Advent 2023 Daily Devotional Readings*

JESUS
Our Priest
Our Prophet
Our King
Our Savior

Contents

Acknowledgements		03
Introduction		04
Jesus our Priest		05
December 3 What is a Priest?		06
December 4 Melchizedek		07
December 5 Aaron		08
December 6 Eli		10
December 7 Samuel		12
December 8 Zadok		13
December 9 Zechariah		14
Jesus our Prophet		15
December 10 V	Vhat is a Prophet?	16
December 11	Moses	17
December 12	Isaiah	18
December 13	Micah	19
December 14	Hosea	20
December 15	Zechariah	21
December 16	Anna	22
Jesus our King		23
December 17	What is a King?	24
December 18	Saul	25
December 19	David	26
December 20	Solomon	28
December 21	Ahab	30
December 22	Hezekiah	32
December 23	Josiah	33
Jesus our Priest, Prophet, & King - Christmas Eve		35
December 24	Jesus our Priest, Prophet, & King	36
Jesus our Savior – Christmas Day		38
December 25	Jesus our Savior	39
Prayer of Salvation		40

Acknowledgements

A writing project such as this takes a number of hands and eyes to complete. There is much prayer, reflection, searching of scripture, writing, editing, and writing again, which brings this offering together.

I want to acknowledge those who have given of their time, Bible knowledge, writing abilities, and spiritual insight to bring this book into existence.

Thank you to Minister Inez Daniels, Sister Debra Kelley, Sister Veronica Maples, and Minister Annie K. Montgomery.

Finally, thank you to my bride Sister Tearrah Brown because without your initial review my feeble writing would never be allowed to see the light of day.

Introduction A Season of Awaiting

I remember as a young boy a classmate mocking me at school, tauntingly stating, "Christmas is dumb; Jesus wasn't even born on Christmas Day!" I was enraged but thank God I didn't lash out. Why was I so offended? It was for the same reason the boy taunted me with the statement. He knew I was a Christian; he knew I attended church, and it was no secret that my father was a pastor. So, it made it easy for him to find something about me to ridicule, my love for Jesus.

I have loved Jesus for as long as I can remember. I have always loved His bride, the local church, and the many saints who loved me so faithfully. Also, I have always loved the Christmas season. Not because Jesus was born on Christmas Day, which quite frankly was not likely December 25th. But the day of His birth is beside the point; I love this season because it is the season of Advent.

Advent is defined as the arrival of a person, event or thing that is significant. As we walk through the season of Advent, we should not be focused on the day, but rather we should be focused on the arrival of Jesus the Christ.

As you walk through this season of Advent, I invite you to join us on this journey of 23 devotional lessons as we quiet our minds, turn our hearts towards the Lord, and reflect and celebrate the coming of the Christ Child. Take time to read, search the scriptures, pray, and listen.

It is my sincere prayer that over these 23 days the Lord fills our hearts and restores our souls in a meaningful way as we once again celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ, which took place in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago.

Awaiting Joyfully,

Dr. Kneeland C. Brown, Pastor

JESUS OUR PRIEST

Sunday, December 3 WHAT IS A PRIEST?

Psalm 134:1-3 (ESV)

"1Come, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, who stand by night in the house of the LORD! 2 Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the LORD! 3 May the LORD bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth!"

In Deuteronomy 33:8-11, Moses outlines the general role of the Priest. You will notice that he refers to them as Levi. Levi was a tribe of Israel from which the Priests came. According to Moses, the people would support the tribe of Levi financially so that they (as the Priests) could care for the upkeep of God's Tabernacle and eventually Temple, teach the people the law of God and offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the people.

A phrase often used to describe the work of the Priests of the Bible was to "serve as mediators". A mediator is one who stands between two people and helps them come to an understanding; sometimes we refer to this as a "go between" or a "middleman." The role of the Priest was to stand between God and humankind, allowing humankind to have access to God because God's glory is far too powerful for humans to stand before God directly and live (Exodus 33:18-23).

While the Priests of the Tribe of Levi fulfilled their role of being mediators between God and the people, they often failed. However, there was always the promise of an all sufficient Priest who stood as the ultimate mediator, who once and for all repaired the divide between God and humankind. That priest is Jesus.

Over the next several devotionals we will look at various Priests who served God in the Bible. Keep Jesus in mind throughout because He is our final and ultimate priest.

Questions:

- 1. Have you ever had a situation where you needed someone else to be a mediator, a go between or a middleman for you? What was that situation and how did it work out?
- 2. What does it mean for Jesus to be our Priest? In what ways does Jesus serve as a mediator between us and God the Father?

Prayer:

Lord, thank you that Jesus is our mediator who stands between us and God the Father and bridges the divide, which sin has caused. Remind me each day to call on Jesus who stands ready to support me in every circumstance of life. Amen.

Monday, December 4 MELCHIZEDECK

Psalm 110:4 (ESV)

"The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Melchizedek is the first Priest to appear in scripture. This individual appears and then disappears just as suddenly. Abram fights a battle to rescue Lot, his nephew, who has been taken captive. The Bible makes it clear that Abram defeats Chedorlaomer and collects the spoils of war (Genesis 14:1-16). There are other kings who help Abram win that battle and one of them is identified as Melchizedek, King of Salem (Genesis 14:18). It is King Melchizedek who speaks a blessing over Abram stating, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed by God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" (Genesis 14:19-20) The scripture indicates that this King of Salem, who suddenly appears, is not only the ruler of a people, but also a "Priest of God Most High."

