

Countdown to Christmas -- Chapters 1 & 2 sample

Day 1: The Crèche

Scripture: Micah 5:2

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah , though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting [NKJV].”

Devotional Reading

Around 700 years before Jesus was ever born, a prophet named Micah foretold that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Seven hundred years is a long time! That would be like someone in the Middle Ages predicting the exact town where someone would be born today.

Bethlehem was a village about six miles from Jerusalem. It's in a very hilly part of Israel and you have to walk up steep hills to reach it. The name Bethlehem means “house of bread.” This would be the house of bread alright. Of all the villages and all the towns and cities in the world, Jesus, who said he was the Bread of Life, would be born in Bethlehem.

In the key verse, we see the prophet Micah foretold something else very important about the One who would be born in Bethlehem. The verse says he would be “from of old, from everlasting.” What do you think that means? How could a newborn baby be from “of old” or from everlasting?

He can't. Only God is from everlasting. God has always existed, before any of this world was ever created. (John 1:1-2) So Micah the prophet

tells us not only that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but that He is God himself born as a baby.

Messiah is the Jewish word for Christ. The Jewish people were excited for the Messiah to come. Other prophets had also told them about the coming Messiah and they waited expectantly for hundreds and hundreds of years, knowing He would one day be born in Bethlehem.

Nativity Activity

Put up your stable or crèche today. Though we still have a few weeks before we celebrate Jesus' birthday, we wait eagerly, just as the people eagerly awaited the Messiah's birth. And just like you know where and when you'll celebrate Christmas, God knew where and when Jesus would be born.

Prayer

Dear God, thank You that You know all things and nothing is hidden from You. You have always been and will always be and You know what will happen tomorrow and the next day and the next. Nothing surprises You. And because of that, God, we trust Your timing, even when it feels like we're waiting. Help us to trust You when it's hard. Thank You, God, for being a promise keeper and for fulfilling every single promise You've made so perfectly. Amen.

Suggested Christmas Carol

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

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Day 2: The Palm Tree

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-2

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him -- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD [NIV].”

Devotional Reading

Today we're talking about stumps and shoots. Do you have any stumps from old trees in your yard? Our yard is full of towering oak trees and every now and again, we have a tree surgeon come out to trim up dead branches and cut down any old, weak trees. Last year, one of our oaks was cut all the way down to a stump. Do you know what happened a few weeks later? New green shoots started growing right out of that old stump.

That's the picture that the prophet Isaiah uses. Isaiah prophesied about 700 years before Jesus was ever born and foretold that a new shoot would come from Jesse. To understand Isaiah's prophecy about stumps and shoots, we first need to know a little about Jesus' own family tree.

Jesus was descended from King David, the great king who reigned over Israel. In fact, both Mary and Joseph were in the line of King David. King David's father was named Jesse. For several hundreds of years, one of King David's royal descendants sat on the throne of Israel, and then Judah. But the last Davidic king was taken prisoner by the Babylonians and his sons were killed.

Israel then went through a series of foreign rulers like the Babylonians and Persians and Romans, and King David's royal line looked like an old, rotting stump.

But out of what looked like a dead royal line, God brought a new shoot. This shoot was the Messiah, Jesus, who would be a new king. He didn't rule like King David did. Jesus didn't have a palace or throne or royal robes on earth. Jesus' kingdom is a heavenly kingdom and He left all the glory of a king to come to earth as a baby.

Nativity Scene

Add a palm tree or plant to your nativity scene to represent the shoot that came from the stump of Jesse.

Prayer

Lord, nothing is too hard for You. You are able, even when things look impossible. You are able, even when hope looks dead. You are able, even when there seems to be no way. Every promise You make will be fulfilled, even when circumstances make it look improbable. Help us to believe this with our whole heart and help us to live fully trusting You. Amen.

Suggested Christmas Carol

Lo! How a Rose E'er Blooming

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Countdown to Christmas: Unwrap the Christmas Story with Your Family in 15 Days

Unwrap the real story of Christmas with this 15-day Christmas devotional and your own nativity set.

Countdown to Christmas is an advent devotional for the whole family to help you prepare your hearts for Christmas. It's an easy way to —

- Unwrap the story of Jesus' birth in an easy, hands-on way.
- Connect a key Bible verse and devotional to one piece of the Nativity each day.
- Create anticipation and excitement as you build the Nativity day by day.
- Celebrate the meaning of Christmas and make lasting memories!

Here's what others are saying —

“Wonderful for families! This will certainly help you keep Christ at the center of your Christmas!”

~ Terri

“This is a wonderful way to teach children the true meaning of Christmas . . . I highly recommend this book. We will be reading it every year.”

~ Charlene

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