



Waiting for Jesus Then and Now The (Empty) Stable

Right now we are beginning the season of Advent. At the end of Advent is Christmas. The word "advent" means "coming." It is the season when we remember the coming of Jesus Christ, God's only son, into the world. Have you ever waited for something for a long time? God's people had been waiting for a very long time for God to send a Savior to them and keep all of his promises. That Savior was Jesus—who was born long ago in a stable in Bethlehem. The baby Jesus would grow up to save all of God's people. Yet that is not all of the good news. It was God's plan to send Jesus to the world twice. He came long ago and he is coming back again. Like the people of Israel, we are waiting for him to come.

Jesus, thank you for coming down into our world! As we learn about your coming help us to see what you have done for us. Help us to be ready for you to come again.

Amen.

Bible Readings:
Psalm 130;
1 Thessalonians 4:15-18



God is the Giver of Life and the Restorer of the World The Green Plants

The whole world was created by God. Can you name something that God made? God made everything that we see around us—the earth, the water, the plants, the animals. Even the bright sun and the moon were set in space by God. And God made every person that lives and ever has lived. After God made the world, he said that it was good. But it was only good as long as the people obeyed God. Then Adam and Eve, the first people, chose to disobey and stopped trusting God. Ever since that day sin and death have been a part of our world. But God always had a beautiful plan to rescue the people and restore his creation. The coming of Jesus is at the center of God's plan.

O God, we praise you because you are good, and you made good things. Even when sin and death entered our world, you always had a plan to restore it.

Thank you, God.

Bible Readings
Psalm 104:24-30;
Romans 8:18-25



We Have All Gone Astray The First Sheep

Do you remember what "Advent" means? We have learned that in Advent we are remembering when Jesus came and waiting for him to come again. But why did God send Jesus into the world? God sent Jesus because every person in the world has a big problem: We are all sinners—we all do wrong things. We disobey God just like Adam and Eve did. The Bible says we are all like sheep: we wander off our own way, far from God. We can't get back to God on our own. Jesus needed to come to save us from our sins and bring us back to God. By doing this, Jesus showed that God is righteous and merciful. He showed God's glory.

God, we confess that we all wander off our own way. We confess that we have sinned against you. Please forgive us for our sins. Thank you for sending Jesus into the world to bring us back to you! Amen.

Bible Readings:
Isaiah 53:4-6;
Romans 3:19-26



Jesus Died to Save Us The Lamb

Do you remember that we have all sinned against God? The wrong things we do hurt us and they can hurt others. But most of all, when we sin we are disobeying God. God is holy, so our sins mean we must die. Our sins need to be forgiven by God. In the time before Jesus came, God forgave the people's sins by having a lamb die instead of the people. This was part of the Law that God gave to Moses. The Law was pointing ahead to Jesus' coming. It was to show what Jesus would do: He would die for our sins instead of us. Jesus is called the Lamb of God because he died on the cross to save us. God saves us through Jesus.

Dear God, thank you for having such an amazing plan to save us from our sins! Thank you for sending Jesus to be the lamb. Help us to trust in Him.

Amen.

Bible Readings:
Exodus 12:21-27;
Acts 8:26-38



Day 5

Jesus Is the Light of the World
The Lantern

Do you know what it is like to sit in the darkness? It is like being blind. You can't see anything. Have you ever been in the dark and then someone came and turned on the light? There is a verse in the Old Testament that tells what it would be like for the world when Jesus came. It says, "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2). That was what it was like when Jesus came to earth. He brought light into the whole world! The light he brought is the truth about God and hope for all people. He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 3:12).

Dear Jesus, we praise you for shining your light when we were in the darkness. We know that there are many people in the world who are still in the dark. Let your light shine through us, in how we live, that they might see it and believe in you, too. Amen.

Bible Readings
Isaiah 9:2-7,
John 3:1-9



God Promised a Great King
The First Wise Man

This is one of the "wise men," or magi. In Jesus' time wise men served foreign kings. Do you know what a king is? A king is the ruler of a nation. He is the leader of everyone that is in his kingdom, for as long as he lives. Long, long ago God promised his people many times that he would raise up a great king for them. He promised them that this king would do only what is right and good. The people of Israel had many kings, but most of them did not do what is right and did not lead the people in God's ways. Each of Israel's kings died, and then the people would need a new king. But God's promised king would rule forever and ever - his kingdom would never end! All of Israel was waiting for God to send them this great king. Then there would be justice and righteousness and peace in their land...forever.

