

Advent Bible Study

HOPE • PEACE • JOY • LOVE • CHRIST



Leanne Johnson

Unwrapping Heaven's Gift!

“And you will call His name Jesus,
for He will save His people
from their sins.”

*A 25-day Bible Study focusing on Christ
in the days leading up to Christmas.*

JESUS' INCARNATION

1st December



The Christmas story is not primarily about the birth of a baby who would grow up to become a great moral teacher and example, although Jesus did become those things. **Rather, it is the profound story of the birth of the Saviour.**

After explaining that Mary was with child by the Holy Spirit, the angel told Joseph, "***And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins***" (Matthew 1:21).

The Hebrew name **Jesus**(= Joshua) means "**Jehovah is salvation.**"
If you do not know Jesus as your Saviour, then you do not know Him at all.

Jesus Christ came to save His people from their sins.

Who came?

- How was Jesus conceived? (see Matthew 1:18,20)

This is the **doctrine of the virgin birth** of our Lord.

Many reject it because it is miraculous.

God is able to interrupt the laws of His creation according to His purpose.

The virgin birth affirms the following:

- **The deity of Christ (that Christ is fully God)**

What do **John 1:1,14** and **John 8:58** say?

How does **Philippians 2:6-7** explain it?

- **The sinless humanity of Christ** (that Christ had no sin in Him):
Who does the angel say Jesus is in **Luke 1:35?** (See also **1 John 3:5**)

.....

**As a sinless man, Jesus could represent the human race as sin-bearer.
As God the Son, His sacrifice was acceptable before God the Father.**

So...“Who came?”

Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary, is none other than the eternal God in human flesh, and that He came to earth primarily as the Saviour.

2nd December

What was Jesus’ purpose in coming?

What does **Matthew 1:21** say His purpose was?

.....

*The word “**save**” is a **radical word**. You do not save someone who just needs a little help. You save someone who is unable to do anything to save himself.
A person who is lost at sea needs saving. A person who has stopped breathing needs saving.*



*This means that prior to Jesus’ saving them, His people were helplessly, hopelessly lost in their sins. They were alienated from God, under His righteous judgment, and unable to free themselves from this condition. A Saviour is one who has the power to rescue people who could not rescue themselves.
Jesus has the God-given power to save His people from their sins. [Steven J. Cole]*

Summarise **Ephesians 2:1,4-5**

.....

.....

- “He **will save** His people from their sins”! There isn’t any human contingency factor about it.
- **“Salvation is from the Lord”**
- When Almighty God purposes to save a people, *He saves that people!*

How do these verses confirm that Salvation is by the Lord alone?

Jonah 2:9

Psalms 3:8

Isaiah 43:11

Why would God do this? See **Ephesians 1:5** and **Ephesians 2:4**

Write out **1 John 4:9**

Write out **Revelation 7:10**

3rd December

Who did Christ come to save?

He came to “save **His people** from their sins.”

But who are His people?



Some may say that “His people” refers to the Jews, God’s chosen people. As Psalm 130:8 puts it, “He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” But if this means that all Jews will be saved, then we must conclude that God has failed in His purpose, since many Jews go to their graves rejecting Jesus as Saviour and Messiah. [Steven J. Cole]

What does Paul point out in **Romans 9:6-7?**

Who are the true children of Abraham?

Romans 2:26-27

Galatians 3:9,29

Some would say that this refers to the whole world since Jesus is the Saviour of the whole world” (John 4:42). While there is certainly a sense in which He is the Saviour of the whole world (not of the Jews only; see Rev. 5:9), if His purpose in coming was to save every person who has ever lived, then we must conclude that He failed in His purpose. But since it is inconceivable that Almighty God could fail in His eternal purpose, “His people” cannot refer to every person in the world.



“His people” refers to **all who believe in Him** for eternal life. But we must ask, **why** do these people believe in Jesus? What enables them to believe?

Scripture is clear on the reasons why anyone believes in Jesus as Saviour and Lord:

John 6:44,65

Ephesians 2:4-5

2 Corinthians 4:4,6

They believe because God granted them faith. They are called His **ELECT**
Acts 5:31; 11:18; 13:48; 16:14; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29; Hebrews 12:2

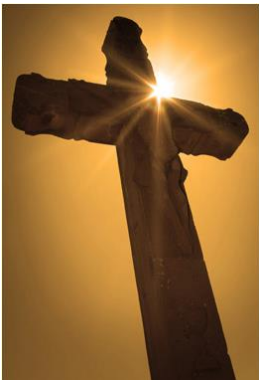
From **Revelation 5:9** – How would you summarise who God’s elect are?

.....

4th December

What did Jesus actually do?

*“He actually saved His people from their sins.”
In other words, Jesus’ death on the cross was **substitutionary**
and specific. He died in the place of those He came to save, so that
they do not have to die for their own sins.*



- He saves or delivers them **from the penalty** of their sins, which is eternal punishment in hell.
What does **Romans 8:1-2** promise?

.....

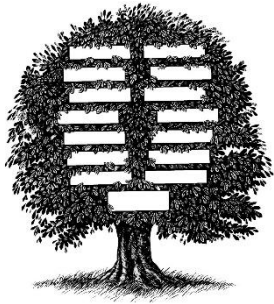
- He saves them **from the power** of sin in their daily lives.
Summarise **Romans 6:14-18**

.....

Are you one of His people?

- ★ Do you know that you are a sinner, deserving of God’s judgment?
- ★ Have you fled for refuge from God’s judgment to the cross of Jesus Christ?
- ★ Are you trusting in His shed blood alone to pay the penalty for your sins?”
- ★ Is there any evidence in your life that Christ has saved you from your sins?
- ★ Do you love Jesus Christ and are flooded with gratitude because you know that He gave Himself on the cross for you. Do you hunger for holiness?

Christ's Genealogy:



Matthew chapter 1 starts with a record of Christ's family tree or genealogy.