It is unclear how Melchizedek knew God. It could have been through post-flood tradition or supernatural revelation, but he was keenly aware that Abram served his God also and that God had granted Abram victory that day. Though it is unknown where Melchizedek had come from, his influence upon the priesthood lived so significantly that King David wrote about him and his priestly lineage in Psalm 110:4. The writer of Hebrews referenced these words of David when making the connection to Jesus Christ as, "being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek". (Hebrews 5:10)

Melchizedek quickly passes through the pages of scripture but leaves a legacy of having served God as a faithful priest, so much so that he left a lineage of service to God through which many would see Jesus.

Questions:

- 1. Have you had anyone who has passed through your life for a season, but left a significant impact? Who are they and how did they have an impact upon your life?
- 2. In what ways are you serving the Lord today which will make an impact upon the generations coming after you?

Prayer:

Lord, use my life to render faithful service to you just as Melchizedek so that I can leave a lasting legacy of service to God, encouraging the generations which will come after me.

Tuesday, December 5 AARON

Exodus 28:1

"Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar."

As Moses led the people of Israel out of captivity in Egypt, God establishes the people in the wilderness with the order for worship. As a part of God's process of establishing His newly liberated people, now traveling in the wilderness, God begins putting His systems into place. The book of Exodus records, amongst other matters, the establishment of God's covenant with the people, the creation of the Ark of the Covenant representing the presence of God amongst the people, and the building of a tabernacle as a place of worship (Exodus 24-27). God details in His specifications of how all of these elements must function, down to the smallest element of design.

After detailing the construction of these consecrated items and spaces, God calls out a group of people from amongst all of Israel to serve Him by ministering to Him on the people's behalf. Aaron, the brother of Moses, and his four sons are selected by God to serve as his Priests, with Aaron as high priest.

Aaron is a middle child born in-between his strong-willed older sister Miriam and towering liberator little brother Moses. He is often seen as the weaker sibling of the three. He is easily swayed into making poor decisions and on the two occasions when he is allowed to lead, he fails miserably. One, he created a golden calf (an idol) for the people to worship while Moses was away on the mountain speaking to God (Exodus 32:2,5). And two he was convinced to participate in a family revolt against Moses (Numbers 12:1).

Although Aaron was no Miriam or Moses, God still used him to serve as High Priest and to stand before Him on behalf of the people. Scripture kindly remembers his service as high priest as one who was chosen (Psalm 105:26) and anointed of God (Psalm 133:2).

Aaron is a great reminder that God doesn't use perfect people, but rather God uses those who are available and willing to heed His call and submit to His will.

Questions

- 1. What shortcomings or flaws do you have which can make you feel like you are unworthy to be used by God?
- 2. What steps can you take to overcome those shortcomings and make yourself available to God for service?

Prayer:

Lord, just like Aaron, I have areas where I am weak and where I fail, and at times this makes me feel like I am not worthy to be used by you. Please remind me that it is you who makes me worthy for service in your kingdom and you alone who calls me to service. Give me ears to hear your voice calling me to serve and giving me courage to follow.

Wednesday, December 6 ELI

1 Samuel 1:9b (ESV)

"Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD."

A descendent of Aaron, Eli served as High Priest in Shiloh and functioned not only as a high priest, but also as a judge (1 Samuel 4:18). Eli's service to the Lord as a priest is probably best known for three reasons.

First, it was Eli who was serving at the temple on the day when Hannah came in weeping and praying for God to give her a child. Her prayer was so passionate that he thought she had come to the temple drunk. Upon explaining to him why she cried and prayed so passionately, Eli blessed her. God answered her prayer and gave her a son named Samuel. (1 Samuel 1:3-17)

Second, it was Eli who young Samuel would run to when the Lord called to the boy four times in the same night. When Samuel woke up Eli the third time, Eli realized that it was God who was calling out to the boy and instructed him, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" Young Samuel did as he had been told and God spoke to him and altered the course of his life. (1 Samuel 3:1-10)

Third, unfortunately for all of Eli's years of service as high priest and judge of Israel, he had a significant blind spot. He did not discipline his own children. Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas were also priests, just like their father, as they had come from his priestly lineage. However, scripture makes it clear that they were both completely corrupt and did not know God (1 Samuel 2:12). They utilized their position in the temple for personal gain (1 Samuel 2:15-17) and sexually abused the women who served in the temple (1 Samuel 2:22). But worst of all, Eli knew about it and never put a stop to it.

Eli would meet the wrath and judgement of God because despite all that he did right, he neglected to stop the wrong taking place in his own home (1 Samuel 3:11-14).

Questions:

- 1. Read Psalm 139 and spend time reflecting on the closing request made in verses 23 & 24 that the Lord search your heart.
- 2. Take a moment to confess any sin in your heart in which you need to place before the Lord and ask for His forgiveness.



Lord, search my heart and remove anything within me that is not like you. I do not desire to hide sin and I do not desire to grieve your heart. Amen.

Thursday, December 7 SAMUEL

1 Samuel 2:18-19 (ESV)

"18 Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy clothed with a linen ephod. 19 And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice."

