

Immanuel



The Story of God with Us

from

Genesis to Revelation

By: Kayla Clyde

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Written By: Kayla Clyde

www.notatheolgian.com

notatheolgianblog@gmail.com

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The Story of God with Us from Genesis to Revelation

If you could summarize the whole Bible in a word, what would you say?

Jesus. Hope. Shalom. Love. Grace. Redemption. Sacrifice. Life.

All true answers and aspects of the story told in Scripture, but I think there is one word that captures the whole picture. One word to describe the main theme of the story:

Immanuel

God with Us

The story of how we were with God in the garden. How we lost this gift of God's presence to sin and rebellion. How God, in His mercy, made a way for us to be with Him again.

This is not a story of God planning to dwell with His people in Eden and God's plan failing. God was not surprised when Adam and Eve ate the fruit, just as He was not surprised when people could not follow the Law of Moses. Jesus taking on flesh in his birth and dying on the cross was not Plan B. This sovereign plan was written before the beginning of time.

“...the Lamb who was slaughtered before the world was made” (Revelation 13:8)

The way the story unfolds was always the plan. The cross was always the plan. A great crescendo in the middle of a song written in eternity past. A melody that begins in a garden and ends in a city where God dwells with His creation forever.

Immanuel

God with Us

This Christmas season, we look back, all the way to the Garden, in order to look forward to the City.

We will think upon God walking with man in the garden, in the first Century and in the New Jerusalem.

We will reflect on the time of waiting for Christ's first coming as we wait now for His second.

We will consider how Jesus both was God with us and the way for us to be with God again.

Let us look at the story of the Bible anew and see how it is the story of Immanuel. God with us.

Music

There is a reason why the Psalms were such pillars of the Jewish life. Music helps our hearts to internalize the truth we sing. In light of this, I would like to recommend a few Advent albums that have a strong scriptural backbone. These are the albums I listened to while writing (before Thanksgiving too, which is equivalent to blasphemy in my house!) and that I recommend to you now as you read.

- Prepare Him Room – Sovereign Grace Music
- Heaven Has Come – Sovereign Grace Music
- Behold, The Lamb of God– Andrew Peterson
- A Seed, A Sunrise – Caroline Cob
- Light Has Come – Future of Forestry

Study Structure

This study is created to be a guide through snapshots of the story of Israel. It is by no means exhaustive but meant give an outline for many of the key events in the storyline of the Bible and to show how it is all a part of the story of God dwelling with His people.

Each day is setup with an invitation to Pray, Read, Reflect and Pray again. There is space below each day's reading and questions to write notes for your reflection and to write out a prayer if you would like. There will some questions that might not have a quick easy answer. Some of these might be answered in the teaching, but not all. And that is okay. Think about these questions. Sit with them. Research them. Talk about them with others. It is okay not to know, but it is important to want to find the answer. To seek after the truth of God.

What I would really like you to get as you read, reflect, and pray is what it felt like as the Israelites waited for the Promised One. Imagine how the people in these true stories would have experienced. Lean into it. The tranquility, the loss, the fear, the reverence, the power, the devastation, the longing, the joy, the silence, the hope, the anguish, the celebration, the righteousness, the anticipation, the triumph.

What it means and how it feels to have God truly with us.

Now...

Let's start at the Beginning.

Creation

November 29th: The Beginning

Genesis 1:1-31

1. Who was there in the beginning? (Genesis 1:1-2)

2. How is each part of creation described in verses 1-25?

God saw that it was _____

3. How is creation described after God made man and woman? (Genesis 1:31)

God saw that it was _____

4. What is different about the man and woman than from the rest of creation? (verse 26-28)

Reflection and Prayer:

November 30th: Life in Eden

Genesis 2

5. Was the Garden of Eden complete? (Genesis 1:28)

a. Was it full of completed perfection or potential?

6. What do humans need to survive and thrive?

b. Did Adam and Eve lack anything they needed?

7. Did they work? (Genesis 1:28-29, 2:8-9, 2:19-20)

8. How did they interact with God?

9. How did they interact with each other?

Reflection and Prayer:

December 1st: The Fall

1. Where did the idea that man could be like God come from?

2. The serpent's lies ("Did God really say...?" and "You can be like God") are a consistent theme throughout history. Where else have you seen these kinds of statements in the world?

3. Did Eve correctly remember what God had said? (2:16-17 and 3:3)

4. Before Eve ate from the tree, did she have any knowledge or concept of evil?

 - a. Did she want knowledge of good and evil or did she want to be like God?