Dear God, we long for your peace to reign in this world. We thank you for promising a king whose reign would never end. Amen.

Bible Readings
Isaiah 11:1-9,
Hebrews 1:7-13

Day 7



Jesus Is the Promised King - Over All the World
The Second Wise Man

We have learned that God promised he would raise up a great king for the people of Israel. God's people were waiting for this great king who would do only what was good and right and who would defeat Israel's enemies. God's king would rule not only over the people of Israel but over the whole world. The greatest king that Israel ever had was named David. David's kingdom spread over a wide land and many people. But David did not rule over the whole world. The king that God promised was Jesus! Jesus was going to be a king like David, but Jesus was going to be far greater than David ever was. Jesus was born to be king over all people and all of creation.

Dear Jesus, you are the greatest king. You are the King of kings and the Lord of lords and we praise you!
Amen

Bible Readings
Matthew 2:24-1-46;
John 18:33-38



Day 8
The Angel Comes to Mary
Mary

This is what happened when the time was right for Jesus to come. In the city of Nazareth there lived a young woman who was faithful to God. Her name was Mary. One day God sent an angel to Mary, to tell her that she would have a special baby. Her baby would be called the Son of God, and he would be a great king whose kingdom would last forever. Do you know who her baby was going to be? God had chosen Mary to be the mother of Jesus! Even though it was so incredible, Mary believed what the angel said. She sang praises to God for making her the mother of Jesus and keeping his promises to his people.

Dear God, Thank you for sending Jesus at just the right time. We praise you because you use humble, ordinary people in your plan. Help us to believe your word like Mary did. Amen.

Bible Readings
1 Samuel 2:1-10,
Luke 1:46-55



Day 9

His Name Shall Be Jesus
The Angel!

Do you know about the angels? The angels serve God. We learn from the Bible that God often sends angels to be his heralds, or messengers. Before his son was born on earth, God sent one of his angels to Mary. Do you remember what the angel told her? She would be the mother of a special baby. The angel said to name the baby Jesus. The name Jesus means, "The Lord saves." Jesus is a form of the name Joshua. In the Old Testament we read how God used a man named Joshua to lead his people into the Promised Land. Jesus would be a leader of God's people, too. He would lead them home to God.

God, we praise you because you are the God who saves. You planned to save all of us through Jesus, whom the angel spoke about so long ago. We pray now in Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible Readings:
Acts 4:5-12
Hebrews 4:3-10



Day 10

God Sends Jesus By the Holy Spirit
The Dove

During Advent we are not celebrating Jesus alone. We are worshipping our one God in three persons: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a part of Christmas, too. Every baby that is born has a human daddy and a human mommy. But Jesus was a very special baby. He came from God. Before he was born God put Jesus into Mary's belly by the Holy Spirit. This meant that Jesus was holy. When he was born he had no sin. It also meant that, even though he was born as a human baby, he was also the Son of God. God's Holy Spirit that came to Mary was with Jesus all of his life on earth. The Holy Spirit is also with us—we who believe in Jesus. The dove is a symbol of God's Holy Spirit.

Dear God, Thank you for sending Jesus down to us, to become a human baby. Thank you for your Holy Spirit, who works in amazing ways. Amen.

Bible Readings:
Matthew 3:13-17;
John 1:9-18



Day 11

The Angel Visits Joseph, Jesus Is Immanuel
Joseph

Joseph was planning to marry Mary. Before they were married, Joseph had a visit from an angel in a dream. The angel told him that Mary was going to have a baby that came from the Holy Spirit. The angel said to name the baby Jesus, but Jesus was also called "Immanuel," which means, "God with us." Joseph would be with Mary, but he wasn't really the father of Jesus. Jesus was the Son of God. The Bible tells us that Jesus was with God before the world was created. He was always with God.

What makes Christmas so special is that we are remembering when God sent Jesus down to us. Jesus became a human child so that he might be with us.

Dear Jesus, We thank you that, even though you are the Son of God, you came down to be a human like we are in order to save us from our sins. Amen.