God would speak to that young boy named Samuel, the son of Elkanah and Hannah, who ran to the Priest Eli three times in the night when a voice, which he did not know, was calling his name (1 Samuel 3:1-10). It turned out, as God was ending the service of Eli, He was beginning the ministry of Samuel. God would reveal a great purpose for the life of that miracle baby born of his mother's heartfelt prayers. Samuel served God as a Priest with his first task being to share the news of God's judgement upon Eli and his family with Eli.

Samuel is known for serving as a bridge between the seasons of Moses/Joshua and David/Solomon. God used Samuel to not only serve the people as a Priest, but also serve as a Judge and Prophet. When Israel demanded their first king, God had Samuel anoint Saul as King and after Saul was rejected, God had Samuel anoint David as King.

God used Samuel in his lifetime in many distinct ways as a mediator between Himself and His people. Samuel is known for calling a dejected and defeated Israel to gather at Mizpah to repent and rededicate themselves to the Lord. This led to the Lord granting them the victory over their oppressors, the Philistines, and Samuel setting up a stone called Ebeneezer, "Stone of Help", at the place of their victory.

Samuel served as a faithful priest for the Lord throughout his life and kept the Word, the will, and the presence of the Lord before the people at a significant time in the history of Israel.

Questions:

- 1. What gifts has the Lord given you for service to His Kingdom on earth?
- 2. How are you using those gifts in your local church and in your community to bring otherscloser to Jesus?

Prayer:

Lord, it is my desire to be used by you for your service because I know that by my serving you, others will come to know you. Show me how I can best be of service in my local church and my community and use my hands to do your will in the world. Amen.

Friday, December 8 ZADOK

1 Kings 1:39 (ESV)

"There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, 'Long live King Solomon!'"

Zadok was a priest who served the Lord during the reign of David and Solomon. Zadok is frequently mentioned alongside Abiathar, another priest who was his contemporary. He was instrumental in returning the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:11) and served faithfully before the Lord. So significant was Zadok's service as a priest that the prophet Ezekiel honors the line of priests from his family as legitimate servants of the Lord (Ezekiel 3:19; 44:15).

Zadok was fiercely loyal to David as he recognized David as God's anointed King. So great was his loyalty to David as King that when David's son Absalom launched a plot to overthrow his father and take the throne, he and Abiathar joined David, as he escaped for a season, until the plot ended. As a matter of fact, Zadok and Abiathar would be asked by David to go back to Jerusalem and secretly work for him in the midst of Absalom's attempted takeover and operate as spies to aid David in overcoming the devious plans of Absalom (2 Samuel 15:24-29). At the point of David's death, it was Zadok who upheld David's desire that Solomon be king of Israel and that Zadok be the one to anoint Solomon as King (1 Kings 1:39).

Zadok was distinct in his priestly service because beyond serving at the temple as a mediator between God and the people, he also rolled up his sleeves and engaged fully in what God was doing amongst the people. Zadok did not shy away from standing for what he believed as right and the will of the God, even when his life was put on the line.

Questions:

- 1. What do you think compelled Zadok to have so much influence beyond the temple and become active in such significant (and dangerous) moments in Israel's history?
- 2. James 2:26 suggests that if our faith does not align with our actions, it is a dead faith. Identify ways can you make your faith more alive by putting it into action?

Prayer:

Lord, grant me faith like priest Zadok, a faith that is alive and which inspires me to take action to advance your will in the world. Give me courage to follow you so that your kingdom may expand on the earth. Amen.

Saturday, December 9 ZECHARIAH

Luke 1:5-6 (ESV)

"5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah,[a] 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."

Zechariah was a priest whose name is well known in the story of the birth of Jesus, but it is actually what God did through his wife that made him famous. Zechariah's wife was Elizabeth and God blessed her in her older years to give birth to and to be the mother of John the Baptist.

Zechariah was so shocked that he and Elizabeth were going to have a son that when the angel told him he immediately questioned the validity of the message. It was for this reason God rendered him unable to speak until John was born.

God selected the priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth because they were faithful to him. "...they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord." (Luke 1:6) It should be remembered that the use of the phrase "walking blamelessly" does not mean that they were perfect people, but it does suggest that they had upright hearts and did their best to follow God's commands and God's will. For this reason, God used them to be the parents of the forerunner of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist.

Questions:

- 1. Are you daily committed to walking before the Lord? What spiritual practices do you have in place to aid you in keeping God's standards before you?
- 2. In what ways do you desire God to use your life for His glory?

Prayer:

Lord, I desire to walk blamelessly before you, just like Zechariah and Elizabeth. Daily show me your ways and help me to live in such a way that brings honor to you. Amen.

JESUS OUR PROPHET

Sunday, December 10 WHAT IS A PROPHET?

Isaiah 58:1 (ESV)

"Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins."

God used the prophets of the Old Testament as His heralds and spokespersons to His people. Unlike the many who label themselves as "prophets" today, biblical prophets addressed concerns amongst the people from God's perspective. Often messages of correction, discipline, and judgement, for unrighteous living, were frequent message from a prophetic voice. These messages were accompanied by a call to confession, repentance, and a return to God.

Prophets also gave messages pointing towards God's future purposes amongst humanity. One such message, which can be heard in the prophetic voices of the Old and New Testament, was the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the great prophet. All of the prophets pointed towards the coming of a prophet who was greater than all because He would not be a mere man speaking the words of God, but the Son of God, both fully human and fully divine, revealing the heart of the Father to the world and serving as the way to reconciliation with God.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 and take a moment to reflect and then answer the questions below.