5. After Adam and Eve eat the fruit, what do they realize and what did they use to fix this?

6. What came into the world with sin? (Romans 5:12, Genesis 5:5)

Reflection and Prayer:

December 2nd: The Consequences and the Promise

Genesis 3:14-24

1. Who is the Offspring that will strike the head of the serpent and whose heel will be bruised? (Genesis 3:15)

a. What future event does this point to right in the beginning chapters of the Bible?

2. What was the work of filling the earth with life and subduing it like before the Fall?

a. What is this work like now? (Genesis 3:16-19)

3. What does Adam hold onto from what God has said? (Genesis 3:20)

4. How had God and man interacted before sin? (Genesis 3:8 and Genesis 3:24)

5. Before God exiles Adam and Eve from the garden, what does he make for them? (Verse 21)

a. What is required to make this kind of clothing?

b. What does this action reveal about God and his relationship with people?

6. What was the second tree that God was protecting from Adam and Eve? (Genesis 3:22-23)

a. Why? What would it have been like for mankind to live forever in a broken world?

7. How do you think it felt the first day after being driven out of the Garden?

8. What do you think Adam and Eve expected of their firstborn, Cain?

9. Were their expectations met or were they still waiting for a savior?

Reflection and Prayer:

December 3rd: Homesick and Hopeful

Have you ever lost your home? Have you experienced the rending of the fabric of peace, security, and love in your dwelling place? Perhaps by a divorce or a relocation or a death. It is a hard thing to lose home.

Adam and Eve knew this better than anyone. Created in Eden, in perfect harmony with God and with the rest of creation, they were given the task of filling the earth and subduing it. They were completely cared for and had all that they needed. They walked with God in the garden, ate the fruit from the trees He had planted, drank the water from the streams He had placed there and basked in the warmth of the sun without need for warm clothing or protection.

They needed nothing. But they wanted more.

They wanted control. They did not want to submit to the will of God in obedience but wanted to be like God. They reached out and took the fruit, and with it, ushered sin and death into a spotless creation. And all creation suffered for it. They could no longer dwell in the presence of a perfect and holy God and God could no longer dwell with them.

They were driven out.

Driven out.

Do you think they wanted to go? Try to imagine for a moment how that must have felt. Like stepping out of a warm pool and into an ice storm. The loss. The emptiness. Feeling cold for the first time. Learning how to kill the very animals they had been given to name and rule. Striving to grow plants that had once sprang up so easily. Fear. Shame. Rivalry with each other. Sickness. Death.

But in the middle of it...a promise.

The woman would bring forth an offspring and he would defeat the serpent even as his heel was wounded.

Adam clearly hears this promise and gives the woman the name Eve. She would bring forth this life. There was hope.

Can you picture how they must have felt when their first son was born: Cain? Eve says, "I have had a male child with the Lord's help" (Genesis 4:1). She very likely thought this was the one: the offspring of the promise.

But instead of crushing the serpent, he crushed his own younger brother. (Genesis 4:8)

I wonder how Eve must have felt.

Cain was not the one.

Mankind was still waiting to walk with God again. To dwell with God again. For God to be with us.

Reflection and Prayer:

The Tabernacle

&

The Temple

December 4th: The Law

Fast forward a bit. Past the faith of Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Joseph to the story of Moses after the Exodus from Egypt. We'll pick up the story of God with us in the wilderness with Israel.

Exodus 19:1-20:21

1. What did the people have to do to prepare for God to be near to them? (Exodus 19:10-15)

2. Even with these steps, were the people able to be with God? (Exodus 19:21)

3. Who went up on the mountain? (Exodus 19:24)

4. What did God give on the mountain?

5. How did the people of Israel react to God's presence? (Exodus 20:18-21)

6. Why were the people afraid?

7. Did they feel like they could dwell with God?

Reflection and Prayer:

December 5th: The Tabernacle

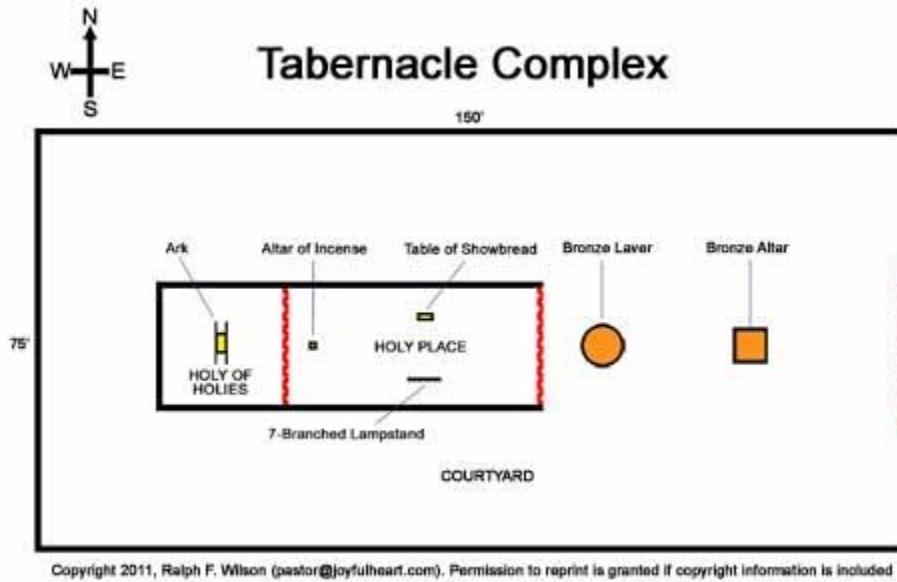
1. What was the Tabernacle? (Also called the Tent of Meeting)

2. Why did God tell the Israelites to build the Tabernacle? (Exodus 25:8 and Exodus 29:45)

3. Where was the Tabernacle in the Israelite camp? (Numbers 2:2)

4. What separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies? (Exodus 26:31-34)

5. What was in the Holy Place and what was in the Holy of Holies? (Exodus 26:34-35)



Reflection and Prayer:

December 6th: The Holy of Holies

1. What happened in the Holy of Holies? (Leviticus 16:2, Numbers 7:89)

2. Where was God in the Holy of Holies? (Exodus 25:22)

3. What would happen if you went into the Holy of Holies when you were not supposed to? (Leviticus 16:2)

4. What did the High Priest have to do before entering the Holy of Holies once a year on the day of Atonement? (Leviticus 16:11)

5. What did the High Priest do inside the Holy of Holies on this day? (Leviticus 16:12-16)

6. Even in this moment, is there something between the High Priest and the presence of God? (Leviticus 16:13)

7. How do you think the High Priest felt in those moments?

Reflection and Prayer:

December 7th: The Promised Land

Joshua 1:1-9

1. Who led the people of Israel up to edge of the Promised Land?

a. What is this leader most associated with?

2. Who led the people into the Promised Land?

a. What does this man's name mean? (Some Research Required)

b. What was Jesus' Hebrew name? (Some Research Required)

3. What does God say to Joshua before they go into the land? (Joshua 1:9)

4. Why did Joshua not need to be afraid?

5. What went before the people of Israel across the Jordan and into the Promised Land? (Joshua 3:10-13)

a. What does this scene remind you of?

6. Why did God do this? (Joshua 3:10)

7. How do you think the people of Israel felt about the Ark of the Covenant?

Reflection and Prayer:

December 8th: The Temple

1 Chronicles 17:1-15

1. What structure had the presence of God dwelt in with the Israelites up to that point? (verses 1 and 5)

2. Why couldn't David build a house for God? (1 Chronicles 22:8-10)

3. Who would provide a homeland for God's people? (1 Chronicles 17:10)

4. Who would build a house? (Verses 10-12)

5. What is promised about this temple?

6. How do you think the people of Israel felt?

Reflection and Prayer:

December 9th: The Tabernacle and Temple

We jump into the story after the great Exodus from Egypt. A people, living in slavery in a foreign land, have been brought out by the hand of God. This is the people who had witnessed the plagues. They had put the blood of the Passover lamb over their doors. They had walked through the Red Sea. They had witnessed the pillar of fire and of smoke, leading and protecting them. These people knew what it meant that God was with them. They knew the power of God and were afraid.

When the power of God came to the mountain, the people of Israel trembled in fear. They did not want to approach the presence of God, and instead, they sent their representative: Moses.

This kind of fear of God is not sinful. In fact, Proverbs 9:10 says that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom.” Because of their sin, they knew that being in the presence of God would kill them. There were protections in place, but what if they got too close or if they had not purified themselves of every ounce of their sins? What if their purification was not good enough? No. They would rather stay away and send Moses instead.

Moses ascends the mountain, and the Law is given.