Bible Readings:
Joshua 1:1-9;
Colossians 1:15-20



Day 12

The Journey to Bethlehem
The Donkey

Do you remember that in the Old Testament there was a powerful king named David? Joseph was one of David's descendants—he was from Bethlehem, the city of David. Long ago God had said that Jesus would come into the family of King David and would be born in Bethlehem. This is how God fulfilled that promise. Around the time that Jesus was going to be born, the ruler of all the land commanded that everyone go to their home city to be counted. So Joseph and Mary had to make a journey to Bethlehem. It was a long journey, about 70 or 80 miles. It would have taken them a long time, maybe a week. Joseph and Mary might have walked the whole way. Or they might have had a donkey to help them. Maybe Mary even rode on the donkey when she was tired. Because God always keeps his promises, Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem just before Jesus was born.

Dear God, We praise you because you always keep your word. We can see how you are in control of all events, big and small. Amen.

Bible Readings:
2 Samuel 7:8-16;
Micah 5:1-5



Day 13
No Room for Joseph and Mary in the Inn
The Cow

Joseph and Mary were on a long journey. They were going to Bethlehem to be counted. When Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem, they tried to find a place where they could stay. But many, many people were traveling to the city. It was crowded. Joseph and Mary found an inn, but there was no room for them there. What could they do? Mary was about to have the baby Jesus! Finally Joseph and Mary found a

place to stay. It wasn't a very fancy place—it may even have been a stable, or a barn! Does a barn sound like the kind of place for a great king to be born? God's plan is sometimes very surprising.

When he came to be born into our world, Jesus humbled himself so much. He was obedient to God even when it meant being poor. He became poor so that we could become rich in him.

Dear Jesus, you are the Son of God and the greatest king and yet you humbled yourself. There is no other god like you! We praise you. Amen.

Bible Readings:
2 Corinthians 8:1-9;
Philippians 2:3-11



Day 14
The Lost Sheep—Jesus Came to Find Us
The Second Sheep

During Advent we celebrate when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and we wait for him to come again. When Jesus was on earth, he told many stories about what God is like. One of his stories was about a shepherd who had 100 sheep. That's a lot of sheep! One of the shepherd's sheep wandered away and was lost. What do you think the shepherd did? He left the other 99 sheep in a field and went to look for the one who was lost. When he found that sheep, do you think he was angry? Do you think he scolded the sheep, or disciplined it? No! He picked it up and brought it back

home to the field, where he had a joyful party to celebrate the return of his little lost sheep. Jesus said that is just like the joy in heaven when one sinner

repents and returns to God. Jesus told this story because some people didn't like it that he was being kind to sinners. He wanted them to know that God loves sinners, and that Jesus was born to save

sinners—like us—from our sins.

Dear Jesus, we want to remember why you came into our world: to save us when we were lost. We praise you because you are kind to us and show us mercy. Amen.

Bible Readings:
Ezekiel 34:11-16;
Luke 19:1-10



Day 15
His Sheep Know His Voice
The Shepherd

We are about to learn about the shepherds in the story of Jesus' birth. Do you know what a shepherd's job is? A shepherd's job is to take care of sheep.

Taking care of sheep is a lot of work. Sheep need fresh, green grass to eat; they need cool water to drink; they need somewhere to sleep; and they need someone to protect them from other animals. If there isn't a shepherd to take care of the sheep, the sheep are in big trouble. We learn from the Bible that we are like sheep—we have all gone astray and gotten lost. Jesus is like our good shepherd who finds us, gives us

what we need, and protects us. He even gave up his life to save us! When Jesus calls us, we listen to his voice like the sheep listen to the shepherd. Advent is a good time to remember that he is our shepherd and to listen to him.

Dear Jesus, you are such a good shepherd to us! Please help us to be good listeners to your voice now and always. Amen.

Bible Readings:
John 10:1-18;
Hebrews 13:20-21



Day 16
The Shepherds Come to Jesus
The Shepherd's Staff

On the night when Jesus was born, there were some shepherds watching their sheep in a field nearby.

Suddenly, the sky above them filled with glorious light and an angel appeared! When they saw this, the shepherds were scared. But the angel told them not to be afraid because he had a message of very good news for everyone. He wanted them to know that a Savior was born in the town of Bethlehem. He invited them to go and find the baby, who was wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger. Then the whole sky filled with brilliant angels singing praises to God and proclaiming peace to his people. When the angels went back to heaven, the shepherds went all the way to Bethlehem in a big hurry to find the baby Jesus! Would you have liked to go and see the baby Jesus? When they found him, they told everyone what the angels said: that Jesus would be a great Savior. They stood and looked at that teeny, tiny baby and they believed that he would save God's people. Then they returned to their sheep in the field, praising God for sending Jesus to the world.