Questions:

- 1. What does Paul the Apostle mean by his use of the word reconciliation in 2 Corinthi ans 5:18-21?
- 2. The prophets of the Old Testament called for reconciliation to God, but Jesus made our path to reconciliation possible through His death and resurrection. How does this reality shape your view of the cross?

Prayer:

Lord thank you that you speak to your people and you speak to me through your word and in prayer. Thank you that you have provided a path for reconciliation through your son Jesus Christ. Help me in this season of Advent to see Jesus more clearly as the all sufficient prophet who has brought me into a right relationship with God.

Monday, December 11 MOSES

Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—"

The miraculous birth, covering, and rearing of Moses is recorded in Exodus 2, and his divine moment of calling as a liberator of God's people, held as slaves in Egypt, can be read in Exodus 3. Moses is known widely as a liberator, leader, and servant of God, who met and spoke with God face to face (Exodus 33:11). But of all of the titles Moses held, it can be easily overlooked that Moses was a prophet of God. The words spoken by Moses in Exodus 18:15 not only

identify him as a prophet, but also speaks of a greater prophet yet to come, which God would raise up from amongst His people.

As a prophet who has been used by God to liberate His people and lead them out of Egypt through the wilderness to the cusp of entering the land of promise, Moses deems it necessary to let the people of Israel know that there is yet another prophet coming and that "it is to him you shall listen." Moses understood that he was "a" prophet, but they were yet awaiting "the" prophet who would grant them true liberation. This prophet is Jesus and when He comes, they "shall listen" to Him.

A refrain Jesus would at times use when teaching was, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 11:15).

Questions:

- 1. Why did it matter to Moses that the people of Israel listen to Jesus when he came?
- 2. What steps do you take to listen to Jesus in your daily life?

Prayer:

Lord, please give me ears to hear what you are speaking in my life by your Spirit every day of my life as I study my Bible, as I pray, and as I walk through the day. Amen.

Tuesday, December 12 ISAIAH

Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Isaiah was the son of Amoz and he was married to a woman who scripture refers to as a prophetess (Isaiah 8:3). It is believed that he may have had some familial relationship to King Uzziah because he had significant access to the king's court. Isaiah is known as a gifted writer and preacher and God used His voice to speak to the people of Israel.

Of all of the words God had Isaiah speak to the people of Israel during a period of social change, Isaiah's prophetic visions of the coming Christ distinctively stand out. In Isaiah 7:14b Isaiah states, "...Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." In Isaiah 9:6 the prophet speaks more specifically towards the coming Christ child as a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Isaiah envisions Jesus, hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, as more than a God appointed prophet like himself and others. Rather he envisions him as the one who has been long-awaited, who will bring God's peace, power, and kingdom to the earth.

Not only does Isaiah prophesy the conditions of the birth of Jesus, but also what Jesus will mean to the world.

Questions:

- 1. What does Jesus mean to you?
- 2. How have you known Jesus to be a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace in your walk with him?

Prayer:

Thank you, Father, for sending Jesus as the one who will meet all of my needs. Thank you for all that Jesus is to my life and all the ways He brings abundant life. Make me grateful every day for all that He is and all that He will be. Amen!

Wednesday, December 13 MICAH

Micah 5:2 (ESV)

"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."

In various periods in the history of Israel, there were significant leadership issues. There would be kings who would drift from following the true God, Yahweh, rather they followed after false gods and lived unrighteously. The prophet Micah served during the reigns of three kings of Judah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah.

A reading of the book of Micah reveals his deep sorrow at the poor and often unrighteous leadership of Judah. God used his voice to communicate coming punishment for Israel. However, in the midst of his disappointment, his prophetic words reveal a ray of hope which is in the coming Christ child to be born who would rule. What Israel's current rulers could not do, this coming ruler would be able to do and He would restore the nation to God.

Often as we look at the condition of the "leadership" of our cities, states, nation, and the globe, it is easy to become worried and disheartened. However, the prophet foretold of a coming leader who would lead with righteousness and truth. This coming leader who was prophesied is Jesus.

Questions:

- 1. How does the leadership of Jesus give us hope for the future of our nation and world?
- 2. What areas of your life do you need to surrender to the leadership of Jesus?

Prayer:

Lord, we have so many so-called leaders who fail us in our lives. Please teach me to follow your leadership because you are faithful and can be trusted with my life. Amen.

Thursday, December 14 HOSEA

Hosea 11:1 (ESV)

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

Some prophetic statements about Jesus are easy to see in scripture, while others take a bit more effort to seek proper interpretation by searching the scriptures. The Prophet Hosea was a contemporary of the Prophet Micah, but his prophecy was directed towards the Northern Kingdom, Israel. Hosea shared God's world with the people of Israel, often using the image of marital and familial relationships. In this way, he conveyed faithfulness to God as marital fidelity and unfaithfulness to God as marital infidelity.

Using this same image of the relationship of God and His people as a familial relationship, Hosea refers to Israel as a child, a son to God, and reminds the people how God is a faithful and loving father who called them out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1). While this historically speaks to the exodus from Egypt, led by Moses the liberator prophet we discussed in a previous lesson, we also see a deeper and more prophetic connection when we consider Matthew 2:14-15, "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."