Included in the Law is instructions for a way for God to dwell with his people: The Tabernacle.

Think of the kindness of this. The God of the universe dwelling in a tent. The all-powerful God who needs absolutely nothing from mankind making a way for the people cowering at the base of the mountain to be able to be near Him. There was layer upon layer of protection for them with the Tabernacle; specific rules to protect a sinful people from the purifying holiness of God’s presence. But still...God was with them.

He did not need to do this. He did not need to limit himself even for a moment to a tent, but He chose to dwell with His people in this way. To live in the middle of the Israelite camp with all their tents cast around His.

How do you think the Israelites must have felt each time they saw the Tabernacle?

Priests would enter into the Holy Place each day to offer different sacrifices, and there was a process for this. But there was only one day a year, the Day of Atonement, when one person, the High Priest, would go beyond the veil to enter into the Holy of Holies. One day to stand before the Ark of the Covenant in the presence of God.

Some scholars believe the curtain was probably 18 inches thick and there was no gap. After offering a sacrifice for his own sin and the sins of the people, the High Priest would have had to crawl under the curtain to come before the presence of God. He was instructed to stir up the incense so that there would be a cloud of protection between him and the presence of God. He would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifices for his own sins and the sins of the people of Israel upon the Ark.

Can you imagine how this felt? How terrifying this process must have been?

If they did not purify themselves, if their sacrifice was not perfect, if they entered at the wrong time or the wrong way, they would die. Aaron, the first High Priest would have known this incredibly well because of what happened to his sons (Leviticus 10:1-7). We have record extra-biblical tradition that speaks of the High Priest tying a rope around his ankle before entering the Holy of Holies in case he died.

That way the people could pull his body out.

Yet, this was the way that God could dwell amongst His people. Was it worth the risk? To be in the presence of the Almighty? Israel thought so.

The people brought the tabernacle with them everywhere they went in the wilderness, carrying the ark covered by the great veil, the wood, the lamp, the table...all of it. Moses, the writer of the Law, leads them right up to the edge of the Promised Land, but is not able to bring them into it. Instead, Joshua, (Hebrew name Yeshua) whose name means “Savior” is the one to bring them across, following the Ark across the Jordan, into the territory occupied by their

enemies. God speaks to Joshua telling him to not be afraid, because “the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” God was with them. There was no need to fear man.

We fast forward a bit past the establishing of Israel in the Promised Land and come to King David. He looks out at the Tabernacle, the house of God, and he feels badly that the house of God would be a tent when David was dwelling in a house of Cedar. Though God has not requested this, God gives him permission to prepare for a Temple but does not allow David himself to build it. Instead, David’s son would build this Temple, and the presence of God would dwell in it.

There is a promise.

The Son of David would build a house for God and this Son’s throne would be established forever. It would never fail. God would be his father and he would be God’s Son.

If you were an Israelite, how would this promise make you feel? Pretty powerful, right?

But is this a prophecy about Solomon, David’s son, or another Son who was to come?

Reflection and Prayer:

Exile

&

Return

December 10th: The Temple Destroyed

2 Chronicles 36:11-21

1. As you read this chapter, put yourself in the place of the Israelites. How would they have felt seeing the Temple destroyed and their priests killed?

2. Why did this happen? (2 Chronicles 36:14)

3. Who desecrated the Temple first? The invading armies or the people of God?

4. What happened to the Ark?

5. Was God with His People? Were His People with God?

6. Is there hope? (2 Chronicles 36:21, Jeremiah 25:1-14)

Reflection and Prayer:

December 11th: The Exile

Lamentations 5

1. Does the author feel like God is with his people?

2. Why is this happening? (verses 7 and 16)

3. Has God been defeated? (verse 19)

4. Where or to whom does the author want to be restored? (verse 21)

Psalm 79

1. What has happened to the temple and the servants of God? (Psalm 79:1-3)

2. What does it mean that God is jealous? (Exodus 20:4-5, Genesis 2:7)

a. Is this the same as sinful jealousy or is it different? (Galatians 5:20, 2 Corinthians 11:2)

3. What is the author pleading for? (Psalm 79:8-9)

a. Why? For who's glory?

4. Who will atone for their sins? (Psalm 79:9)

5. Will the people stop praising God? (Psalm 79:13)

Reflection and Prayer:

December 12th: The Hope

Ezekiel 11:13-21

1. Where are the people of Israel and why? (verses 15-16)

2. What does it mean that God has been a sanctuary to them where they are? (verse 16)

a. Is God confined to the Temple?

