



from
COVENANTS
to the
CROSS

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL 2023
CHRIST REDEEMER CHURCH



INTRODUCTION:

Christmas changes everything. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, and our job today is to remember it, celebrate it, and put it into practice in our homes, churches, and cities. God has made his blessings flow as far as the curse is found, and that means we can not only celebrate the birth of Christ, but also his rule & reign as our king. In other words, joy to the world.

During this Advent season, CRC has put together this family devotional for your encouragement. We will study four covenants that God made with his people throughout Scripture and see how the fulfillment of these covenants points to Jesus because all the covenants or promises of God find their “Yes” in Jesus.

Read the Scriptures, sing songs, remember God’s covenantal faithfulness to his people, and declare that Christ is king over the nations.

Our worship during this season should be fueled by our understanding that God and sinners have been reconciled through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ — and that it was promised long before Mary became pregnant.

In his wisdom and great irony, God the Father sent Christ the Son to be born as the most powerful king, a helpless baby. Through his death and suffering, we have new life. Through his judgment, we have redemption.

Come, let us worship the long expected Jesus together, who was born to set his people free.



WEEK 1: THE FIRST & THE LAST

We can trace the promise of Christ from the Garden of Eden all the way to the cross, and Ephesians 1 tells us that this was apparently in the works before the world even began. In this way, Christ is the “first.”

In Genesis, we see the curse of sin after Adam & Eve’s disobedience at the tree (and of course we would later see Christ’s obedience *on* the tree), but God also promises that the seed of woman would crush the seed of the serpent. This is the very first of many promises that God makes with his people, each pointing to Christ. As far as the curse of sin is found, we’re promised that God’s blessing extends even further.

In a very real sense, Christ is the first promise that we have, and he’s also the last. While all of Scripture’s promises have their “Yes” in Jesus, they don’t end with his birth, but rather with us worshiping him forever.

SCRIPTURE:

As you read through these scriptures, whether all at once, once a day, or something in between, bring each passage back to the curse, the promised savior and the fulfillment of the promise in Jesus.

- Genesis 3:14-19
- Isaiah 9:6
- Luke 24:44-48
- 2 Corinthians 1:20
- Ephesians 1:3-10
- Colossians 1:15-20

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What was the promise that God made to Adam and Eve?
- If Satan is the serpent from Genesis and the dragon from Revelation, that makes Jesus the great dragon-slayer. What are some other names of Jesus we sing in our Christmas songs or read in Scripture?
- Why would Jesus be called “the son of righteousness” or “the heaven-born prince of peace” like in “Hark the Herald Angels Sing?”
- Sometimes we refer to the gospel as: “the law and the prophets.” Why?

SONGS:

- Joy To the World
The curse of sin is remedied by the promise of God’s blessing through Christ
- Hark the Herald Angels Sing
Different names of Christ
- Come Thou Long Expected Jesus
Jesus was long foretold and promised to Israel (and the whole world)



WEEK 2: COVENANTS & HINTS

This week, we're looking at how the Christmas story involved Abraham from the Old Testament. We'll learn about God's covenant with Abraham, and how its fulfillment points to the fulfillment of his promised Savior King. God's covenant with Abraham was that he would make a great nation out of him, and that all families of the earth would be blessed through him. And this would ultimately be fulfilled by Christ's birth. Another important part of God's covenant was circumcision, which was the sign for all males among Abraham's people. Later, of course, the sign of the new covenant with Christ is spiritual and no longer physical.

And, of course, there's the matter of Isaac's birth. How would God make a great nation out of Abraham when he and his wife, Sarah, were very old and without children? God fulfilled his promise through a miraculous birth, for Scripture tells us that God gave Isaac to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. Isaac's birth was was miraculous, much like Christ's birth was, because Sarah was very old and Mary was a virgin. God was using Abraham and his family to make and keep promises, but also to show his people what was to come.

In fact, Scripture shows us that Abraham was a shadow of Christ, hinting at the true redeemer who would one day come through his line to save all the people from their sin. Even the sacrifices that God required of the Israelites were a hint of what was to come later. Instead of a yearly sacrifice of lambs, goats, and crops, one day there would be a Spotless Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the whole world. And this lamb would only need to die once.