Yes! God did call His people Israel out of bondage in Egypt, like a parent calls a son they love. However, there was another son that was to be called out of Egypt and this was the child Jesus, whose parents would take Him into Egypt under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to escape the evil King Herod, and then later call Him back out of Egypt to return home to His people.

Hosea spoke of how God would guide the steps of the child Jesus, to ensure He was safe.

Questions:

- 1. Are there moments you can look back on and see how God's hand has guided you? How has God directed your steps to ensure that you were safe?
- 2. What practices can you put into place to ensure that you are hearing the voice of God in the daily events of life?

Prayer:

Lord, give me a heart that trusts you with every step of my life's journey. Teach me to hear your voice and follow your leading, knowing that you will keep me safe.

Friday, December 15 ZECHARIAH

Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

It is believed that the Prophet Zechariah was both a prophet and a priest and there were certainly others in the Old Testament who served in both of these roles: Jeremiah; Samuel; and Ezekiel. His prophetic ministry was during Israel's long-awaited return from the Babylonian exile.

The Lord granted Zechariah a very descriptive prophetic word concerning a coming King and the graphic details which the prophet provided made that ruler easily discernable. Zechariah declared the coming King as righteous and that He would provide salvation to the people and that He would come humbly mounted on a colt, the foal of a donkey. This meant that the coming king would be riding on a young donkey and would be met with great celebration.

Read Matthew 21:1-10 and you will see that leading up to His entry into Jerusalem Jesus told the disciples to get a young donkey and he road into the city to the celebration of all of the people who shouted, "Hosanna, in the highest!"

Just as God had empowered Zechariah to prophesy years in advance, the people celebrated as Jesus came riding into Jerusalem.

Questions:

- 1. In celebration some people sing, others dance, and some let out a loud shout of joy. In what ways do you openly celebrate Jesus in your life?
- 2. Write down three things Jesus has done in your life which are worth celebrating.

Prayer:

Lord, in this Advent season, grant me a compelling vision of Jesus as my King, and as I see Him as King, call my heart to serve more faithfully, withholding nothing. Amen.

Saturday, December 16 ANNA

Luke 2:36-38 (ESV)

"36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, 37 and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.[f] She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem."

Anna was a prophetess (a female prophet), the daughter of Phanuel and from the tribe of Asher. She was married as a younger woman for 7 years before her husband died, and she became a widow. She never remarried but devoted the rest of her life to serving God.

Anna was 84 years old when God rewarded her faithfulness to Him. She was in the temple on the day when Mary and Joseph brought a child named Jesus to the temple to present Him to the Lord. Anna was able to witness the presentation of the Christ child and then she began sharing the news with all that the long awaited "redemption of Jerusalem" had come.

God rewarded all of her years of faithful service in one single day. All that Anna had scarified God honored by blessing her to share one of the greatest words of prophetic fulfillment in history, the proclamation that the child Jesus had come.

Questions:

- 1. List three blessings that God has poured into your life since you met Jesus.
- 2. Who do you know with whom you can share the good news of Jesus Christ so that they too can experience the blessing of encountering Him?

Prayer:

Lord, make me faithful to serve you with my life like the Prophetess Anna and give me the courage to share the good news of Jesus with those I encounter just as she did. Amen.

JESUS OUR KING

Sunday, December 17 WHAT IS A KING?

Proverbs 20:28 (ESV)

"Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king, and by steadfast love his throne is upheld."

During the time of Samuel who served as a priest, prophet, and judge, the era of the kings of Israel began. God led the people out of Egypt and into the Land of Promise, meeting their every need along the way and providing them a law to follow. This form of government is known as a theocracy, which is a government led by God. But as time passed, the people of Israel saw that the other nations had human kings and this looked really attractive, so they asked Samuel to ask God to give them a king (1 Samuel 8:4-5).

Samuel was grieved by this request, but God assured Samuel that he should not feel the weight of sorrow because the people's request wasn't a rejection of him but rather a rejection of God Himself. God decided to give the people of Israel what they wanted but he gave them a stern warning in advance of how a human king would reign (1 Samuel 8:10-18). Even with the warning they persisted in their desire for a king (1 Samuel 8:19-22).

From the anointing of the first king by Samuel, there would be many kings who ruled over Israel. Some of them were good, faithful, and godly rulers, but most of them were not and just as God had warned the people, human rulership brought with it hardship.

Over the coming days, we look at the various human kings who ruled over Israel and Judah during the Old Testament period while recognizing that none of these kings, no matter how capable, courageous, or just, could compare to the coming King Jesus Christ.

Questions:

- 1. Have you ever had moments in life when you pursued something which God had forbidden and when you got it you suffered the consequence? What was that experience like?
- 2. What are some ways that you can ensure your desires are aligned with God's will for you?

Prayer:

Lord, my desire is to have the things which you have determined for me and to flee the things which you do not want in my life. Give me spiritual insight to know the things that are sent from you and the things which are not, and to make decisions which honor and please you. Amen.

Monday, December 18 SAUL

1 Samuel 9:1-2 (ESV)

"1There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. 2 And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people."

Saul was the first man to be king of Israel and according to 1 Samuel 9:1-2, he was a perfect choice, from the outside anyway. Saul came from a wealthy family; he was tall and also handsome. He was just what every Israelite imagined when they thought of a leader to rule and represent their nation.