3. What will God give them? (verse 17 and 19)

Ezekiel 37

4. What does Ezekiel do with the sticks?

5. What does this represent?

6. Who will save the people? Who will cleanse the people of their sins? (verse 23)

7. Who will be king? (verse 24)

8. Where will they live? (verse 25)

9. Who will be their prince? (verse 25)

10. What covenant will God make with them? (verse 26)

11. Where will God dwell? (verses 26-28)

Reflection and Prayer:

December 13th: Return and Rebuilding

Ezra 1:1-5

1. Who conquered the Babylonians? (2 Chronicles 36:20)

2. What did God say to the king of Persia?

3. Where is God? (Ezra 1:3)

4. What did this return mean?

Nehemiah 8

5. What happens when Ezra read the law? (Nehemiah 8:9)

6. Why are they weeping? Where have they just come from and why were they there?

7. What is said to the people to comfort them? (Nehemiah 8:10-11)

8. Why did they begin to celebrate? (Nehemiah 8:12)

9. Why did they continue to celebrate? (Nehemiah 8:14-15)

10. What was the meaning of the Festival of Booths? (Leviticus 23:34-42)

a. Why would that feel significant?

11. How did the Israelites feel? (Nehemiah 8:17-18)

12. Was this the fulfillment of the promise God spoke through Ezekiel or were the people still waiting for their King?

Reflection and Prayer:

December 14th: A People in Exile

The people of Israel built a temple for God, and it was beautiful! They thought that God's promise to them was that this earthly temple and this earthly city would last forever. That these places would never be destroyed because they had God the Creator on their side. But they did not understand yet that this earthly temple was not the promise.

The people of God were rebellious. Again.

Instead of worshiping just God alone, they began to chase after other gods. They worshiped them within the temple of the Lord. Talk about spitting in the face of God. They no longer feared God. They no longer respected God. They no longer obeyed God. They no longer loved God.

They abandoned God and then God abandoned them.

Not forever and not completely. He was still a sanctuary to His people even in exile.

He promised them a return. He told them that the promises He made to their forefathers was still true. There was still a Kingdom waiting to be established that would last forever. He would cleanse them from their sins. He would again dwell with His people.

After 70 years of captivity, their Babylonian captors were overtaken by the Persian army. God spoke to the King of Persia and the people of Israel were allowed to return to their land.

A few early groups were sent back, and they began to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple. But this Second Temple was different in a few ways. Most notably, the Ark of the Covenant was not in the Holy of Holies.

The Israelites come back to the city and their numbers are listed in Nehemiah 7. When they had settled in, the time came for them to come together to read the law.

And they begin to weep.

Their sin was before them and they mourned. They heard how they had broken the law of God and they wept.

I do not know about you, but I think that they were terrified.

They had just come home after a long exile in a foreign land because they had disobeyed God. To hear again how many ways they had been breaking God's law even up until then... I imagine they were suddenly afraid of losing the home they had just regained.

But do not be afraid. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

They did not need to rely on their own strength. They needed to rely on God.

The next day, they resumed reading and discovered that that very day was the beginning of the Feast of Booths: the festival Israel was to celebrate by living in tents for a week to commemorate their time in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land.

Again, the kindness of God in this moment and timing. Can you imagine it? Remembering how God had been faithful over and over again to His people. Faithful to bring them home. Out of Egypt. Out of the wilderness. Out of Babylon. Out of exile.

But the promise was not complete. The King of the Jews had not yet been established. The Son of God and Son of David had not yet appeared. The Offspring that would crush the head of the Serpent had not yet come. But He was coming...The day was approaching when God would again come to His Temple.

Malachi, the last of the Prophets in the Old Testament and one who likely wrote during Nehemiah's time of leadership, wrote of this coming.

“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.”

Malachi 3:1

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction” Malachi 4:5-6

Then...silence.

Over 400 years of silence.

God did not speak to his people again until one day, when an old priest stood before the veil in the Holy Place to burn the day's incense...

Reflection and Prayer:

The First

Advent

December 15th: The Baptist

Luke 1:1-25

1. Knowing what you know about how serious God is about the Holy Place and Holy of Holies, how do you imagine Zechariah felt when he saw the angel?