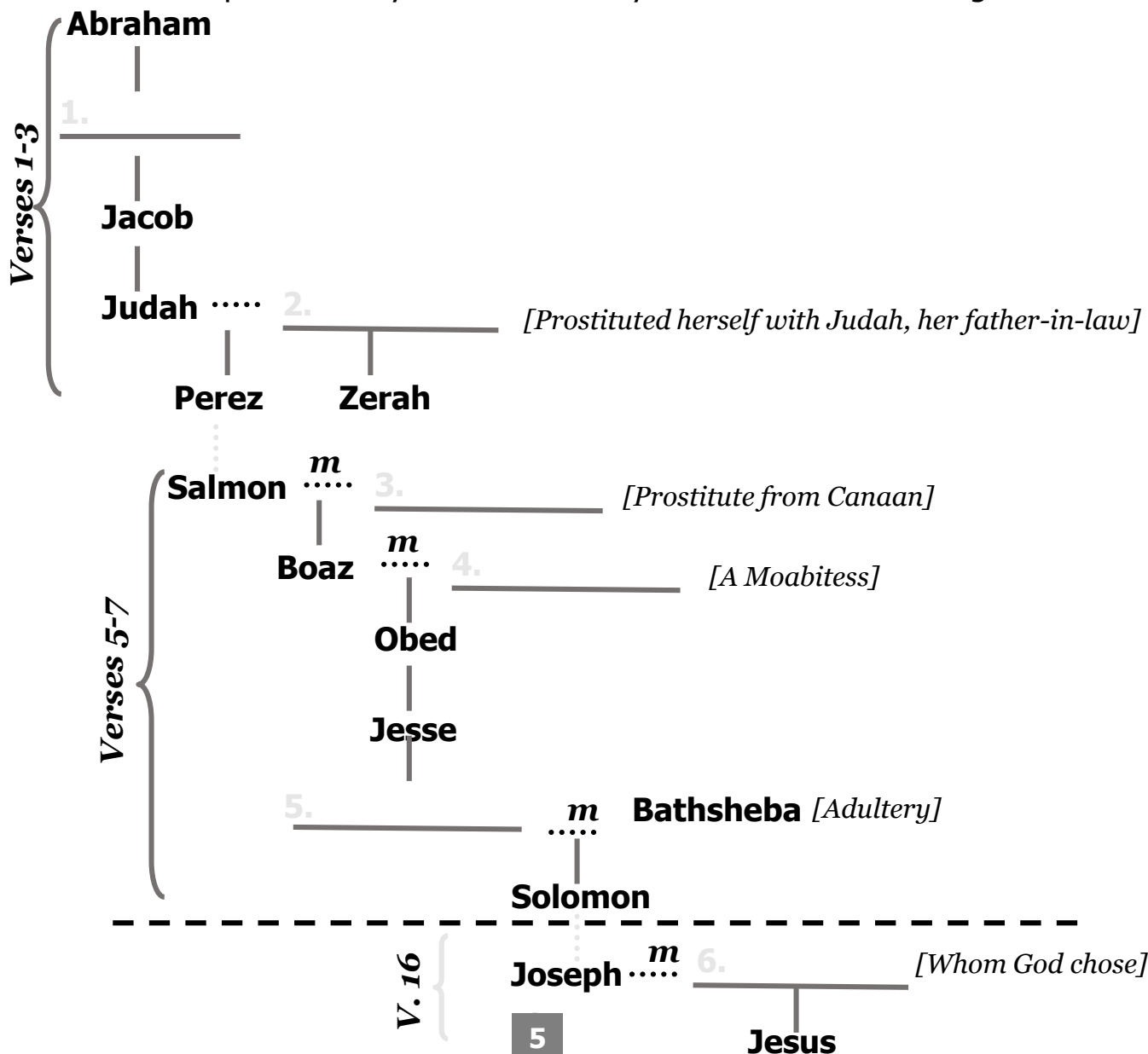
He traces the royal ancestry of Jesus the Messiah. It does seem like a dull way to begin a book, much less to launch the New Testament! I doubt if any editor today would accept such an opening for any book. Most of us would probably just skip these sections when we read through the Bible.

Perhaps you might wonder why God would take up space in the Bible with this boring list of difficult names to pronounce of people who lived thousands of years ago, half-way around the world.

How is it relevant to us? Let's take a look at it to see why it is relevant to us.

Please read Matthew 1:1-17 – Highlighting any names you might recognise or know from the Old Testament.

- Below is a simple summary of Christ's family tree – fill in the missing names:



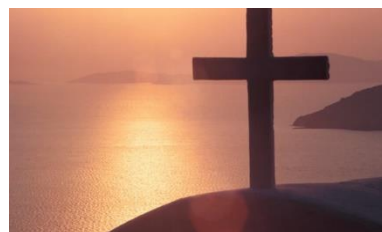
Hopefully that exercise has already piqued your curiosity and you are starting to see God's hand of sovereignty, providence and grace in the ancestry of Jesus.

- Christ's genealogy is tainted with sinners
- Christ's genealogy shows that God sent a Saviour for sinners and that He fulfilled His promises in Jesus Christ.
- This is the Jewish royal line of Jesus (the King of kings) and it cannot be fabricated, because no Jew would have included prostitutes and Gentiles in the family line of the Messiah. Only God – whose redemptive plan was there from before the creation of the world to save a people for Himself from all nations, tribes and tongues.

6th December

God sent a Saviour for sinners:

Every individual in Christ's family tree needed a Saviour. Everyone on the list shares something in common: whether they were relatively good people or notoriously bad, they all were sinners who needed a Saviour.



In **Romans 1-3**, Paul argues that everyone, whether pagan, Gentiles or religious Jews, are guilty before God as sinners.

What is Pauls' conclusion in **Romans 3:23**?

.....

.....

What does Paul say in **Romans 6:23**?

.....

.....