Dear God, we praise you for sending Jesus into the world, too! Thank you for giving us a Savior who would give us peace with you. Amen.

Bible Readings:
Isaiah 40:1-11;
Ephesians 2:12-18



Day 17

Good News of Great Joy For All People
The Second Angel (Angel's Wand).

Do you remember what the shepherds saw when they were in the field watching their sheep? They saw some brilliant angels! What did the angels say to them? The angels told the shepherds that they were bringing them good news. We have another word for good news, it is the word gospel. Gospel means "good news" and it is the very good news that Jesus came into the world to save us. This news brings so much joy to us and to all people who believe in Jesus. The angels said that this joyful good news would be for all people—not just for the shepherds, not just for the wise men, or even just the people of Israel. The good news about Jesus is for everyone everywhere who believes in him. Do you remember when we learned that everyone in the world was in the dark until Jesus came? This is why we celebrate Jesus being born for so long. He is the Light of the World!

Dear God, we thank you for the good news! We are so glad to know about Jesus coming into our world to save all who believe in him. Help us to tell others about Jesus, too. Amen.

Bible Readings:
Isaiah 52:7-10;
2 Corinthians 4:1-6



Day 18

Jesus' Birth Is a Cosmic Event
The Star

Mary and Joseph had found a place to sleep—maybe a stable—in Bethlehem. And Jesus was born. In that time, at that place, Jesus, who was God, became a baby. Nothing like this had ever happened in the world before and nothing like this would ever happen again. It was the most amazing thing that has ever happened. Have you ever seen a tiny newborn baby? Babies are born every day. But the baby Jesus was very special. He was God. To show how important Jesus' birth was, God put a new and unusual star in the sky over the place where he was born. The star was shining out to announce to the whole earth that Jesus had come. Have you noticed that we decorate with stars at Christmastime? Many families put a star on the top of their Christmas tree. When we see the stars, it reminds us of the special night when Jesus was born.

Dear God, we thank you for the many ways, like the star, that you have shown how special the birth of Jesus was. Help us to have hearts and minds that are ready to think about Jesus when we see all of the decorations of Christmas. Amen.

Bible Readings:
Matthew 2:1-12,
John 3:16-21



Day 19

The Whole World Needs to Hear About Jesus
The Third Wise Man

Do you remember when we looked at the magi, or wise men? The wise men served foreign kings in faraway lands. Some of them studied the stars and they saw the great star that God put in the sky when Jesus was born. They knew that this star meant that a great king was born. They set off on a long journey to find him. The wise men remind us that the baby Jesus would become a great king who would rule over the whole world. Jesus came not only for the people of Israel but for everyone. God wants everyone in the world to know that Jesus is his Son and that he was born to bring salvation. Jesus' birth is the good news that everyone needs to hear.

Dear God, we thank you that Jesus came for everyone. Please help us to share this good news all around us. Amen.

Bible Readings:
Psalm 67;
Revelation 7:9-12



Day 20°
The Wise Men Come to Jesus
The Camel

When they saw the special star that God put in the sky to announce the birth of his Son, the wise men began a long journey to find him. They traveled for a very long time until they came to Herod, the king of Israel. They asked Herod where to find Jesus. Do you remember that God had promised long ago that Jesus would be born in the city of Bethlehem? Herod learned this and he told the wise men, "But Herod was a bad man. He didn't want the baby Jesus to grow up and be God's great king. So he asked the wise men to come back and tell him where Jesus was. He said he wanted to worship Jesus, but he didn't. He wanted to get rid of Jesus. On the way to Bethlehem, the star rose for the wise men and led them to the house where Jesus and his parents were. When they saw the star again, they were so happy! They came into the house and saw the young Jesus, and they knew who he was. They worshipped him. But they didn't go back and tell King Herod, because God was protecting his Son Jesus."

Dear God, we praise you because you are in control of the stars in the sky and all of the people on the earth.

We are so thankful that you had a great plan for Jesus to come. We pray that many people from many places would come to find Jesus. Amen.

