. Luke's (3:23-37) goes back to Adam.
- Who—and what—are the milestones, marking the three divisions of names (v.17).
- Why is each of these significant in Jesus' back-story?

December 22                      Matthew 1: 18-25

- What's in a name? Consider the importance of the names the angel gave to the child to be born in verses 21 and 23. What do these names and their significance mean to you today?
- How is Joseph an 'unsung hero' of the Christmas story?

December 23                      Matthew 2: 1-6

- Matthew often refers to prophecy being fulfilled (1:22, 2:15, 23) besides other direct quotes from the Old Testament (2:6 & 18). How would you describe the relationship between the OT and the New Testament and the need to understand the one to understand the other?

## MEMORY VERSE FOR WEEK 3

*"And they will call him Immanuel!" -which means, 'God with us.'"*  
*Matthew 1: 23b*

*Mark's Gospel says nothing of Jesus' human entrance into this world. John, in his marvelous Prologue to his Gospel (1:1-18) describes with deep philosophical eloquence to both the Greek and Jewish mind, both the creation of the world by "the Word" (Christ) and his physical entrance into the world (v.14a)*

## WEEK 4

December 24                      John 1: 1-12                      Fourth Sunday of Advent / Christmas Eve

- LIGHT is an important theme in the Christmas season. What are your favorite Christmas lights? How many times is the word 'light' used in verses 4-9?
- How is "the light" an apt description of Christ and his role in the world and in your life?

December 25                      John 1: 13-18                      Christmas Day  
Amidst the many profound theological truths for Christ's coming into the world in verses 16 to 18, which one impresses you most?

- John's "Bethlehem manger" comes in verse 14, this week's memory verse. It's longer than the others but well worth memorizing in its entirety. By all means memorize the first short sentence of it.

December 26                      Matthew 2: 7-12

- Before mention of the Gifts, what two words in verse 11 indicate that the magi are misplaced in most traditional Christmas scenes?
- Also, the only reason the magi were thought to be three is due to the number of gifts. What might be the meaning of the actual gifts they brought?

December 27                      Matthew 2: 13-18

- From these verses, how might Jesus relate to and understand the oppressed, immigrant, refugee and internally displaced people of the world? Terrorism and killing of innocent children, sick and sad as it is, is part of the fallen world we live in and part of Jesus' own story. How does Jesus enter our own stories today in this regard? Google the song "Spirit of the Age" by Michael Card to listen to, or read the lyrics to, a contemporary musical rendering of this passage.

December 28                      Matthew 2: 19-23

- How many places has Jesus lived in already in his short earthly life? What took him to each place? If you have been blessed to grow up with stable, nurturing surroundings, then thank the Lord! If you have 'bounced around' for whatever reason, find comfort in knowing Jesus truly understands

December 29                      Galatians 4:4-5

- *"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son..."* God had just the right timing in sending Jesus into the world 2,000 years ago. There was a common Greek language. There was relative peace in the Roman world. There were good means of travel across the empire, so the Good News of Jesus could spread quickly far and wide. What are you looking forward to in the New Year? How has God gone ahead of you to prepare the way?

December 30                      Titus 2:11-14

- The Advent season leading up to Christmas is said to have three dimensions of Christ's coming—1) His coming to us in the past as a baby born in Bethlehem's manger, 2) His coming to us to meet us in the here and now and 3) His future coming in glory. How are these three dimensions expressed in these verses in Titus—which otherwise, are not normally thought of to be Advent / Christmas verses?
- *"He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds." (v.14)* May Christ's coming at Christmas make this difference in our lives in the New Year!

## MEMORY VERSE FOR WEEK 4

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*John 1: 14*