Even the godly virgin Mary, His mother, acknowledged her need of a Saviour. What are her words in her prayer in **Luke 1:47**?

.....

What does she say in **Luke 1:54-55**?

.....

.....



Are you beginning to see that Christmas is not just about a baby in a manger and nativity scenes and carols sung once a year?

What Christmas is about is the heralding of hope for a fallen world – hope for you and me. And if you cannot see the cross as the central message of Christmas, you don't understand what Christmas is about!

The reason there was a manger is so that there could be a cross!

Let's look at 4 of the Women in Christ's ancestry

Oddly for the patriarchal Jews, there are some women on the list. Also, oddly for a Jewish genealogy, three of those women were Gentiles, and 3 were notorious for immorality. **This shows that Jesus came to save sinners:**

TAMAR: The salvation Christ brings is for sinners



*Tamar's story occurs in one of the most sordid chapters in the Bible, **Genesis 38**. Judah, her father-in-law, had taken a Canaanite wife, who bore him three sons. Judah took Tamar, a Canaanite woman, as a wife for his first son, but that son was evil in the Lord's sight and the Lord took his life. Judah then told his second son to go in to Tamar to conceive an heir for his deceased brother. When that son dodged his responsibility, the Lord killed him.*

*Judah then promised Tamar that when the third son grew up, she could be married to him. But he either forgot or ignored his promise. Tamar then disguised herself as a prostitute, hiding her face under a veil. Not knowing that it was she, Judah had relations with her and she became pregnant with twins, Perez and Zerah. Perez was in the line that led to Jesus Christ (**Matthew 1:3**).*

What are Jesus' words in **Matthew 9:13b**?

.....

.....

What does **Matthew 11:19** say?

.....

.....

To benefit from the reason that Jesus came, you must recognize in the first place that you have sinned against the Holy God and that all of your good deeds will not atone for your sins. You need a Saviour and Jesus is that Saviour. But, how do we obtain this salvation? Let's look at Rahab....

RAHAB: The salvation Christ brings comes through faith



Rahab has come down to us in biblical history with the qualification, "the harlot." Like Tamar, she was a Canaanite woman, excluded from God's covenant people. She lived in Jericho. She knew that the city was going to be destroyed and she believed in the God of the Hebrews, that "He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (Joshua 2:11). So she hid the Hebrew spies and pleaded with them to spare her life and the lives of her family.

What does **Hebrew 11:31** say about Rahab

.....

.....

What does **James 2:25** say about her?

.....

.....

James is making the point that genuine saving faith is not merely intellectual assent. The demons have that kind of faith, but are not saved. Rather, saving faith always results in a life of obedience. Rahab proved that her faith was genuine by her obedience in risking her life to protect the Hebrew spies. The fact that Rahab is listed here as the wife of Salmon shows that she turned from her life of prostitution. By faith in God's promise, she experienced His salvation. By His grace, she even became an ancestor of the Saviour. [Steven J. Cole]

8th December

RUTH: The salvation Christ brings is for Gentiles condemned by law, but redeemed by grace



Like Tamar and Rahab, Ruth was a Gentile. She was a Moabite and thus outside of God's covenant people. Unlike Tamar, Rahab and Bathsheba, Ruth was a moral woman. She was married to a Jewish man who died. When her mother-in-law decided to return to Israel, out of love Ruth chose to go with her. She made the great confession (Ruth 1:16b), "Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God."

What did God's law say about Moabites in **Deuteronomy 23:3?**

.....

.....

How, then, did Ruth find her way into the genealogy of Christ?

- The Book of Ruth tells how Ruth found grace and love in the eyes of a man who was her kinsman-redeemer. Boaz paid the price of redemption and took Ruth, the Moabite woman, as his bride.
- It's a beautiful picture of how Christ, our Redeemer, paid the price of our redemption with His own blood. As a result, we Gentiles, who formerly were excluded from God's people and, even if we were good people, were condemned by His law, were brought into His family as His chosen bride (Ephesians 2:11-22)!

Ruth illustrates God's grace. What does **Ephesians 2:8-9** say?

.....

.....

BATHSHEBA: The salvation Christ brings is sufficient to preserve His people despite their sins



In the Greek text, Matthew 1:6 does not name Bathsheba, but refers to her as “the wife of Uriah,” a way of alluding to her and David’s sin of adultery. Probably Bathsheba was a Jew (1 Chron. 3:5). As such, she and David remind us of the fact that even believers can fall into gross sin. They experienced the consequences for their sin, in that the child she conceived died, and yet, their second son, Solomon, is in the line of Christ. While we should never justify or excuse such sin, Bathsheba’s place among the ancestors of Christ shows us God’s grace in preserving His elect, even when they sin.

What does **1 John 1:9** promise believers?

.....

What assurance does **Philippians 1:6** give believers?

.....

- These four women illustrate from different angles the great news that God saves sinners.
- If you have failed terribly, God sent the Saviour for you!
- This genealogy invites you to come to Jesus and ask Him to save you from your sins.
- If you have trusted in Christ as Saviour, but have fallen into serious sin, this genealogy invites you to turn back to Christ, experience His forgiveness, and walk in fellowship with Him again.
- In Christ, God sent a Saviour for sinners. His plan from the beginning.

9th December

God fulfilled His promises in Jesus Christ:

Matthew 1:1 doesn't just say the genealogy of Jesus, but of “**Jesus Christ**”. The NASB (a literal translation) says “**Jesus the Messiah**” “**Christ**” means “**Messiah**” (Hebrew) or “**Anointed One**” and points to Jesus as God’s anointed Saviour and King.

Who does Peter say Jesus is in **Matthew 16:16**?

.....

What was he acknowledging?

.....

Matthew makes two main points with his genealogy:

A. God fulfilled His promise: Jesus is the son of David.

Jesus the son of David, the promised Messiah was born!

Note the prophecies in the following verses:

Psalms 89:3-4

Isaiah 9:6-7

Matthew is tracing Jesus’ legal right to the throne.