SCRIPTURE:

As you read through these scriptures, whether all at once, one a day, or something in between, bring each passage back to God's covenant with Abraham and how the fulfillment of that covenant points to the covenant that was fulfilled in Jesus' birth.

- Genesis 21:1-3
- Hebrews 11:8-18
- Hebrews 7:22-25
- Galatians 3:16, 23-39

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What else in Abraham's story reminds us of Christ? (*Hint: sacrificing the one and only son*)
- Read Galatians 3:7-9. Does that remind you of a song you used to sing? (*"Father Abraham had many sons..."*)
- As a family, think of other promises that God makes in the Bible and discuss why they're more important than, say, a promise between friends.
- In a world that tends to focus more on little drummer boys and red-nosed reindeer during Christmas, how can we praise God for his promises during the Advent season?

SONGS:

- What Child Is This?
The promise of Christ who would finally fulfill God's promises
- O Holy Night (Hear the Gospel Story)
The world longed to see Jesus
- Joy Has Dawned
Rejoicing in the promised birth of Christ, who came in humbleness to fulfill the law and prophets



WEEK 3: ANOTHER TYPE OF CHRIST

This week, let's look at the story of Moses and how he was another "type" or shadow of Christ to come. After God's great covenant with Abraham, Jacob migrates to Egypt and Joseph wins the favor of the pharaoh of that time. But another pharaoh comes to power who does not know the God of Abraham or Jacob, and thus God makes good on his covenant with Abraham and rescues his people from slavery, using Moses to do the job.

So how is Moses a shadow of Christ to come? First, baby Moses is saved from death at the hand of an angry king — much like Herod wanted to kill Jesus after he was born. And later, we see God deliver his people from Pharaoh through blood and water, just like Jesus delivers us from sin through blood and water.

At the final plague, how were people to save the lives of their firstborn sons? Through the blood of a lamb. And what can save our lives today? The blood of *the* Lamb. God delivers his people from Pharaoh's armies through the Red Sea, and today we are commanded to be baptized in water. Just like the Israelites followed God through the waters of the Red Sea, we follow Christ into a symbolic death through our baptism. Lastly, in the desert, we see Moses intercede for Israel as he prays to God, and we know that Christ never ceases to intercede for his people.

Of course, after all this, God solidifies his covenant with Israel and gives them laws (more than just 10) and rules to live by. And despite Israel's disobedience & forgetfulness, he continues to be faithful, though their disobedience does come with consequences.

That faithfulness is tested over and over again, but God never breaks his promise to one day deliver his people from sin once and for all, with a final sacrifice.

SCRIPTURE:

As you read through these scriptures, whether all at once, one a day, or something in between, bring each passage back to God's covenant with Moses and the people of Israel — and how that ultimately is fulfilled in the birth of Christ.

- Exodus 1:7
- Exodus 2:1-10
- Exodus 6:1-8
- Exodus 12:6
- Exodus 14:22
- Hebrews 7:26-28

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- God gets glory over Pharaoh and the horse he rode in on (Ex 14:26), what else did he do with Moses that established himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?
- God has always been faithful to us, even when we are disobedient. Have there ever been times when God has kept promises to you, even if you were disobedient?
- If all of Scripture points to Jesus, then how does the story of Moses point to him?

SONGS:

- O Come, O Come Emmanuel
Israel was promised deliverance
- Sing We the Song of Emmanuel
The glorious promise of Christ brings hope and joy
- Angels We Have Heard on High
The joy of Christ's birth as it's announced



WEEK 4: THE LION OF JUDAH

King David had a special part to play in the Christmas story, for he came from the tribe of Judah, one of the 12 families of Israel. Long ago, God made a promise to King David that the forever king of Israel (Jesus) would come from the tribe of Judah. We can trace the promise of Christ all the way from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Judah, and finally David. One of Scripture's names for Jesus is "the lion of the tribe of Judah."

God's covenant with David was that his throne (or family line) would be established forever. By this point, we should know that David wasn't going to live forever (just like Abraham wasn't literally going to have millions of kids with Sarah). God is referencing the throne of Christ, who would come from David's lineage. And we remember from Isaiah 9 that of the increase of Christ's government, there will be no end.