God led Samuel to find Saul and to anoint him as King of Israel. Once Saul was anointed as King of Israel, he was to be presented to the people as King, but in an interesting turn of events, no one could find him at the time of his presentation. When they searched for their missing young King, they would find him hidden out amongst the baggage (1 Samuel 10:20-24). The young and nervous king would grow into an established ruler over the years, but he had struggles. Saul had fits of rage; at times he fell into periods of deep depression; he disobeyed the direct instructions of God (which ultimately led to his demise); and his pride caused him to begin an internal power struggle with a young shepherd/warrior/musician who God anointed to be the next King. His name was David.

For all that Saul did right, his most significant error was that he stopped listening to God. It is for this reason that he ultimately lost the throne of Israel because his pride and confidence in himself as king grew so much that he stopped listening to God.

Questions:

- 1. Have you ever had moments in your life when your pride got the best of you? What was that experience and why do you think you felt prideful?
- 2. What are ways that we as believers can keep our pride from getting the best of us so that we can remain right before God?

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you for all that you have done for me in my life and for all the ways you have blessed me. Lord, please protect me and keep me from pride that I may be lifted up by you because you exalt the humble.

Tuesday, December 19 DAVID

1 Samuel 16:11-13 (ESV)

"11 Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest,[a] but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." 12 And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah."

We meet David as the son of Jesse who is tending the sheep when Samuel arrives at their home, under the direction of God, to appoint the next king of Israel. So unconvinced is David's father about his youngest son as a potential candidate for king that he doesn't even invite him to meet with Samuel. It isn't until the Man of God asks if Jesse has another son he has not met yet that Jesse calls David from the field. It is interesting that God would not allow the oil of anointing to flow until it flowed on the right person (1 Samuel 16:1-13). No one can take what God has set aside for you!

Over the forthcoming chapters and verses of scripture, we learn a lot about the young shepherd who is anointed king. We learn that he is a musician, a song-writer, a fierce fighter, an effective strategist, a gifted administrator, full of faith, and a worshipper of God. All of these gifts culminate to make David the greatest king of Israel; so much so that Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, would be affectionately referred to as the "City of David" (1 Chronicles 15:1; 1 Kings 2:10).

It would take David a long time to become king of Israel and he would find himself in situations in which his life was almost taken by an angry and jealous King Saul, but no matter how bad it got, David never stopped trusting in God. Once David became King, it was not always a positive story. David would commit failures and sins in his life so atrocious that it would affect his future generations, and David would fight so many wars and shed so much blood as he established the nation of Israel that God would not allow him to build the temple of worship. This work was left to his son.

David's greatest lasting legacy was not his wealth, reign, music, or feats in battle. His greatest legacy was that of his worship of God and willingness to confess his sins and seek God's forgiveness. It is for this reason that at the end of his life, he was called a "man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22).

Questions:

- 1. Have you experienced a moment or season in your life when you failed and came to God asking God for forgiveness?
- 2. How did it feel when you experienced the forgiveness of God? What is the source of your confidence that you have been fully forgiven.

Prayer:

Today's prayer is for those who have made mistakes that yet haunt them. Those who have fallen short in their life and do not have the confidence that they have been fully forgiven by God.

Lord, I confess that I have made mistakes in my life; I have sinned; and I have regrets. Today, I ask for your forgiveness for that which I have done that has hurt your heart, hurt myself, and possibly hurt others. Thank you Lord for forgiving me and thank you that you no longer remember my sins once I confess them to you. Please give me strength to honor you alone with my life from this day forward. Amen.

Wednesday, December 20 SOLOMON

1 Kings 1:28-30 (ESV)

"28 Then King David answered, "Call Bathsheba to me." So she came into the king's presence and stood before the king. 29 And the king swore, saying, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my soul out of every adversity, 30 as I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel, saying, 'Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' even so will I do this day."

Solomon, the son of King David, would succeed his father as King. There would be significant contention and fighting for the throne as uprisings took place, which were led by some of David's other children who desired to lay claim to the throne. While this form of inner-family violence is historically common in the transition of power amongst royal families, these events within King David's family had a more specific and spiritual source.

Solomon's mother was Bathsheba, a woman who King David had utilized his power to take her despite the fact that she was married to Uriah, who was one of David's soldiers. This already grievous sin would only become all the more twisted when King David attempted to cover his tracks after impregnating Bathsheba by having Uriah intentionally set-up to be killed in battle. All of this is recorded in 2 Samuel 11. The chapter ends with this statement, "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD."

God's displeasure and judgement was communicated by the Prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 12) who proclaimed to King David that the baby Bathsheba was carrying would not live and furthermore, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house..." This word upon King David's house set the stage for his own offspring turning against one another and against him as well.

However, even the midst of the sin which King David invited into his own home there was the grace of God. Bathsheba would give birth to another son named Solomon and King Solomon became known as one of the richest and wisest men ever to live (2 Chronicles 9:22). He also is known for building the glorious temple of God in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6).

Out of King David's failure God still used his son King Solomon to build the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, a temple so glorious it is sang of in many Psalms.

Questions:

- 1. In what ways does our sin impact those beyond ourselves?
- 2. How have you experienced God's grace in the midst of your failure in your life?

Prayer: Lord, I know that I am a sinner in need of your grace. Please grant me strength to resist the temptations of the flesh and use my life to leave a monument to your glory.