Bible Readings:
Isaiah 60:1-14;
Matthew 2:13-23



Day 21
The Wise Men Bring Gifts to Jesus the King
Gifts #1:

When the wise men followed the star to find God's great king, they didn't come with empty hands. They brought some very costly gifts with them to give to the baby. When the wise men came in the house where Jesus was and worshipped him, they laid these precious gifts at his feet. They gave him gifts because they knew that Jesus was God's great king and they wanted to show him honor. What do you think the gifts were? The Bible says that the wise men brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold was the most valuable and beautiful metal they had. Frankincense and myrrh came from special trees and were burned to make sweet-smelling incense. They were both used in the temple in Jerusalem. What would you want to give to Jesus?

Dear Jesus, you are worthy of all honor and glory! Help us to honor you—not only with what we give, but in how we live. Amen.

Bible Readings:
1 Chronicles 29:10-18;
Matthew 2:6-13

Day 22



Why Do We Give Gifts at Christmas?

Gifts #2

Do you remember what the wise men brought when they came to see Jesus? They brought him gifts! They did this because Jesus was God's great king.

Did you know that we give gifts on Christmas? Part of our celebration of Jesus' birth is that we give Christmas presents to each other. We give presents because it is the time when we remember the greatest gift ever given. Do you know what it was? It was Jesus.

God gave us Jesus, his only Son! Jesus was born into our world back in Bethlehem and he lived a life on earth and died to save us from our sins. Because

of Jesus we can have peace with God! That is the biggest and best gift we could ever have. That is good news of great joy for all people. When we give gifts this Christmas, let's remember that Jesus is the greatest gift given to us.

Dear God, thank you for giving us your own Son, Jesus. He is the best gift ever given. Help us to remember him when we give presents on Christmas.

Amen

Bible Readings:
Isaiah 55:1-9,
Romans 5:12-17



Day 23
Jesus the Servant King
The (Empty) Manger

When you go to sleep tonight, where will you sleep? You sleep in a bed. The Bible tells us that, after Jesus

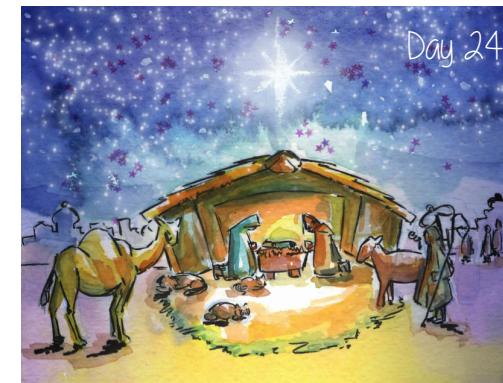
was born, Mary wrapped him in cloths and lay him down to sleep. But remember how there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn? There wasn't a bed or a crib to lay him in! The baby Jesus was tucked in to a manger. A manger is a wooden box used to hold food for animals to eat. It probably wasn't very

soft or even very clean. Maybe Mary filled it with hay to make it softer for the tiny, new baby. This is a very surprising way for a great king to be born. And

it is very strange that when God chose to send his own Son into the world he had him enter a stable and sleep in an animal's food box. The humble way that Jesus was born was the same way that he would live his whole life. Jesus came as a king, but as a king who serves his people. The world had never seen a king like this.

Dear Jesus, it is amazing to us that when you came from God into our world, you were born into a stable and slept in a manger instead of a king's bed. We thank you for coming as our servant king. Amen.

Bible Readings:
Mark 10:42-45,
John 13:3-17



Day 24
Jesus Is Born! Christmas Day
The Baby Jesus

Do you remember what Advent means? It means coming—the coming of Jesus. This Advent season we have been celebrating when Jesus, God's own Son, was born into our world as a little baby in Bethlehem. We have been looking at the story of Jesus' birth—how God made the good world, how we have all gone astray like sheep, how we needed a Good Shepherd to come and bring us back to God. We have learned how the angel came to Mary, and told her that God would give her a special baby by the Holy Spirit. We know that Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem and had to stay in a stable. And Jesus was born! When Jesus came the first time, not many people knew who he was, that he was God's great king who had come to save us from our sins and bring us peace with God. This is the good news of great joy that the angels sang to the shepherds. When Jesus comes again, everyone in the whole world will know. He will come with a loud trumpet and with many angels. We are waiting for him to come.

Dear God, we all want to thank you again for sending your Son Jesus to be born into our world and save us from our sins. You are so good and so merciful to us. O God! Please help us to be ready for when Jesus comes again. Amen.

Bible Readings:
1 John 4:7-12,
Revelation 22:12-17