This Davidic covenant was a continuation of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants we looked at in the last few weeks, and of course it all started in the Garden of Eden with the curse of sin and the promise of a savior.

Hopefully, it's quite clear now that the Christmas story doesn't just start with Mary and Joseph's difficulty finding a room at the inn, but it's the story God has been telling since the beginning of time.

As the hymn says, "Hark! the herald angels sing!"

SCRIPTURE:

As you read through these scriptures, whether all at once, one a day, or something in between, bring each passage back to God's covenant promise with King David and how it's fulfilled in the birth of Christ.

- 2 Samuel 7:1-17
- Revelation 5:5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Discuss how David often sinned against God, yet God still said that he would be a father to him. It reminds us of how God is patient with us, doesn't it?
- After Christ was born, what happened to all the covenants and promises that God made with Adam, Abraham, Moses, and David? (*Hint: read Hebrews 8*)
- How has God been working from the Garden of Eden to King David? Can you see how he's kept his promises and made them into a great nation, delivered them from Egypt, given them a new home, and a new king?

SONGS:

- Hark the Herald Angels Sing
Christ's birth as fulfillment of prophecy
- O Come All Ye Faithful
God's faithfulness unfolded
- Exult In the Savior's Birth
The promised one of Israel



WEEK 5: BORN IS THE KING OF ISRAEL

Today is Christmas, and that's the day we celebrate Christ's birth, his rule over the nations as king, and the promises of God fulfilled.

Did you know the entire church calendar points to Christmas? From Easter to Christmas, we're proclaiming the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

At CRC, we often say that we trust in the sovereignty of God and that his Word is sufficient for us. In the spirit of Christmas, another way of saying this is that God's blessing for us goes as far as the curse is found. There is no part of our lives that he is not sovereign over, and he has appointed Christ as the head of it all. All things were created through him and for him, and God's plan is to unite all things to Christ in the fullness of time.

If Christ really rose from the dead, then this whole world belongs to him, for he bought it with his blood. This means that he's the Lord over our presents, our hot chocolate, our schools, our children, our finances, our presidents, and more.

Let's celebrate Christmas today with thankfulness and joy in our hearts, for our king is reigning at the Father's right hand, death has been defeated, and there is peace on earth through the blood of his cross. We might need to start telling people about this.

SCRIPTURE:

As you read through these scriptures, whether all at once, one a day or something in between, bring each passage back to God's covenant with Abraham and how the fulfillment of that covenant points to the covenant that was fulfilled in Jesus' birth.

- Isaiah 9:2-7
- Revelation 5:1-5

SONGS:

- Joy to the World
- Go Tell It On the Mountain
- The First Noel
- All Glory Be to Christ

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Think about the line "he comes to make his blessings flow as far as the curse is found." What sorts of things are affected by the curse of sin? How does Christ being born fix those? Will sin finally be no more when Christ returns?
- The prophet foretold that a people who walked in darkness would see a great light. What was the great light? What was the darkness they were walking in? Do you know anybody today who needs to hear about this great light?
- If Christ is really the king over everything, then what does that mean on Monday and Tuesday? When we go back to school? When we're playing with our friends? How can we honor Christ as king in our everyday lives?



RESOURCES:

- ESV Bible Dictionary (QR Code)
- Extra coloring sheets (QR Code)
- Digital advent devotional (QR code)
- Spotify playlist of Christmas songs (QR code)

“ADVENT” DEFINITION :

The arrival of a notable person, thing, or event.

The first season of the Christian church year, leading up to Christmas and including the four preceding Sundays.

“COVENANT” DEFINITION :

A binding agreement between two parties, typically involving a formal statement of their relationship, a list of stipulations and obligations for both parties, a list of witnesses to the agreement, and a list of curses for unfaithfulness and blessings for faithfulness to the agreement. The OT is more properly understood as the old covenant, meaning the agreement established between God and his people prior to the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the new covenant (NT).

NAMES OF JESUS:

- Prince of Peace
- Wonderful Counselor
- Mighty King
- Everlasting Father
- Emmanuel
- Faithful and True
- King of Kings
- Lord of Lords
- Lion of the tribe of Judah
- Light of the world
- Good Shepherd
- Rose of Sharon
- The resurrection and the life
- The way, the truth, and the life
- The Word of God
- Bright morning star