When our God promises something – He brings it to pass.

B. God fulfilled His promise: Jesus is the son of Abraham.

This takes us back to the covenant that God made with Abraham 2,000 years before Christ, where He promised Abraham that through his seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3).

There are preview glimpses of this through the Gentile women in the line of Christ. As we’ve seen, three of the four women listed were Gentiles, and the fourth was married to Uriah the Hittite, a Gentile. This shows us that Jesus, the son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1), brings the blessing of Abraham beyond Israel to the nations. [Steven J. Cole]



What commission does Jesus give His disciples in **Matthew 28:19**?

.....

Christ’s birth represented the fulfilment of a 2,000-year-old promise to Abraham and a 1,000-year-old promise to David

The stories of Tamar, Ruth, Rahab, and Bathsheba show us that God’s mercy extends to all sinners who will repent and trust in Christ. The genealogy of Jesus as the son of David, the son of Abraham, shows that God keeps His covenant promises.

Jesus is coming again, a second time, to judge the world.

What will your standing be on that day?

Are you ready for that day?

Mary, the mother of Jesus:

Read Luke 1:26-38



When Gabriel appears to Mary, she is probably about 14 or 15 years old. She has dreams of marriage, a home and a family. She is even engaged to a man named Joseph and about to be married. She has probably ordered the flowers, chosen her dress from the bridal magazine and planned her honeymoon! According to the text, she has maintained her sexual purity, as well as her spiritual purity. She is living close to the Lord and is living a good life before the Lord. Mary apparently has it all. A bright future is awaiting her, she has everything for which to live.

What does the angel Gabriel say twice to Mary in **verse 28** and **verse 30**?

.....

- Finding favour with God has nothing to do with age, wealth, position or gender
- Finding favour with God has everything to do with our hearts and our faith

What 5 things did the angel Gabriel say about Jesus in **verses 32-33**?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

This was a lot to process. The appearance of the angel with amazing news!
What is Mary's response in verse 34?

.....

It is interesting to note that Mary's question is not one of disbelief. She believed the promise, what Gabriel said, but did not understand how it could happen through her.

The following responses must have raced through her mind:

FEAR – she was troubled (v.29-30)

WONDER – she didn't understand (v.34)

DISTRESS – she knew the penalty for pregnancy outside of marriage was death by stoning (Leviticus 20:10)

QUESTIONING – she was unmarried and a virgin (v.27)

What is Gabriel's response in verse 37?

.....

What is Mary's response in **verse 38**?

.....

.....

Doesn't that absolutely amaze you? Her entire world has just been turned upside down and inside out! She immediately submits to the will of God and does not question, she does not try and get out of it, she does not throw a tantrum, she does not add her own agenda or requests. She does not panic or work out how she is going to explain this to Joseph or her parents. She quietly rests in the sovereignty and plan of God.



It is all a mystery to her and yet she just trusts in her God, with whom nothing is impossible!

Mary's response shows us 4 attitudes of her heart:

1. A heart of humility
2. A heart of submission
3. A heart of acceptance
4. A heart of praise

Can the same be said of your 🍏 **?**

11th December

Mary's song/prayer of praise

Read Luke 1:39-56



This is the hymn of praise that Mary spoke in response to Elizabeth's recognition through the Holy Spirit that Mary was carrying the promised Messiah in her womb. In this hymn, Mary extols God for His mercy and for His righteous judgments. Even though Mary was only a teenager, she had a deep understanding of God and His mercy.

How does Elizabeth encourage Mary?

.....

.....

Mary's hymn is full of information about the attributes and nature of God. Her world has just completely changed – and she sees God in it and trusts Him and praises and worships Him! **Is this your natural reaction?**

She goes to Elizabeth, an older, wiser, Godly woman, who she knows will encourage her and give her a Godly perspective on her situation. Elizabeth confirms that she is carrying the Messiah by the power of the Holy Spirit. When God sets His way before us – He goes before us, step by step. We just need to start walking in it....BY FAITH.

Write down the attribute of God from the following verses?

- Verse 47
- Verse 49
- Verse 50
- Verse 51-52
- Verse 53
- Verse 54

How does Mary refer to herself in **verse 48**?

The more we see how great God is, the more we will sense our own sinfulness, which will lead us to magnify all the more His abundant mercy toward us in Christ.

What does **Philippians 2:5-8** say our attitude should be like? Explain



Scholars tell us that **Mary's “Magnificat”** (Mary's hymn of praise) contains at least 15 quotes from the Old Testament. Mary knew God through the books of Moses, the Psalms and the writings of the Prophets. She had a deep reverence for the Lord in her heart because she knew what He had done in the history of His people. She was anticipating her Messiah.

12th December

Mary knew the Old Testament Scriptures – as a Jewish girl, she would have memorised many passages of Scripture. It is possible that that on her 4-day walk to Elizabeth’s house in the hill country, Mary might have been remembering Hannah’s famous Old Testament prayer from 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Hannah took her crisis to God in prayer. She conceived a child and gave birth to a son and her son served the Lord all his days.



Hannah, like Mary, was a woman with a song in her heart. As you look at Mary’s hymn of exaltation and compare it with Hannah's prayer from the Old Testament, may it teach you how to pray and how to magnify the Lord.

Read **1 Samuel 2:1-10** and compare it with Mary's "Magnificat" in **Luke 1:46-57**

Mary's prayer	Hannah's prayer
v.46-47	v.1
v.49	v.2
v.51	v.4,9,10
v.52	v.8
v.53	v.5,7

In **verses 54-55** of Mary's "Magnificat," Mary affirms what God will do for Israel. What did God promise to Abraham and to Israel in...

- Genesis 12:1-3**
- Genesis 17:19**
- Genesis 22:18**
- Genesis 26:4**
- Genesis 28:14**
- Psalm 98:1-3**

All of these promises point to the Messiah's forthcoming appearance - a promise that was about to become a reality!