2. In whose spirit and power would John be? (verse 17)

3. Read Malachi 4:5-6, Matthew 11:14, and Mark 9:11-13. Does John fulfill the prophecy in Malachi?

4. Who did John prepare the way for? (Mark 1:1-5, John 1:1-9)

Luke 1:57-80

5. Who is Zechariah speaking of in verses 67-75?

 - a. Who is he speaking of in 76-80?

6. Whose oath would this person be fulfilling? (verses 72-73)

7. What would this first person give the people? (verse 73-75)

 - a. What would this mean to the Israelites, and especially to a priest like Zechariah?

 - b. In whose presence would the people be?

8. How would people be saved? (verse 77)

9. Who will visit them? (verse 76 and 78)

10. Peace with whom? (verse 79)

Reflection and Prayer:

December 16th: The Light

John 1:1-18

1. What does verse 1 mean? How can someone be with the one true God and be the one true God?

2. Who were all things created through? (verse 3)

a. Was he created?

3. Who was John?

4. Who did not recognize the Light? Who did not receive him? (verses 10-11)

5. What did the Light give to the people who received him? (verse 12)

a. Does this mean some people are not called Children of God?

6. What is the Greek word used in verse 14? Where else is this word used? (Some research required)

a. Given the history of Israel, what does this mean?

7. How did Jesus exist before John? (verse 15)

8. Has anyone ever seen God? (verse 18)

9. Who reveals God?

Reflection and Prayer:

December 17th: Immanuel

Matthew 1:1

1. Who is Jesus called the son of?

- a. Why are those two names significant?

Luke 1:26-56

2. What did the angel say to call the baby?

- a. What is this name in Hebrew? Who else had this name? Where did they lead the people of Israel?

3. Why is the prophesy in verse 32 significant? (1 Chronicles 17:7-14, Isaiah 9:6-7)

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4. Was Jesus the offspring of a man? Was he the offspring of a woman? (Genesis 3:15)

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5. Read Mary's song of praise in verses 46-55. Given the history of Israel, does this song take on new meaning?
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Matthew: 1:18-25

6. What does "Immanuel" mean?

-
7. Who was Jesus? (verse 23)
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Reflection and Prayer:

December 18th: The King of the Jews

John 6:1-15

1. What did Jesus do for the people?

2. Who did they believe he was? (Deuteronomy 18:15)

3. What did Jesus do in response?

a. Why?

Matthew 21:1-13

4. What prophecy does this fulfill? (Zechariah 9:9, 1 Kings 1:32-35)

5. Who is Jesus saying he is?

6. Who did the people think he was? How did they respond?

7. What do you imagine they thought Jesus would do when he arrived at the temple?

8. What did Jesus do? (verse 12)

John 18:33-38

9. Was Jesus intending to be a King of an earthly Kingdom?

Reflection and Prayer:

December 19th: The Lamb of God

John 1:29

1. Why had Jesus come?

2. Where else do we see lambs taking away sins? (Exodus 12:11-13, Exodus 29:38-42)

a. Why did these lambs die? What was the purpose of taking away sins?

b. Why did Jesus die? What was the purpose of taking away sins?

Isaiah 53

3. Who is this prophecy about?

4. How and why did he die? (verse 5)

5. What does this punishment bring us? (verse 5)

a. Peace with whom? (2 Corinthians 5:19)

b. Healing from what? (1 Peter 2:24)

6. What kind of animal is he described as? (verse 7)

Reflection and Prayer:

December 20th: The Temple and the Cross

John 2:18-21

1. What does Jesus refer to his body as? (verse 21)

2. What was the purpose of the Temple and the Tabernacle? (Exodus 25:8 and Exodus 29:45)

3. What was the purpose of Jesus' body? (1 Peter 3:18, Ephesians 2:13)

Matthew 27:32-52

4. What title was posted above the cross of Jesus? (verse 37)

5. What happened the moment Jesus died? (verse 51)

 - a. What veil was this?

 - b. How did it tear?

6. How would the first priests to see this have felt?

7. Why didn't they die? (Luke 1:73-75)

8. What does the tearing of the veil signify?

Extra Study: What does Jesus say from the cross and why does he say this? (verse 46, Psalm 22)

Reflection and Prayer:

December 21st: The Grave

It had happened again.

A baby born. Such a promising beginning. Angels heralding his birth. Many prophecies made. Miracle after miracle. Teaching with authority.

Maybe this would be the one to make them a mighty nation? The King of an undefeatable Kingdom. The one to overthrow their captures. The one to bring God back to His people.

But he was killed. Dead on a Roman cross.