Thursday, December 21 AHAB

1 Kings 16:29 (ESV)

"In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years."

Remember, God warned the people through Samuel, when they asked for a human king, that a king would bring trouble. One form of trouble that develops is that the nation of Israel divides into two separate kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom retains the name "Israel" and the Southern Kingdom takes on the name Judah. For years these kings will not rule over a united kingdom of Israel, as did Saul, David, and Solomon.

The other form of trouble we see is bad kings, like King Ahab who could have been the very king that God had in mind when He gave Israel the warning about kings.

Scripture refers to King David as a man "after God's own heart". In contrast, King Ahab who ruled the Northern Kingdom of Israel for 22-years was a man who was not only far from the heart of God, but he intentionally lived a life that hurt the heart of God. In fact, 1 Kings 16:30 states, "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him." Yes, King Ahab distinguished his reign by being sinful, evil, and wicked beyond compare. Ahab would bring pagan gods, such as Baal, and worship them amongst the people, which solidified his position as being against the God of Israel including his marriage to his wife Jezebel, whose name yet lives on in as much infamy as his own.

It was his sinful lifestyle that led the people astray and would also create a contentious relationship between he and God's powerful Prophet Elijah. It was King Ahab's sin that ultimately brought about God's wrath in the form of a contest of powers, in which God would strike all of King Ahab's kingdom with a devastating drought.

King Ahab would have a reign marked by sin and evil, yet he could not overpower God for soon God moved Ahab out of the way and continued His great work in the world.

Questions:

- 1. Have you ever had difficulties come into your life that are so substantial it seems like they would never end? How did this experience lead you to feel?
- 2. Now, reflect on what it was like when God removed that obstacle and lifted that burden. Take a moment to thank God that no personality, circumstance, illness, loss, or sorrow can stop the will of God.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you that even when that which is evil rises up against your will it cannot stop you. I am grateful Lord that you are unstoppable, and it is in this reality that I find strength, even in the difficult moments of life. Amen.

Friday, December 22 HEZEKIAH

2 Kings 18:1-2 (ESV)

"1In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah."

King Hezekiah was only 25 years old when he came to the throne to rule the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He is best remembered for his faithfulness to God, which was immediately and decisively demonstrated with his initial acts as King as he destroyed all the idols and altars built to false gods.

This initial act of ousting false worship was not the totality of his reign. He truly embodied faithfulness to God. King Hezekiah kept the law of God and held fast to the ways of God; he refused to bow and serve the pagan King of Assyria who was much stronger, and he fought the Philistines who were the enemy of God's people.

One of the great episodes in the reign of Hezekiah is recorded in 2 Kings 18:13-19:37 when he stood against the threat of the violent Assyrian King Sennacherib, who had the city of Jerusalem surrounded. Rather than giving in to the threats, once it was realized that King Sennacherib was not going away, Hezekiah trusted God and stood shoulder to shoulder with the Prophet Isaiah and God delivered them.

At a key moment in King Hezekiah's life, he is deathly ill and received word from the Prophet Isaiah that he was going to die. Hezekiah immediately prayed to God and reminded God of how faithful he had strived to be and requested to be healed and God relented and restored Hezekiah's health (2 Kings 20:1-11).

Questions:

- 1. Identify and write down a moment (or two) in your life when you felt like you were going to suffer a great setback and God came through and delivered you.
- 2. What are some ways you have experienced the blessings of God through your faithful ness to Him?

Prayer:

Lord, make me faithful to following you like King Hezekiah. Give me courage to tear down any idol in my life and build myself up in your Word so that I can follow you more completely. Amen

Saturday, December 23 JOSIAH

2 Kings 22:1 (ESV)

"1Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Ierusalem."

King Josiah became King of the Southern Kingdom of Judah at only 8 years old! He would ultimately reign for 31 years and what is most impressive about Josiah is the big decisions he made as a young king that pleased the heart of God. Let's take a quick look at a few of the BIG decisions of this child King.

• Repairing the temple

King Josiah sent word to the High Priest Hilkiah to use funds to make repairs to the Temple so that it was not allowed to remain in disrepair (2 Kings 22:3-7).

• Finding the Book of the Law

In the midst of the High Priest Hilkiah having the temple repaired, the Book of the Law is discovered and reported back to King Josiah, who laments that it was lost and not found and calls out to God for mercy, and God grants mercy (2 Kings 22:8-20).

Enacting Reforms

King Josiah calls all the elders and inhabitants of Jerusalem to the Temple, and they hear the reading of the Book of the Law and recommit themselves to the Lord, destroying all altars and false gods and re-establishing God's ordinances (2 Kings 23:1-20).

• Restoring the Passover

King Josiah commanded all the people to once again keep the Passover (because it had not been kept since the days of the judges), and for the remainder of his reign the Passover was kept (2 Kings 23: 21-27).

Josiah's reign ended when he was 39 years old, as he died in battle. His body was returned back to Jerusalem and buried (2 Kings 23:28-30). Josiah did not live a long life, but his life was greatly effective because he followed and obeyed God.

Questions:

- 1. Can you think of other biblical characters which God used at a young age (David, Mary, Miriam, etc.)? Look them up in your Bible read about them and write down some common character traits you see shared amongst them.
- 2. Why do you think those traits matter to God?

Prayer:

Lord, I know that you can use my life regardless of age. I also know you have a purpose for my life. Give me Lord eyes to see and courage to follow the good plans and purposes that you have for my life. Amen.

JESUS OUR PRIEST, PROPHET, & KING Christmas Eve

Sunday, December 24 – Christmas Eve JESUS OUR PROPHET, PRIEST, & KING

Colossians 1:19-20 (ESV)

"19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

In all candor, if the story of God ended with the names which we have studied over these past three weeks of our Advent experience, it would be what Paul the Apostle called, "most miserable" because every prophet, every priest, and every king, no matter how much they served God, was a flawed and broken person. This underscores the truth of the words of Romans 3:23, "23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...", reminding us that even on our very best and most faithful day we are all damaged by sin. So, what shall we do then? Where is our hope? Who will speak the will of God to us as His faithful prophet? Who will stand between us and God as our mediator to restore relationship? Who will judge and reign righteously as our King?

The answer is to these questions is found in one word, Jesus!

Hebrews 4:14 declares Jesus as our Great High Priest. Revelation 19:10 identifies Jesus as the source and essence of all prophecy and those who see his works openly declare him a prophet (Matthew 21:10-11). Twice in the book of Revelation Jesus is referred to as "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords" (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

Jesus Christ is the very son of God and He alone is our all-sufficient Prophet, Priest, and King. While prophets were used to speak on God's behalf, Jesus is the direct revelation of God the Father. While priests were to make sacrifice to God on the people's behalf, Jesus is our sacrificial lamb of God. While kings reigned for a period of time, Jesus is the King of Kings who reigns without end.

Rejoice that Jesus is our Prophet, our Priest, and our King!

Questions:

1. What has Jesus been to you? A friend, a provider, a protector, a guide? Jesus is not only our all-sufficient prophet, priest and king, but He is also so much more! Take a moment to write down all that Jesus is to you. When you finish writing your list, take a moment to go back through your list and thank Jesus for each way He has been just what you have needed in your life.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for being my all-sufficient Prophet, Priest, and King who meets every one of my needs. Help me to know that in whatever condition I find myself you are all I need because you meet my every need. Amen.

JESUS OUR SAVIOR Christmas Day

Monday, December 25 – Christmas Day JESUS OUR SAVIOR

Read the Christmas Story: Matthew 1:18-2:12 & Luke 1:26-2:21 Luke 2:11 declares "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." On Christmas morning we not only celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ our all-sufficient priest, prophet, and king but we remember on this day that Jesus is our SAVIOR!

Reading the story of the birth of our Savior, we are struck by how heaven and earth collided with one another, all in one moment. At the same time that a baby is being born in a small manger, because there is no room in the Inn, wise men travel from afar off to bring that baby the gifts of the king. In the same field where shepherds are keeping watch over their flock as common workers within the community, the heavens open and angels appear surrounded by radiant light, announcing the birth of the Christ child and singing glorious songs.

Jesus the son of God came as our Prophet, as our Priest and as our King, but Jesus ultimately came as our SAVIOR! This word savior means that Jesus came as our deliverer. Jesus came to break the chains of sin and deliver us from the bondage of death. But not only did Jesus come to deliver out of sin and death, but Jesus also came to deliver us into true life, or as he called it, abundant life (John 10:10).

Our great joy on Christmas morning is that we reflect on the reality that Jesus, the fulfillment of all prophecy, our Great High Priest, the King of Kings, has come to earth, delivering us from sin and restoring us to new and abundant life in God.

Jesus our Savior is the greatest gift!

Question:

1. Jesus our Savior is the greatest gift guiding us out of death and into new life. Have you accepted Jesus Christ? If not, this is just the right time to do so. Romans 10:9-10 says, "...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." If you would like to invite Jesus

into your heart, please pray the Prayer of Salvation on the next page.

PRAYER OF SALVATION

Prayer of Salvation

Jesus is our priest, prophet, and king, but to know Him truly, you must accept Him personally as your Savior. If you want to accept Jesus Christ into your heart and be saved in Him, take a moment now and read these words earnestly to the Lord in prayer:

Jesus, I thank you that I have been able to spend time in this advent devotional study and for the ways you have spoken to my heart. I thank you that you are my Prophet, my Priest, and my King and that everything that I need is provided in you.

Jesus, now in this moment I confess with my mouth that you are my Savior! I believe that you are Lord, that you love me, and that you showed your love for me by giving your life on the cross and then being raised victoriously by God the Father, conquering the sin and death which held me captive.

Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner. I have made mistakes and many bad decisions; I have done wrong in my thoughts, words, and deeds. I ask your forgiveness and I ask you to come now and live in my heart.

Thank you Jesus for coming into my heart and for making me new. Thank you for your Holy Spirit that now lives in me and thank you that you have made me a new creation in you!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Congratulations on your new life in Jesus Christ and welcome to the family of God! If you have just prayed this prayer, we at Tabernacle Bible Church would really like to know so that we may help you find a good Bible teaching church near you so you can have the support of other Christ followers alongside you. Please send us an email at info@tbcwichita.org or give us a call at (316) 681-3954. We would love to speak with you.



♀ 1817 N. Volutsia Wichita, KS 67214

(°) 316-681-3954

@tabernaclebiblechurchwichita

www.tabernaclebiblewichita.com