Write out **Galatians 3:29**.

.....
.....

13th December

Joseph



Read Matthew 1:18-25

Let's see how God used Joseph. The man Mary was betrothed to, to act on her behalf. Joseph was a righteous man who desired to handle the situations in his life the right way – God's way. What seemed to be a crisis in Mary and Joseph's life... was actually God working out His sovereign will and purpose. A will and purpose that was bigger than them. Both Mary and Joseph passed the test of faith and both humbly bowed to God's will – even though it was not easy.

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph a total of 7 times!
What promise in **Luke 1:31-35** became a reality in **Matthew 1:18**?

.....

.....

What fact does God's Word make clear regarding sexual relations between Mary and Joseph in **Matthew 1:18**?

.....

How is Joseph described in **Matthew 1:19**?

.....

Rather than humiliate Mary and make a public spectacle, what did Joseph decide to do quietly in **v.19**? What did the Law say in **Deuteronomy 24:1**?

.....

In Jewish custom, an engagement or betrothal was as binding as marriage. Therefore, to break the engagement, required a legal divorce.

But what happened instead? (**Matthew 1:20**)

.....

Summarise the angel's description of Jesus' conception, life and ministry in **Matthew 1:20-23**

.....

.....

How did Joseph respond to the angels' instructions and what does Scripture make clear regarding sexual relations between Mary and Joseph? (**Matt. 1:24-25**)

.....

14th December

Seeing the Big Picture

Read Luke 2:1-7



Mary and Joseph both responded obediently and humbly to the Lord. They both displayed hearts of submission and trust. Their circumstances would have seemed overwhelming to them, and yet, because they feared God, they chose to obey Him and to be used by Him. What a privilege and an honour to have found favour with God!

What promise of God did they experience and which we can be sure of?
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

Bible historians will tell us that Jesus was not born on the 25th December and that this specific day has come to us from pagan roots. But it is the time in our Christian calendar when we specifically remember and celebrate the birth of Christ. You know the “Christmas story” well – the “Away in a manger” version.



*But if we are not careful – we might miss the “big picture”. We will miss the **sovereign God** working through the lives of big government officials as well as in the lives of little people who humbly obeyed the Lord.* [Elizabeth George.]

Let’s look at some of the FACTS:

- Who was the ruler “in those days” and what was his decree? (v.1)
- How did this impact the people? (v.3)
- How did this affect Mary and Joseph? (v.4)
- What was Mary’s condition? (v.5)
- What happened while Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem? (v.6-7)
- Describe the details of the birth. (v.7)

Now go back to the Old Testament and see what Micah prophesied in **Micah 5:2**.

Can you see how Caesar Augustus’ decree was used by God to bring about the fulfilment of Micah’s prophecy?

Elizabeth George reminds us that it is very pagan authorities who were responsible for bringing Jesus to Bethlehem. Caesar...unknowingly, becomes the servant of God’s purpose! The PROMISE is fulfilled through the actions of the unlikeliest of people. **For God is Lord of all the earth and there is no power not under His authority!!**

Write out **Proverbs 21:1**

.....

.....

Write out **Proverbs 20:24**

.....

.....



*Put yourself for a minute in Mary's position:
The trip to Bethlehem was about 100 km on the back
of a donkey on winding paths, rocky roads and steep
mountain terrain. Mary was 9 months pregnant.
Then... arriving in Bethlehem with no place to stay.
Then... giving birth away from home and family... in
a stable (more like a cave.)*

How much hardship and inconvenience are you willing to endure for the God?

.....

Write out **Psalms 25:9**

.....

.....

15th December

Responding to the Saviour

Read Luke 2:8-20

The first people who are told of the birth of the King of kings are poor, simple shepherds, who were seen as unclean and had no status in society. God chose them, to be the first to hear the glorious announcement of the birth of His Son! God chose to treat them to the chorus of angels singing the anthem of praise. Heaven's choir came down to sing when Heaven's King came down to save!



What words did the angel give the shepherds? (v.10)

.....

.....

How did the angel refer to Jesus? (v.11-12)

.....

.....

What happens immediately after the angel's announcement? (v.13)

.....

Can you sense the glory of the occasion?



The shepherds acknowledged the announcement as coming from the Lord God (v.15)

They did 3 things in response:

- *They received the message of God (v.15)*
- *They responded immediately in obedience (v.16)*
- *They told others (v.18)*

The Angels announced the Good News and the shepherds passed it on.
What does **Romans 10:15** say?

.....

.....

**Have you responded to the Good News of Christ?
Are you sharing the Good News with others?**

What was Mary’s response to the shepherd’s visit? (v.19)

.....

How did the shepherds respond after visiting Mary and Joseph? (v.20)

.....

16th December

Born to Die Read Luke 2:25-35

Even though we don’t often leave the stable and manger scene at Christmas, the purpose of Christ’s birth was ultimately for the suffering and glory of the cross. When Jesus was 8 days old and taken to the temple – the reason for His birth was already hinted at by the prophetic words of Simeon. Simeon prophesied that Mary would experience anguish.



What did Simeon prophesy as he took Jesus in his arms?

- v. 30**
- v. 31**
- v. 32**
- v. 34**
- v. 35**

What did Isaiah prophesy about Jesus in **Isaiah 53:3-7?**

.....

.....

What does **John 19:25** say about the fulfilment of Simeon's prophecy concerning Mary?

.....

.....

We will never know the true depth of Mary's anguish as she watched her Son being crucified, but Simeon's choice of words paints a gruesome picture. The word he used for "**sword**" is the same word found in the Old Testament to describe the giant, Goliath's, large, broad sword (**1 Samuel 17:51**). The pain Mary would know when her son was nailed to the cross would be like the pain inflicted by a huge and cruel weapon.