The anguish must have been crippling. Can you imagine it?

They didn't see it yet.

They didn't see that he was Immanuel, God with them. God incarnate dwelling amongst them. The One who made all things took on flesh he created. The Son had set aside the privileges of divinity (Philippians 2:7) and chosen to tabernacle among his people (John 1:14). God had again walked with his people.

They didn't see that Jesus was the true Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) The only way to the Father (John 14:16). The Way and the Waymaker.

The people of Israel didn't see it yet. The disciples didn't see it yet. They cowered in fear in their homes. They used the past tense to describe their hopes that Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel: The King promised to David. (Luke 24:21)

What they didn't see was that Jesus was not only the Son of David.

He was also the Offspring of Eve. (Genesis 3:15)

He was their King, but his Kingdom was not of this world. His primary battle in his first coming was not against the empires of this world, but against the powers of darkness, sin and death that entered into the world in the garden.

The serpent had crushed his heel on the cross, but Jesus would crush its head...

Reflection and Prayer:

The Second Advent

December 22nd: The Resurrection

Luke 24:1-8

1. What were the women planning to do?

2. What does the angel say? (verse 5)

3. How does the resurrection defeat death? (Revelation 1:17-18, Acts 2:24, 1 Corinthians 15:17)

4. How is Jesus' resurrection different from other resurrection events in the Bible?

5. Who raised Jesus from the dead? (Romans 8:11, Romans 6:4, Acts 2:24, John 10:18, John 2:19-21, Romans 1:4)

Acts 1:4-11

6. What did Jesus tell them to wait for? (verse 4-5)

7. Who was coming?

8. What did the disciples ask Jesus? (verse 6)

9. What did he respond?

10. Are we still waiting for the Kingdom to be established on earth?

11. Where is Jesus now? (Romans 8:24, Acts 7:55-56)

Reflection and Prayer:

December 23rd: The Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1-8

1. Who came?

2. Was it good for Jesus to leave and the Spirit to come? (John 16:7)

3. How did the disciples feel before the Spirit came to them?

a. What did they do? (Luke 22:54-62, John 20:19)

4. How did they feel after the Spirit came?

a. What did they do? Who did they speak of? (Acts 2:4, Acts 2:14-41)

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

5. Where is the temple of God now?

6. Where does God dwell?

7. Why is this possible? (1 John 4:15, Ephesians 1:7)

8. What does it mean that the Holy Spirit is within us? What changes?

a. Romans 8:15-17: _____

b. Romans 8:26-27: _____

c. 1 Corinthians 2:12: _____

d. 1 Corinthians 12:11-13: _____

e. Galatians 5:16: _____

f. Galatians 5:22-23: _____

g. Ephesians 1:13-14: _____

Reflection and Prayer:

December 24th: The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:1-22:5

1. Where will be the dwelling place of God? (21:3)

2. What will happen to the results of the Fall? (21:4)

3. Who is the Alpha and Omega? (21:6, Revelation 1:8, Revelation 22:13-16)

4. What will he give? (21:6, John 4:14, John 7:38-39)

5. What shape is the New Jerusalem? (Revelation 21:16)

a. Where have we seen this shape before? (2 Chronicles 3:8)

6. Will there be a temple in the New Jerusalem? (21:22)

7. Will there be a sun? (21:23)

8. What tree is in the city? (22:2, Genesis 3:22)

9. What will the servants of God see? (22:3-4)

10. Will this Kingdom ever be destroyed? (22:5)

Reflection and Prayer:

December 25th: The Second Advent

It looked like the serpent had won.

The Messiah, the long awaited one, dead on a cross. The Offspring that was meant to crush the head of the serpent had instead been crushed.

But this is what Enemy did not understand: the victory over sin and death came through the sacrificial death of the Sinless One.

The Defeat of Sin and Death

The power of sin was no match for the Perfect Sacrifice. By dying on the cross as an atonement for sin, he paid the price for the sins of all who choose to be represented by him (Hebrews 10:14). He was crushed for our iniquities. He was pierced for our transgressions. By his wounds, we are healed. (Isaiah 53)

Death could not hold the Christ. In the Fall, sin ushered in death (Genesis 2:16-17). Death is the consequence for sin. (Romans 6:23), but Christ had not sinned and therefore death had no claim on him. (Hebrews 4:15, 1 John 3:5, Acts 2:24) He defeated death by not staying dead. (2 Timothy 1:10, Isaiah 25:8, 1 Corinthians 15:55-57) This resurrection was different than any other because, while the others would all eventually die again, Jesus rose never to die again. (Revelation 1:17-18)

With his death, Jesus broke the power of sin. (Romans 6:10) With his Resurrection, he proved his victory over death. (Romans 6:9)

The Purpose of the Sacrifices

The Perfect Sacrifice, Jesus on the cross, was what the sacrifices in the temple and the tabernacle were always pointing toward.