17th December

Seeking the Lord **Read Matthew 2:1-12**



*In Matthew 2:1 we meet the **Magi**. "**Magi**" comes from the Hebrew word "magos." A "**Magian**" refers to an Oriental Scientist, a wise man. These were wise men from the East, probably Persia. They were astronomers. They were not kings and there were probably more than three. They probably arrived a few months after Jesus' birth.*

Church traditions even tell us their names - supposedly Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar. You can see their supposed skulls in a cathedral in Cologne, Germany.

What question do the Magi ask on their arrival in Jerusalem? (v.2)

.....

What reason do they give? (v.2)

.....

What is their purpose? (v.2)

.....

Jewish legends say that Daniel himself, as an official of the Persian government, founded this order of *Magi* (**wise men**), and instructed them to watch for the Messiah through the generations. [David Guzik's commentary]

Wise men come first to Jerusalem, assuming that the leaders of the Jews would be aware and excited about the birth of their Messiah. The wise men are about to find that this isn't the case at all.

What is Herod's scheme? (v.8,11)

.....

.....

.....

What is the response of the magi when they arrive in Bethlehem and see Jesus?
(v.10-11)

.....

.....

***It is interesting to note the responses of praise , joy and worship from all those who encountered Jesus:
From Elizabeth and Mary before His birth and then from the shepherds and the magi.
What is your response to the birth of Jesus? Are you seeking Him?***

The idea that there were three wise men comes from the fact that there were three gifts:

- **Gold** representing royalty,
- **Frankincense** representing priesthood, and
- **Myrrh** representing death.

Once again – Jesus purpose in being born is hinted at here again.



Why did they not return to Herod? (v.12)

.....

.....

Elizabeth George makes the following observation:

- The religious leaders in Jerusalem knew **where** the Messiah was to be born... but not **when**.
- The wise men from the East, knew **when**... but not **where**.
- Once these two groups of "wise men" shared their information, for some reason, "wise men" (Jews) from Jerusalem did not travel the few 5miles to Bethlehem to witness the miracle of God-in-flesh...while
- The wise men (Gentiles) from the East, with complete information, completed their quest.

Obeying the Lord Read Matthew 2:13-23



*There was a large Jewish community in Egypt. It wasn't strange that the Holy Spirit would guide Joseph to take the family there. But we are impressed by Joseph's rapid **(leaving the very night of the dream)** and complete obedience. This wasn't an easy thing to do, but he did it. In the process, another prophecy was fulfilled. At first glance, we might wonder how this prophecy from Hosea 11:1 is fulfilled in Jesus: "Out of Egypt I will call my Son." But Matthew makes it clear that even as Israel as a nation came out from Egypt, so does the Son of God.*

[David Guzik]

Why did Mary and Joseph have to leave Bethlehem? (v.16-17)

.....

.....

How long did Mary and Joseph stay in Egypt? (v.15)

.....

.....

Summarise the events following Herod's death. (v.19-23)

.....

.....

.....

In a city called Nazareth - This was a small town, situated in Galilee, west of Capernaum, and not far from Cana.

The character of the people of Nazareth was such that they were proverbially despised and condemned. To come from Nazareth, therefore, or to be a Nazarene, was the same as to be despised, or to be esteemed of low birth; to be a root out of dry ground, having no form or comeliness. This was what had been predicted by all the prophets. When Matthew says, therefore, that the prophecies were "fulfilled," his meaning is, that the predictions of the prophets that he would be of a low and despised condition, and would be rejected, were fully accomplished in his being an inhabitant of Nazareth, and despised as such.

What does Nathanael say about Jesus in **John 1:45-49**?

.....

.....

What did the Isaiah prophecy about Jesus in **Isaiah 53:1-2**?

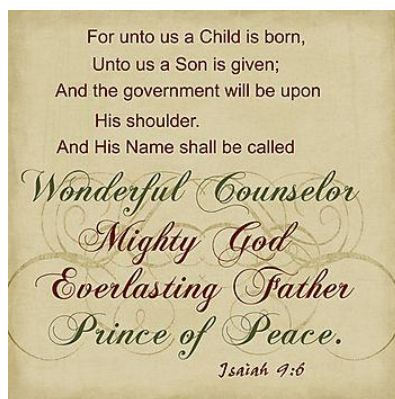
.....

.....

Seeing the Whole Story

Read Isaiah 9:1-7

The Old testament is full of prophecies foretelling the coming of the Messiah. The One who will be the Saviour. The prophecies were detailed and descriptive. Each one of them was fulfilled. Their fulfilment proves that God's Word stands and that He is faithful to His Word. His Word can be trusted. The Jews had studied the prophecies and were awaiting His coming. But they were looking for a Saviour of their own making.



The context of Isaiah's words is a very dark time for Judah. At the end of chapter 8 Isaiah speaks of darkness and fearful gloom that have come upon them. The nation is under siege by a neighbouring enemy, and this will be followed by two greater, more devastating attacks in the years ahead. At this point Judah has lived in rebellion against God for quite some time. Because of that, God's disciplinary judgment is falling, and nations around them are rising to oppress them.

In Isaiah 9:1-2, God explains what he is going to do in the midst of the darkness.

What is the light that God promises? (v.6-7)

.....

.....

Who is this referring to?

.....

How did Jesus refer to Himself in **John 8:12** and **John 9:5**?

.....

What geographical place will the light come from? (v.1)

.....

In light of what you studied yesterday – are you beginning to see the connection between the prophecy and its fulfilment?

Ever since Adam and Eve's original fall, the reign of sin on earth has brought darkness and devastation.

Yet into the midst of that darkness, God speaks a word of promise and hope, anticipating his decisive act: "Light has dawned!" He says, "I'm coming to deliver you out of darkness into light." **And in Christ He has done that!**

Write out **Isaiah 9:6a**



*The birth of a child suggests he is part of humanity.
But the words “**to us a son is given**” somehow evoke the idea
of something outside of humanity, given to us from God.
The greatest gift ever given, is God giving His Son.
He is the Son of God and the Son of Man.*

What 4 names is our Deliverer given in **verse 6**?

One who possesses all the wisdom and perspective of God himself, the One who is actually able to enact justice and peace and righteousness in our world

He has the power to accomplish what is right, to carry out the purposes of God to do what needs to be done. One who is strong and invincible.

He has no end. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

The peace that we experience now as followers of Christ is peace between us and God, the peacefulness of spirit and soul that issues from our relationship with God, because we know through faith that we have been reconciled to him.

So when we look into the manger and see this baby, what God says is that this child who is born, this Son who is given, is the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

According to **Philippians 2:7-8**, what did this entail for Jesus?

Write out **John 3:16**

That is why we dare not get lost in sentimentality about the Christmas story. This is not just a charming little story of a poor couple in trouble and a beautiful little baby in a manger in a stable. This is a decisive act of God Almighty, driven by the passion deep within his soul to rescue those he has created in his image, who are destroying themselves in their sin.

Unwrapping Heaven's Gift

Read Galatians 4:4-7

In this passage, Paul writes about the great, unspeakable gift of God. He helps us to understand Jesus, His mission and His ministry a little bit more clearly. In effect, he helps us to unwrap Heaven's gift.

The gift God gave the world was great beyond description!

What was the gift God gave 2000 years ago? (**John 3:16**)



What is the result of this gift in **Romans 6:23**?

What are Pauls' words in **1 Corinthians 9:15**?

The Fullness of Time:

- The time was right **Religiously:**

The Jews were free from idolatry, they were looking for Messiah, they had finished their Old Testament, and they had created a system of synagogues and religious schools. All of this made the propagation of the message of the Messiah much easier.

- The time was right **Culturally:**

The common language of the day was Greek. A very expressive language, known around the world.

- The time was right **Politically:**

The Roman empire was the dominate power in that day.

They provided three tremendous assets to the spread of the Gospel message.

- 1.) **Pax Romana** - The Roman peace provided social, economic and political stability. This allowed the early missionaries and preachers to travel freely throughout the Roman Empire.
- 2.) **Lex Romana** - The Roman Law gave the citizens living in the Empire many rights that also helped spread the Gospel.
- 3.) **Rio Romana** - The Roman roads. These highways, many of which are still in use today, served to aid in the spreading of the Gospel message.

[Alan Carr]

According to verse 5, what was His purpose for coming?

According to Mark 10:45, what was His purpose for coming?

According to verse 5, what was the result of His coming?

In the verses below (**Galatians 4:5-7**), highlight all the personal pronouns:

- 5

so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
- 6

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
- 7

Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God

The ministry of Heaven's gift was very personal in nature.

He did what He did for people He knew.
He did what He did for people He loved.
He did what He did as a personal ministry!

He went to the cross with in mind.
[Put your name in here]

22nd December

The message of Heaven's gift is about family and future

In the verses below (**Galatians 4:5-7**), highlight any "family" words.

- 5

so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons (and daughters).
- 6

Because you are sons (and daughters), God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
- 7

Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son (or daughter); and if a son (or daughter), then an heir through God



The phrase "**Abba, Father**" could roughly be translated, "**Daddy, Father**". It is a phrase that expresses the intimacy God's children can enjoy with Him. This speaks of a relationship that allows us to enter the presence of God at any time to worship and to seek His help. The Lord has literally become our Father!

Note: This was a new idea, particularly to the Jews. They had many names for God. He was Jehovah-Jireh; Jehovah-Rohi; Jehovah-Shammah; Jehovah-Rapha, etc. When they prayed to God, they used whatever name they felt was appropriate for their current circumstances. When the disciples came to Jesus to ask Him about praying to God and how to approach Him, Jesus told them to pray, "**Our Father....**", **Luke 11:1**. [Alan Carr]

What does **Romans 8:15-17** tell us?

.....

.....

.....

*We are reminded here that we are His "**heirs**".
What belongs to our Father belongs to us as well!
This is what Paul told us in **Romans 8:16-17**. We are
heirs of the greatest estate that has ever existed. We
serve a God who is eternal and immortal.
We will inherit that. We serve a God Who is infinitely
holy. We will inherit that also some day. What God
has for us is far beyond our comprehension today!*



What do these verses promise us?

John 10:28

John 14:1-2

1 Corinthians 15:49

.....

Revelation 21:4

.....

If you are in Christ, do you realise what an unspeakable gift you have? Do you realise what it cost God the Father and His Son to give you that gift? Are you full of worship like the shepherds and Magi who realised this? Are you rejoicing in your gift of life? Jesus was born into a humble human family so that we could be part of his glorious heavenly family!

23rd December

Bethlehem - The place of beginnings



*As we start nearing the end of our “Christmas journey,” let’s go back to where we started.
Bethlehem. “O little town of Bethlehem...”
The place prophesied in the Old Testament that would witness the birth of the Messiah.
Bethlehem had significance throughout the Old Testament. Let’s take a visit there. Let’s take a look at the story of Bethlehem:*

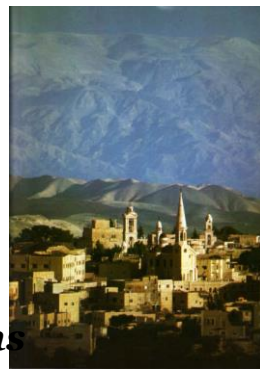
Write out **Micah 5:2**.

.....

.....

.....

In 1865 the Pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Boston, Massachusetts, was helping with a Christmas Eve service in Bethlehem. He later wrote about his feelings as he descended from Jerusalem in Bethlehem riding a horse. He said,



“I remember standing in the old church in Bethlehem, close to the spot where Jesus was born, when the whole church was ringing hour after hour with splendid hymns of praise to God, how again and again it seemed as if I could hear voices I knew well, telling each other of the Wonderful Night of the Saviour’s birth.”

Two years later, in 1867, Phillip Brooks, put his pen to paper and wrote a very special and very biblical song we sing each year at Christmas time. He wrote ***“O, Little Town Of Bethlehem”***.

***O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.***

***For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth!***

***O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!***

These verses declare the heart of Christmas. It is a time of celebration, a time of salvation and a time of contemplation

The town of Bethlehem is located five miles south of Jerusalem. We do not know when the town was founded, but it is first mentioned in a letter from one of the kings of Palestine to an Egyptian Pharaoh in 1250 BC. This would have been during the time of the Judges. It would seem that Bethlehem existed when Israel invaded Canaan.

The name ***“Bethlehem”*** means ***“House of Bread”***. Micah also calls it by another name ***“Ephratah”***. This is an older name for the city. The name ***“Ephratah”*** means ***“Place of Fruitfulness”***.

What does Jesus say He is in **John 6:35**?

Jesus is the One Who can take a barren life, change it by His grace, and turn it into a fruitful life for His glory, **John 15:1-8**

Write out **John 15:5**:

24th December

Let's continue our journey into historic Bethlehem

Bethlehem is first mentioned in **Genesis 35:16-20**.
Summarise what happened there.



***“Benoni”*, means *“Son of my sorrow”*.
Bethlehem is first mentioned in a very negative context.
It is associated with sorrow and death.**

- *Jesus can take a place associated with grief and suffering and turn it into a place associated with glory. While He was here on this earth, Jesus was “a Man of Sorrows”, Isaiah 53:1-3.*
- *The One Who created the universe had nowhere to lay His head, Matt. 8:20.*
- *The One Who left Heaven above to come die for His people was rejected by the very people He came to reach, John 1:11. He knew pain and sorrow for in the end, He was crucified for the sins of the world, Isa. 53:4-6. He was our “Benoni” He was the “Son of My Sorrow”! [Alan Carr]*

Bethlehem is next mentioned in **Judges 12:8-10**. What does it say?

Note what **Revelation 19:15** says about Jesus being our judge.

Bethlehem is next mentioned in **Ruth 1:19**. Who arrived there and under what circumstances?.

It was in Bethlehem that Ruth the Moabitess found redemption from her pain and her past. She found grace, mercy, love, acceptance, restoration, hope, family and a future, all in that place called Bethlehem.

The One born in Bethlehem is the One Who provided salvation in its fullness for all who will receive Him, **John 1:12**. The salvation found in Jesus promises all the things Ruth found in Bethlehem and so much more.

Ephesians 2:1-10; Hebrews 7:25.

Bethlehem is next mentioned in **I Samuel 6:1-13**. What happened to David there?

.....

.....

It was at Bethlehem that the “*Shepherd of our souls*” was born, **Luke 15:4-7**

It was here that the “*Good Shepherd*” was born, **John 10:9-11**.

It was here that the “*Great Shepherd*” was born, **Psalms 23:1-6**.

It was here that the “*Chief Shepherd*” came into this world, **Psa. 24:1-10**.

David was a shepherd who became the King and it was through David’s line that Jesus, the King of Kings would come!



- God told Adam and Eve that a Redeemer would be born someday down the line, **Gen. 3:15**. This Redeemer would defeat the devil.
- As the years went by, more and more of God’s plan was revealed. When God saved His people out of their bondage in Egypt by the blood of a Lamb, **Ex. 12**, He revealed a little more of His plan.

- When He gave Israel the Law and the sacrificial system, He was revealing His plan. Every aspect of the Tabernacle, the priesthood and the sacrifices revealed more and more of God’s plan.
- Through the mouths of the prophets God gave insight into His plan. When Isaiah wrote about a virgin birth, **Isa. 7:14**, he was writing about the plan. When he told us about that child that was to be born, **Isa. 9:6**, he was writing about the plan. When he told us about the Messiah and the pain He would suffer, **Isa. 53:1-6**, he was writing about the plan.
- Then Micah revealed the birth place of the Messiah. He told us where the King would be born. He told us that the One Who would fulfil the plan would come from the little town of Bethlehem. He was merely revealing more of the plan!

What does **1 Peter 1:20** say about God’s plan of sending His son?

.....

.....

Praise God that He included you in His plan!!!

JOY TO THE WORD... The Lord has Come!

Our King

**Joy to the World , the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.**

Our Saviour

**Joy to the World, the Saviour reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.**

Our Redeemer

**No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.**

Our Judge

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.**

Joy to the World" is a hymn of Isaac Watts' from his famous hymnal, 'Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament.'

Watts gave Psalm 98 a new interpretation – a New Testament expression of praise for the salvation that began when God came to earth as the baby Jesus, destined to remove the curse from Adam's fall. Watts first titled the text, "The Messiah's Coming and Kingdom."

*Watts was highly critical of the congregational type of Psalm singing, and was challenged by his father, "Why don't you give us something better to sing?" Watts, then aged 18, accepted his father's challenge. The next Sunday he produced his first hymn, with enthusiastic response from the congregation. For the next two years, he wrote new hymn texts every Sunday. He published a collection of 210 hymns in a book entitled *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. He wrote more than 600 hymns in all.*



As you awaken to the day we remember and celebrate Christ's birth, ponder the following:

As you and your family open your gifts – think of the greatest gift in the birth and work of Jesus, God’s Son, for you.

As you sit around the tree, think of the Jesus, the Saviour, who hung on Calvary's tree for you.

As you express your love and gratitude to your family , think of your adoption into Gods family through the blood of Christ.

As you sing carols, think of the song of worship in your heart, for Him.



Go back to **"Mary's Magnificat"** in **Luke 1:4-55**.

This is her personal hymn and prayer of praise and worship at the news that she was going to give birth to the Messiah.

I challenge you to write out your own prayer/hymn of praise and worship to God for sending His Son, for you, and what that means to you.

Write out your own song of thanks.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dotted lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting. There is no text or other markings on the page.

***O come let us adore Him, for He alone is worthy,
we'll give Him all the glory, Christ the Lord.***