The blood of animals, things God had created and already had ownership of, did not on their own pay the penalty. It was like taking someone's watch, wrapping it up for them and giving it back to them as payment for a debt. But this is what God asked of the people as an act of faith. Those who performed those sacrifices of old did so in faith that God would do what He said. He would forgive their sins because of their faith. He would cleanse them and dwell with them. (Hebrews 9:11-14 & 23, 10:11-18, 11)

They were looking ahead to the perfect sacrifice, though they did not know that yet. (John 5:38) They had a veil over their eyes, but when you turn to Christ, the veil is taken away to see clearly. (2 Corinthians 3:12-16)

And this is what we see...

Earthly Copies and Prophetic Actions: We know that the tabernacle, the temple, the Holy of Holies, the Ark, and all of it were copies, a shadow of the true heavenly things. Representations that we might be able to understand just an ounce of the glory and majesty of God. A merciful gift so that God's people could dwell with Him in their midst. A shining prophecy through repeated action pointing toward what Christ would do.

We are Made Righteous in Christ: Now, those who claim Jesus can be called sinless in him. We have been baptized into his death and raised again to new life. We have been made righteous through the blood of Christ, sacrificed for sins (2 Corinthians 5:21, Revelation 7:14, 1 John 1:7). The Prince of peace has made peace between us and God. Once again, God has clothed his people, but this time instead of with an animal, with the body of the Son. (Genesis 3:21, Galatians 3:27)

Because of repentance and realizing our need for a savior. That we cannot do it on our own. That we are poor in spirit and that we mourn our sin. (Mark 1:15, Matthew 5:3-4)

Because of belief: that Christ is the One who is mighty to save. That he who is his both God and Man took on the penalty of the cross and rose from the dead. (John 3:16, John 6:29, Romans 10:9)

We Be in the Presence of God: Believers in Christ, those made righteous through his sacrifice, can approach the throne of God with confidence because Christ has made the way. (Hebrews 4:16) We can enter into his presence. We can be in the true Holy of Holies. (Hebrews 10:19) While we still understand that our God is a consuming fire and completely powerful and worthy of righteous fear (Hebrews 12:28-29), we do not tremble at the bottom of the mountain any longer as the Israelites did when they waited for Moses. We can serve God without fear of our own sin because of Christ (Luke 1:74). We can be with God. The Second Yeshua has brought us into the Promised Land and into God's Kingdom and presence.

God can Dwell in Us: Not only can we be with God, but God can dwell within us in the here and now through the Holy Spirit. He lives in us. In the individual believer and in the gathering of the believers (John 14:16, Matthew 28:20, 1 Corinthians 3:16). The Kingdom of God with Christ as our King, has been established in part on earth through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit helps us to serve God. To love God, love neighbor and to welcome other people into the family of God through belief in Jesus.

The Kingdom is here!

But not in fullness.

The World is Still Broken: We participate in this Kingdom, but the whole of creation does not, and though our hearts are in the Kingdom, our bodies are not. We still suffer the consequences of sin and a broken world. There is still sin. There is still death. There is still sickness, and sadness and pain. All creation groans.

But it will not always be this way. The Kingdom is Coming!

The Second Advent: Our King will come again.

King Jesus will reign, and his throne established forever. There will be a new creation and a new Jerusalem. Streets of gold. The wolf laying with the lamb. No need for a temple because God is our temple, and we will continually be in his presence. No more death. No more sickness. No more pain. God will be the one to wipe away every tear from our eyes and the one who made all these things to pass away. There will be no more darkness and no need for a created sun, for the glory of God will be the light within our midst. We will sing praises to our God and King forever and worship to know even a fraction of the Infinite One.

This is eternal life. (John 17:3)

God with us.

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Revelation 21:3-4

For, now we wait.

As we look back on his first advent in a manger, let us also look forward to his second on the clouds.

He who was faithful to come once will come again.

Come, Lord Jesus. And may the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen (Revelation 22:20-21)

Reflection and Prayer:

