



6 Studies for Advent

Please Note the following:

1. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
2. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP**

Study 1 – A Prophecy of Hope

(Sermon on 30th November 2025)

Before we begin: What is Advent? Why is it important?

The Dictionary Definition is: the arrival of a notable person or thing.

In Christianity: It is the arrival of our Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the World. In the Church, it is the first season of the Church Year (not the calendar year) and is the lead up to Christmas, marked by the four Sundays preceding Christmas Day. This year those four Sundays are: 30th November and 7th, 14th and 21st December.

Advent is important because without the Birth of Jesus – we do not have a Saviour to fix the punishment for sin – we do not have forgiveness and eternal life – we can't have Good Friday and Easter Sunday; unless Jesus is first born!

Before you begin: What is prophecy?

Oxford dictionary definition: a statement that something will happen in the future. In the Bible, prophecies are declared by God's prophets [like Isaiah] who speak a divine revelation from God which declares God's will or plan for the future.

Whatever God says will happen – ALWAYS happens! It's not a guess or prediction – but a rock-solid promise that what is declared will happen in God's providence.

Read Isaiah 9:1-2

1. What gloom is Isaiah describing in vv. 1–2, and why does the light start in Galilee?

The “gloom,” “darkness,” and “distress” of Isaiah 9:1–2 refer to:

a) The Assyrian invasion and judgement

- **Zebulun and Naphtali** (northern Israel) were the first regions attacked, conquered, and humiliated by Assyria (2 Kings 15:29).
- These borderlands suffered the **earliest and worst devastation**, becoming symbols of Israel's spiritual and national darkness.

b) Israel's spiritual condition

- The people had rejected God's word (Isaiah 8:19–22).
- Instead of turning to the LORD, they turned to mediums and false sources of guidance, which only plunged them into **deeper darkness and despair**.

*So the gloom is both **historical (Assyrian oppression)** and **spiritual (sin and unbelief)**.*

Isaiah deliberately says that the region once brought “contempt” will be the first to see God’s restoring light.

a) Galilee was the region most devastated by Assyria

Since judgment began there, Isaiah declares salvation will also begin there. God often brings hope to the most unlikely and most broken places.

b) Fulfilled in Jesus’ ministry

Matthew explicitly quotes Isaiah 9:1–2 to show fulfilment (Matthew 4:12–17). Jesus begins His public ministry in Galilee—preaching, healing, and announcing, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The place once in deepest darkness becomes the first to see the Light of the World.

2. Read Matthew 4:12–17. How does Matthew show Jesus fulfils the prophecy in Isaiah 9:1-2?

Jesus deliberately settles in the region referred to by Isaiah. Jesus leaves Nazareth and goes to live in Capernaum by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Matthew, in vv15-16 even quotes Isaiah: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶ the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

The arrival of Jesus in that region signals the arrival of the “light” that has dawned. And that’s why Jesus says in v17: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

This is the beginning of the reversal of the gloom, darkness and distress of the Zebulun and Naphtali, in the region of Galilee.

3. Read John 1:4–9 and John 8:12. How do these passages deepen Isaiah’s picture?

John 1:4-9 – ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the *light* of all mankind. ⁵ The *light* shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ *There was a man sent from God whose name was John.* ⁷ *He came as a witness to testify concerning that **light**, so that through him all might believe.* ⁸ *He himself was not the **light**; he came only as a witness to the **light**.*

⁹ *The true **light** that gives **light** to everyone was coming into the world.*

John 8:12 - *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “**I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.**”*

*The light is not just God’s salvation; **the Light is a person!** John reveals that the “light” that Isaiah spoke of is Jesus Himself, the eternal word of God that gives life (John 1:4)*

Isaiah points to light coming to Galilee first; John expands this to say Jesus is the true light who gives light to everyone (John 1:9), showing the global scope of God’s salvation.

***The light overcomes the darkness [of sin and death].** Where Isaiah spoke of gloom, John says the **darkness cannot overcome** the light (John 1:5), emphasizing the victory and permanence of Jesus’ salvation.*

***Jesus is the world’s only true light.** In John 8:12 Jesus declares, “**I am the light of the world.**” Not just Galilee, not just Israel — the **whole world** finds life, direction, and freedom from darkness [of their sin] in Him.*

4. Read 2 Corinthians 4:6. How does God shine His light into human hearts today?

2 Corinthians 4:6: *For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.*

*God shines His light into **human hearts** by **opening our eyes to see the glory of Christ** through the **message of the gospel**. By the work of the **Holy Spirit**, He brings understanding, faith, and a personal knowledge of Jesus — the same God who once said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” now creates spiritual light in us.*

Read Isaiah 9:3-5

5. What images of joy and liberation does Isaiah use here?

*Isaiah uses **three vivid images**:*

1. **Harvest joy** — like farmers celebrating a rich, abundant harvest.
2. **Victory joy** — like soldiers rejoicing after dividing plunder from a battle won.

3. **Freedom from oppression** — God breaks the “yoke,” “bar,” and “rod” (like Gideon defeating Midian), showing complete liberation from those who once dominated them.

The ministry of the Messiah would bring joy and gladness to Israel. Jesus said His ministry was like having a wedding party ([Matthew 9:14-15](#)).

6. **Read Luke 4:16–21.** How does Jesus’ mission echo Isaiah’s themes of liberation?

This is a very controversial scene. Jesus is in His hometown of Nazareth, where He grew up and He is in the synagogue and reads from Isaiah’s scroll (61:1-2; 58:6) and He declares that HE is the fulfilment of this Isaiah passage.

*Jesus announces that He fulfils Isaiah’s promises by bringing **good news to the poor, freedom for the oppressed, sight for the blind, and release for the captives.** Just as Isaiah spoke of God breaking burdens and ending oppression, Jesus declares that **He Himself is the bringer of God’s liberation**, ushering in the long-promised age of salvation.*

Read Isaiah 9:6

7. What does the title ‘**Wonderful Counsellor**’ reveal about the Messiah’s wisdom?

The Hebrew literally means “supernatural” counsellor.

*The title “**Wonderful Counsellor**” reveals that the Messiah will have **supernatural, extraordinary wisdom**. He won’t just offer good advice; His counsel will be **divine, perfect, and full of insight** — wisdom far beyond any human ruler. He knows exactly what His people need and leads them with **God’s own understanding and guidance**.*

*Jesus is a “**wonderful counselor**”:*

- “He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person” (John 2:25).
- He is able to advise His people thoroughly because He is qualified in ways no human counselor is. In Christ is “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3), including the knowledge of all human nature (Psalm 139:1–2).

- *Jesus always knows what we are going through; He can empathize in our weakness and knows all about suffering, and He always knows the right course of action (Hebrews 4:15–16).*
- *Christ's position as our Wonderful Counselor means we can trust Him to listen to our problems and guide us in the right direction (Proverbs 3:6).*
- *We can be sure He is listening because He told us to pray to Him about our worries (Philippians 4:6; James 1:5).*
- *We can be certain He has our best interests at heart because He loves us (1 John 4:19).*
- *And His love is so wide and deep (and wonderful) that we cannot fully understand it (Romans 5:8).*

*How we need Jesus as our **Counselor**! "It was by a Counsellor that this world was ruined. Did not Satan mask himself in the serpent, and counsel the woman with exceeding craftiness, that she should take unto herself of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in the hope that thereby she should be as God? Was it not that evil counsel which provoked our mother to rebel against her Maker, and did it not as the effect of sin, bring death into this world with all its train of woe? Ah! beloved, it was meet that the world should have a Counsellor to restore it, if it had a Counsellor to destroy it." (Spurgeon)*

*Jesus is our **Counselor** in the sense that as God the Son, He takes counsel with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our good. The High Council of the Godhead brought forth our salvation. "Hence you read in the book of Zechariah, if you turn to the sixth chapter and the thirteenth verse, this passage — 'The council of peace shall be between them both.' The Son of God with his Father and the Spirit, ordained the council of peace. Thus was it arranged. The Son must suffer, he must be the substitute, must bear his people's sins and be punished in their stead; the Father must accept the Son's substitution and allow his people to go free, because Christ had paid their debts. The Spirit of the living God must then cleanse the people whom the blood had pardoned, and so they must be accepted before the presence of God, even the Father. That was the result of the great council." (Spurgeon)*

The Great Counselor guides our lives. "Remember, there is nothing that happens in your daily life, but what was first of all devised in eternity, and counselled by Jesus

Christ for your good and in your behalf, that all things might work together for your lasting benefit and profit.... Oh, how strange providence seems to you and to me! Does it not look like a zig-zag line, this way and that way, backward and forward, like the journeyings of the children of Israel in the wilderness? Ah! my brethren, but to God it is a straight line. Directly, God always goes to his object. And yet to us, he often seems to go round about.... Let us learn to leave providence in the hand of the Counsellor.” (Spurgeon)

Jesus’ counsel is necessary counsel. Jesus’ counsel is faithful counsel, without any self-interest. Jesus’ counsel is hearty counsel. It isn’t detached and unemotional. Jesus’ counsel is sweet counsel. “Christian, do you know what sweet counsel is? You have gone to your Master in the day of trouble, and in the secret of your chamber you have poured out your heart before him. You have laid your case before him, with all its difficulties, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh’s letter, and you have felt, that though Christ was not there in flesh and blood, yet he was there in spirit, and he counselled you. You felt that his was counsel that came from the very heart. But he was something better than that. There was such a sweetness coming with his counsel, such a radiance of love, such a fullness of fellowship, that you said, ‘Oh that I were in trouble every day, if I might have such sweet counsel as this!’ Christ is the Counsellor whom I desire to consult every hour, and I would that I could sit in his secret chamber all day and all night long, because to counsel with him is to have sweet counsel, hearty counsel, and wise counsel, all at the same time.” (Spurgeon)

“Why, you may have a friend that talks very sweetly with you, and you will say, ‘Well, he is a kind, good soul, but I really cannot trust his judgment.’ You have another friend, who has a good deal of judgment, and yet you say of him, ‘Certainly, he is a man of prudence above a great many, but I cannot find out his sympathy; I never get at his heart, if he were ever so rough and untutored, I would sooner have his heart without his prudence, than his prudence without his heart,’ But we go to Christ, and we get wisdom; we get love, we get sympathy, we get everything that can possibly be wanted in a Counsellor.” (Spurgeon)

8. Read Colossians 2:2–3. How does this confirm Jesus as the “Wonderful Counselor”?

Colossians 2:2-3 – The Apostle Paul says this: ² My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³ **in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

Paul says that **all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ**. This confirms that Jesus is the **“Wonderful Counsellor”** because He alone possesses perfect, divine wisdom and insight to guide, teach, and lead His people. No human ruler or teacher can compare—He is the ultimate source of understanding.

9. What does it mean for **the** child to be called ‘**Mighty God**’?

Calling the child **“Mighty God”** means that the Messiah, Jesus, is truly divine. He possesses **all the power, authority, and strength of God Himself**.

Though born as a human child, **He is God incarnate**, able to save, protect, and rule **with sovereign power**.

It affirms that salvation and deliverance come not from human might, but **from the divine strength of the Lord Himself**.

Here is a summary of how Jesus is Mighty God

a) Immanuel – God with us:

- Jesus’ birth fulfilled the prophecy of **God coming to dwell with His people** (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).
- He is **fully God and fully human**, present with His people to save, guide, and redeem.
- He is **the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1:15)

b) Eternal and divine:

- Jesus existed **before creation** (John 1:1; Colossians 1:16–17).
- He is **the Word**, through whom all things were created and who sustains all creation.

c) Divine authority and heroic power:

- The title **“Mighty God”** reflects God’s ultimate strength, leadership, and authority (Psalm 45:6; Deuteronomy 10:17).

d) Servant leadership on earth:

- Jesus demonstrated humility and servant leadership, not military might (Matthew 12:17–21; 20:28; John 18:36; Philippians 2:7).

e) **Demonstration of divine power:**

- Healing the sick, performing miracles, and casting out demons (Luke 4:14; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; Luke 4:36; Mark 1:32–34).
- Apostles testified of His divine power (Acts 2:22).

f) **Resurrection and exaltation:**

- Jesus conquered death, rose with divine authority, and was seated at God's right hand (John 10:18; 2 Corinthians 13:4; Philippians 2:5–8; Ephesians 1:19–22).

g) **Recognition of His divinity:**

- Thomas confessed, **"My Lord and my God!"** (John 20:28).
- The disciples acknowledged Him as Lord and God (Luke 24:52; Matthew 28:18–20).

h) **Future reign and final victory:**

- Jesus will return with power and glory to judge and reign over all creation (Matthew 24:30; 1 Corinthians 15:24–25; Revelation 11:15–17; 12:10).
- All creation will worship Him, fulfilling Isaiah's vision of the **Mighty God-King** (Revelation 5:12–13; 19:1).

10. Read John 1:1 and John 20:28. How do these verses affirm the title **Mighty God**?

John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the **Word was with God**, and the **Word was God**.

John is saying that Jesus is the Word [Of God] and the Word was there at the beginning of Creation with God – AND the Word was God. Therefore Jesus, the Word of God, is actually God. John 1:14 – goes on to say that: "The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us" – In other words, Jesus, who is the Word of God and fully God, became human; i.e. Immanuel = God with us!

John 20:28 - Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas missed out seeing the resurrected Jesus, the first time Jesus appeared to His disciples; but when Thomas finally got to see the resurrected Jesus, Thomas had no doubt that Jesus is/was "My Lord AND my God!"

11. What does the title '**Everlasting Father**' mean—and not mean—about Jesus?

The Messiah is the Everlasting Father: The idea in these Hebrew words is that Jesus is the source or author of all eternity, that He is the Creator Himself. It does not mean that Jesus Himself is the Person of the Father in the Trinity.

What it means:

- The title “Everlasting Father” emphasizes that the Jesus’ **care, protection, and leadership** over His people are eternal.
- Jesus provides **guidance, provision, and nurturing**, like a loving father, and His rule is **everlasting**, never ending.
- It highlights His **eternal covenant relationship** with His people, showing that God’s promises and salvation are all firm and secure in Him.

What it does NOT mean:

- It does **not imply that Jesus is God the Father**. Jesus is the Son!
- It is a metaphor describing Jesus’ fatherly role over His kingdom, not His identity within the Trinity.
- His role as protector and provider will not be limited by aging or death. His role as father (protector and provider for us His children) will continue in perpetuity

Also Paul says in **Colossians 2:9** – “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” Therefore Jesus, the Son, has the same attributes of the Father!

Hebrews 1:3 says: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the **exact representation of his being**, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”
Therefore Jesus, the Son, is exactly the same as God, the Father!

12. **Read John 10:28-30.** How does Jesus fulfil the role of ‘**Everlasting Father**’?
²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.

Jesus says no one will snatch His sheep from His hands and likewise no-one will snatch them out of the Father’s hand either. The Son’s hands are just as secure as the Father’s hand, and vice-versa. Also, Jesus declares, “**I and the Father are one**”, showing that His everlasting care for His people is identical to the Father’s everlasting care!

13. In what way is Jesus, the Messiah, the ‘**Prince of Peace**’?
We are not talking peace as in a military sense here!
The peace we are talking about is:

Peace that brings reconciliation with God: Through His death and resurrection, Jesus ends humanity's separation from God (Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:20)

The Peace Jesus offers is inner peace: He gives believers a lasting **peace of heart and mind**, even amid life's trials (John 14:27; Philippians 4:7).

And Jesus establishes a kingdom of peace: Jesus' reign ushers in **justice, righteousness, and harmony**, ultimately culminating in His second coming when all conflict will be ended (Isaiah 11:6–9; Revelation 21:4).

When we are inwardly tossed by various tempests, and when Satan attempts to disturb our consciences, let us remember that Christ is The Prince of Peace, and that it is easy for him quickly to allay all our uneasy feelings. Thus will these titles confirm us more and more in the faith of Christ and fortify us against Satan and against hell itself.” (Calvin)

14. Read Ephesians 2:14 and Luke 2:14. How do these show Jesus as the '**Prince of Peace**'?

Ephesians 2:14 - “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.”

Jesus brings peace by reconciling humanity—breaking down divisions between Jews and Gentiles, and between humans and God. He removes hostility and unites people under His kingdom, fulfilling His role as Prince of Peace

Luke 2:14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.” *The angels announce Jesus' birth as **bringing peace on earth**. His coming signals the start of **God's reign of peace**, blessing those who receive Him.*

Hark! the herald angels sing,

“Glory to the new-born King;

***Peace on earth**, and mercy mild;*

***God and sinners reconciled.**”*

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,

Join the triumph of the skies;

With angelic hosts proclaim,

“Christ is born in Bethlehem.”

Read Isaiah 9:7

15. What characteristics of the Messiah's kingdom are highlighted in v. 7?

Characteristics of the Messiah's Kingdom (Isaiah 9:7)

1. **Everlasting rule** – His kingdom will **never end**; it is eternal.
2. **Justice and righteousness** – He will govern with **perfect fairness and moral integrity**.
3. **Divine authority** – The establishment and upholding of the kingdom are by **God's mighty power**.
4. **Peace and security** – His reign will bring **peace, stability, and protection**.
5. **Davidic promise** – His rule is **on David's throne**, fulfilling God's covenant promise that there would always be someone on David's throne! (2 Samuel 7:16).

16. Read Luke 1:32–33. How does the Angel Gabriel affirm Isaiah 9:7?

Luke 1:32–33 - *“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”*

*Angel Gabriel confirms the Messiah will **inherit David's throne**, just as Isaiah 9:7 mentions a kingdom established on David's line.*

*Angel Gabriel emphasizes that **His reign will never end**, echoing Isaiah's description of an **eternal kingdom**.*

*God Himself **gives the throne**, affirming that the Messiah's rule is by **God's sovereign power**.*

17. Read Revelation 11:15 and Revelation 19:11–16. How do these passages show the final fulfilment of Isaiah's kingdom vision?

Revelation 11:15 – *“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and **he will reign for ever and ever**.’”*

*Revelation 11:15 echoes Isaiah 9:7's promise that the Messiah's **kingdom will never end**.*

Revelation 19:11–16

*“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. **With justice** he judges and wages war.*

His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.

He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.

The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.

‘He will rule them with an iron sceptre.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

*These verses show Jesus exercising **supreme power and judgment**, ruling all creation with justice and righteousness as per Isaiah 9:7*

18. How does/should the certainty of Christ’s eternal rule shape our lives today?

Confidence and security – *Knowing Jesus reigns forever gives us assurance as we face trials, knowing nothing can overturn God’s plan (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:20–23).*

Peace and hope – *His eternal kingdom reminds us that ultimate justice, righteousness, and peace will prevail, giving us peace of mind and the certain hope of justice as we live in this troubled world (Isaiah 9:7; Revelation 11:15).*

Obedience and faithfulness – *As citizens of His kingdom, we are called to live under His lordship, following His commands and modeling His character (Matthew 6:33; Colossians 3:17).*

Mission and witness – *Because His kingdom is eternal, we participate in spreading His reign by **sharing the gospel and living as ambassadors for Christ** (2 Corinthians 5:20; Matthew 28:18–20).*

Perspective on life’s priorities – *Temporal struggles, possessions, and status take second place to living for Christ’s eternal kingdom (Matthew 6:19–21).*

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of this study?

A prophecy of Hope: God’s promised Light, Savior, and Eternal King



What ***light globe moment*** did you have in this study?

What ***questions*** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Finish in prayer: Father, thank You that into our darkness the light of Jesus has shone. Thank You for the hope promised in Isaiah and fulfilled in Jesus. Lord Jesus, our Wonderful Counsellor and Prince of Peace, guide us, strengthen us, and fill us with Your peace. Help us to walk in Your light and live under Your good and loving rule. Send us out with hope in Your kingdom and confidence in Your promises. In Your name we pray. Amen..

Study 2 – The Announcement of God’s Promised Saviour

(Sermon on 7th December 2025)

Before you begin: Have you ever received news—good or bad—that changed everything for you? How did you respond?

Good News: When I became a Dad!

Good News: When Heather agreed to marry me!

Good News: When I was accepted by my peers to be ordained!

Bad News: Arriving at work to receive a message that my Dad had aneurysm of the aorta and passed shortly after.

Bad News: GP informed me I had a leiomyosarcoma – aggressive fast-moving cancer!

Read Luke 1:26-38

1. What is significant about God sending the angel Gabriel to a young woman in Nazareth? (vv. 26–27)
 - **God works through the unlikely/unexpected and overlooked** – Nazareth was a small insignificant village. “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). God often chooses the unexpected to achieve His purposes!
 - **God chose an ordinary woman** – not a powerful or privileged woman – in choosing Mary. See 1 Corinthians 1:26-29: ²⁶ Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him.
 - **God chose to bring His salvation in a surprising way** – an angel appearing to a lowly woman in a small village
 - **God chose a virgin pledged (betrothed) to be married to Joseph.**
 - There were three stages to a Jewish wedding in that day.
 - Engagement (a formal agreement made by the fathers).
 - Betrothal (the ceremony where mutual promises were made).
 - Marriage (approximately one year later, when the bridegroom came for his bride at an unexpected time).

- When a couple was **betroted**, they were under the obligations of faithfulness, and a divorce was required to break the betrothal. This was not a casual promise.
- Mary is clearly said to be a virgin. There is no ambiguity about the idea here — Mary had never had sexual relations with any man.
- The conception of John the Baptist, the forerunner, was miraculous; we should expect an even more remarkable conception of the Messiah.
- “The name ‘Mary’ is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Miriam, the sister of Moses. It means ‘exalted one,’ a fitting description of the soon-to-be mother of the Messiah.” (Pate)
- The virgin birth is critical
 - **It shows that Jesus is both fully God and fully human.**
Jesus has a human mother, so He is truly human.
But He is conceived by the Holy Spirit, not by a human father, showing He is truly God.
 - **It shows that Jesus’ birth is God’s supernatural work.**
Salvation comes from God, not human effort. Jesus enters the world by God’s initiative and power.
 - **It fulfils God’s promises.**
The virgin birth fulfils prophecy (Isaiah 7:14) and shows God keeps His word.
 - **It means Jesus is born without inherited sin.**
Jesus enters the world holy (Luke 1:35), able to be the perfect one and for all sacrifice for sinners.
- **Joseph (and Mary for that matter) was a descendant of David.** This fulfils the promise that the Messiah would be a forever King on King David’s throne (1 Samuel 7)

Though **Nazareth** is in the general region of Galilee, it is 15 miles away from the Sea of Galilee. It is six miles from the closest major road. **Nazareth** had no good water supply; only one fairly weak well in the center of the village.

2. Why does Angel Gabriel call Mary “**highly favoured**” and say “**the Lord is with you**”? (v. 28)

The phrase “**highly favoured**” means literally “graced” or “full of grace” — Mary is the recipient of God’s grace — and grace means “undeserved favour” — Mary did not earn the privilege of carrying Jesus — she was chosen by God and the privilege

was given to her by God's grace. **It highlights the familiar pattern of God using the humble and lowly to achieve His purposes.** God used: David (a shepherd boy); Moses (a fearful, exiled shepherd); Gideon (from the weakest clan); Rahab (a prostitute and Gentile); Ruth (a widow and Gentile); the disciples (fishermen, tax collector, ordinary working men); the Samaritan woman.

The Roman Catholic prayer that begins "Hail Mary, full of grace" is accurate. Mary was full of grace, and so is any believer. **But Mary's grace was a received grace, not grace to give to others.**

The phrase "**the Lord is with you**" reassures Mary she is not alone. God Himself will strengthen, protect and guide Mary as she carries and raises Jesus!

3. Why is Mary "**greatly troubled**" by the greeting? (v. 29)

Mary was greatly troubled because:

- a. She has just be visited by an angel – and visitations from angels are typically received with fear and trembling [see Zechariah – Luke 1:12]
- b. For a lowly woman being told she is "highly favoured" and "the Lord is with you" would be overwhelming statements for such a young girl.
- c. She is trying to understand what the angel is telling her!

4. What does Angel Gabriel's announcement reveal about who Jesus will be? (vv. 31–33)

- He will be called Jesus – which means "God saves" or "He saves"
- He will be called great and called the Son of the Most High . This shows Jesus' divinity. Jesus is God's eternal Son, sharing the Father's nature, authority, and glory.
- He will be given the throne of His Father (ancestor), King David – fulfilling the promise from 2 Samuel 7:12-16
- He will reign over His Kingdom forever – it will have no end!

Note: Mary's question in verse 34 "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" implies that Mary understood conception was to happen immediately, not when she eventually married Joseph!

5. How does Angel Gabriel explain the miracle of Jesus' conception? What does this teach about Jesus' nature? (v. 35)

- *Jesus' conception is entirely the work of God – there is no human sexual intercourse. Gabriel says “the Holy Spirit will come upon you” and “The Most High [God] will overshadow you” – Overshadow does not imply any sort of sexual intercourse between God and Mary!*
- *Jesus will be “Holy” from the moment of conception. Holy means ‘set apart’ or ‘unique’ or ‘one of the kind’.*
- *This shows that Jesus is without sin – set apart from all humanity – who are born with original sin – see Romans 5:12.*
- *Jesus is the Son of God – He is fully human through Mary giving birth to Him – and fully God – divine!*

6. Why does Angel Gabriel mention Elizabeth's pregnancy? (vv. 36–37)

Gabriel mentions that Elizabeth is pregnant

- *To show Mary that the message that Gabriel is bringing her is trustworthy – because even Mary's relative Elizabeth who was old and unable to have children, is also pregnant!*
- *To encourage Mary's faith that she is not alone – God has already been a work in Mary's family*
- *To show that “nothing is impossible for God” (“no word from God will fail”)*

7. What does Mary's final response teach us about true discipleship? (v. 38)

True discipleship is:

- *Is a willing, obedient “YES” to God*
- *Involves faith even when things are uncertain or inexplicable!*
- *Involves humility and surrender to God's will/plan*
- *Involves participating in God's/Jesus' mission*

8. With reference to the following Old Testament passages, how does this announcement fit into the bigger story of God's salvation?

Genesis 3:15

*In Genesis 3:15: God promised that the offspring of the woman would crush the serpent's head. **Connection:** Jesus' miraculous birth fulfills this first hint of a Saviour who defeats sin and Satan.*

Genesis 12:1-3

*In Genesis 12:1-3: God promised Abraham that through one of his offspring, all nations in the world would be blessed. **Connection:** Jesus is the ultimate descendant of Abraham, bringing blessing and salvation to all people [who care to believe in Jesus]*

Genesis 18:1-15

*In Genesis 18:1-15: God promised Sarah a son despite her old age [she was 90 years old when she had Isaac]. **Connection:** Gabriel points to Elizabeth's pregnancy as proof that **nothing is impossible for God**, preparing Mary to believe in her own miraculous conception.*

2 Samuel 7:11-16

*In 2 Samuel 7:11-16: God promised that a descendant of David who would reign forever of King David's throne forever! **Connection:** Gabriel tells Mary that Jesus will inherit David's throne and reign eternally, fulfilling God's covenant promise!*

Micah 5:2-5a

*In Micah 5:2-5a promises that a ruler of Israel will come from the tiny town of Bethlehem. **Connection:** Mary's child, Jesus, will be born in Bethlehem [see Matthew 1 and Luke 2], fulfilling this prophecy.*

Isaiah 7:10-14

Spurgeon said of this passage, that it is said to be "One of the most difficult in all the Word of God. It may be so; I certainly did not think it was until I saw what the commentators had to say about it, and I rose up from reading them perfectly confused."

"It is characteristic of predictive prophecy that it often mingles different times together in one composite picture" (Martin)

*As is often the case with Old Testament prophecy, it can have a **near fulfilment and a far fulfilment!***

*The **near fulfillment of this prophecy** centered around King Ahaz and the city of Jerusalem, and the attack from Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Syria. For Ahaz,*

the sign centered on this time span. Simply put, God would give Ahaz a sign that within a few years, both Israel and Syria would be crushed. This was a sign of deliverance to Ahaz.

i. Many commentators think that this was immediately fulfilled when a young woman in the royal household shortly married, conceived a son, and unknowingly naming him “Immanuel.” Before this boy came to eat solid food, Israel and Syria would be defeated. It is also possible that God is just referring in a figurative way to a year or two period of time.

ii. “The name ‘Immanuel’ was a rebuke to King Ahaz. If ‘God is with us,’ then why should he have feared the enemy?” (Wolf)

iii. “The ‘sign’ of the child, therefore, constitutes an indication that the all-sovereign and all-knowing God has the situation completely in hand, and it rebukes the king’s lack of faith in him.” (Grogan)

*The **far or ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy** goes far beyond Ahaz, to announce **the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus Christ**.*

i. We know this passage speaks of Jesus because the Holy Spirit says so through Matthew: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.” (Matthew 1:23)

*ii. We know this passage speaks of Jesus because the prophecy is addressed not only to Ahaz, but also to David’s entire house (**O house of David!**).*

*iii. We know this passage speaks of Jesus because it says **the virgin shall conceive**, and that conception would be **a sign** to David’s entire house. Those who deny the virgin birth of Jesus like to point out that the Hebrew word translated **virgin** (almah) can also be translated as “young woman.” The idea is that Isaiah was simply saying that a “young woman” would give birth, not a virgin. **While the near fulfillment may have reference to a young woman giving birth, the far or ultimate fulfillment clearly points to a woman miraculously conceiving and giving birth.** This is especially clear because the Old Testament never uses the word in a context other than **virgin** and because the Septuagint [the Greek translation of the Old Testament] translates it categorically **virgin** (parthenos).*

*We know this passage speaks of Jesus because it says He will be known as **Immanuel**, meaning “God with Us.” This was true of Jesus in fact, not only as a title. **Immanuel** speaks both of the deity of Jesus (God with us) and His identification and nearness to man (God with us).*

“In what sense then, is Christ GOD WITH US? Jesus is called Immanuel, or God with us, in his incarnation; God with us, by the influences of his Holy Spirit, in the holy sacrament, in the preaching of his word, in private prayer. And God with us, through every action of our life, that we begin, continue, and end in his name. He is God with us, to comfort, enlighten, protect, and defend us, in every time of temptation and trial, in the hour of death, in the day of judgment; and God with us and in us, and we with and in him, to all eternity.” (Clarke)

Isaiah 7:14 says: A virgin will bear a child called Immanuel (“God with us”).

Connection: *Jesus’ virgin birth is a direct fulfillment of this promise, showing that Jesus is not only human but fully God and therefore He truly is Immanuel, “God with His people”*

Isaiah 9:6-7

*Isaiah 9:6-7 says that a child will be given to us and that this child will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, and His kingdom will never end. **Connection:** Gabriel’s announcement to Mary confirms Jesus’ divine nature, His titles, and the eternal scope of His kingdom reign.*

9. Ponder: How should we respond to God’s announcements and promises today?

a. With faith and trust

- *Like Mary, we may not fully understand God’s plan, but we can **believe His promises are true**.*
- *Scripture reminds us that **nothing is impossible with God** (Luke 1:37-no word from God will fail!).*

b. With obedience and surrender

- *True response means saying “yes” to God’s will, even when it’s unexpected or challenging (Luke 1:38).*
- *Obedience shows we value God’s purposes above our own comfort or understanding.*

c. With humility

- *Recognize that God works through ordinary people, and we don’t earn His favour by our status or our efforts.*

- God calls us to **serve Him faithfully**, trusting that He will equip us for the task.
- d. With joy and gratitude**
- God's promises bring hope and salvation. Responding with **thankfulness and praise** reflects our recognition of His grace.
- e. By participating in His mission**
- God's announcements often involve us in His plan, like Mary's role in the birth of Jesus.
 - Our response includes sharing the good news, helping others, and living in ways that reflect God's kingdom on earth.

What's the **BIG IDEA** of this study?

God's declaration of His miraculous plan of salvation



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V37 - For no word from God will ever fail.

Finish in prayer: Gracious Father, we thank You for the wonder of Your announcement to Mary and the reminder that nothing is impossible with You. As we walk in faith, help us to trust Your Word, welcome Your plans, and obey with the same humble faith Mary showed. May the good news of Jesus shape our lives and our hope. In His name we pray, Amen.

Study 3 – Good News that Breaks into Bad News

(Sermon on 14th December 2025)

Before you begin: What kinds of “*bad news*” do people experience today? Why do we long for good news?

Examples of “bad news”:

- Bereavement
- Marriage problems
- Relational problems
- Health struggles
- Financial pressures
- Mental/emotional burdens
- Moral failure/brokenness
- Employment problems
- Everyday disappointments – plans don’t work out; people let us down
- Bush fires
- Natural disasters
- Ageing – dementia/Alzheimer’s

Why do we long for good news?

- We are designed to hope for better things
- We know good news will bring joy and lift our spirits
- We know deep down that the world is not as it should be
- And God has set eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11) – so we instinctively hunger for something better

Before you begin: How might the people of Israel in the time of Jesus have known/experienced “*bad news*” in their lives?

There was a great deal going on in Israel at the time of Jesus

- Roman occupation and oppression and cruelty (crucifixions)
- High taxation and financial strain
- Corruption and injustice – Herod the Great was known for his paranoia, injustice and violence
- Social and religious tension – Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, tax collectors, Samaritans
- Poverty

- Sickness/disease
- Spiritual longing – has God forgotten about His people

Before you begin: How might the shepherds have known “*bad news*” in their own lives?

- Shepherds were often looked down upon—considered unclean, unreliable, and on the fringe of society. Many people didn’t trust them; they weren’t allowed to give testimony in court.
- Long, freezing nights, dangerous terrain, predators, and thieves. No job security and very small wages and constantly in danger.
- Shepherds were among the poorest in society. Feeding themselves and their families was a constant challenge.
- They worked far from the towns—long stretches away from home, family, and community worship. Loneliness was a normal part of their life.
- Their work made it hard to attend temple services or keep strict purity laws. Many might have felt distant from God, or unworthy.

Read Genesis 3:1-24

1. What “bad news” do you find in this passage? Why?

Bad news: Doubt, deception, and disobedience (**SIN**) enter the world.

Why: Trust in God is broken—the root of all later sin and suffering.

Bad news: Adam and Eve, in shame, hide from God.

Why: Their relationship with God and each other is now damaged

Bad news: The blame game starts. Adam blames Eve; Eve blames the serpent.

Why: Human relationships are fractured.

Bad news: God introduces the punishment/curse for disobedience – the serpent is cursed and will crawl on its belly; there will be pain in childbirth; marriage is marked by conflict; work becomes frustrating and exhausting.

Why: Sin brings suffering in to every part of life. The world is fallen and broken.

Bad news: Humankind’s punishment for sin is introduced – namely **physical death**

Why: Mortality is the consequence of turning away from the Giver of life.

Bad news: Spiritual warfare introduced.

Why: Because the serpent is actually the devil [In Ezekiel 28:13-19 tells us that Satan was in Eden. Many other passages associate a serpent or a snake-like creature with Satan (such as Job 26:13 and Isaiah 51:9). Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 speak of *the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan.*] and there is now enmity/hostility between the devil/Satan and the woman and the woman's offspring (v15)

Ezekiel 28 tells us Satan, before his fall, was an angel of the highest rank and prominence, even something of a leader of worship in heaven. Isaiah 14 tells us Satan's fall had to do with his desire to be equal to or greater than God, to set his will against God's will.

We may not understand everything involved in the way Satan used the body of a serpent, but we can know it was true and this is no mere fable. "It is idle to call the narrative of the Fall a mere allegory; one had better say at once that he does not believe the Book... There was a real serpent, as there was a real paradise; there was a real Adam and Eve, who stood at the head of our race, and they really sinned, and our race is really fallen. Believe this" (Spurgeon).

The representation of Satan as a serpent makes the idea of Moses saving Israel by lifting up a bronze serpent all the more provocative (Numbers 21:8-9), especially when Jesus identifies *Himself* with that very serpent (John 3:14). This is because, in this picture, the serpent (a personification of sin and rebellion) is made of *bronze* (a metal associated with judgment, since it is made with fire). The lifting of a bronze serpent is the lifting up of sin judged, in the form of a cross.

Bad news: There is **separation from God**. Adam and Eve are driven from the garden of Eden.

Why: Sin creates distance/separation from a Holy God; paradise is lost.

Praise God there is some Good News in verse 15

This prophecy also gives the first hint of the virgin birth, declaring the Messiah — the Deliverer — would be the Seed of the Woman, but not of the man.

Genesis 3:15 has been called the *proto-evangelium*, the first gospel. Martin Luther said of this verse: "This text embraces and comprehends within itself everything noble and glorious that is to be found anywhere in the Scriptures" (Leupold).

“This is the first gospel sermon that was ever delivered upon the surface of this earth. It was a memorable discourse indeed, with Jehovah himself for the preacher, and the whole human race and the prince of darkness for the audience.” (Spurgeon)

Read Luke 2:8-20

2. Why is it significant that the angel appeared to shepherds? (cf. Exodus 3:1; 1 Samuel 16:11)

Exodus 3:1 - Now Moses was **tending the flock** of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God

God calls a shepherd, Moses, to deliver His people

1 Samuel 16:11 - So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “**He is tending the sheep.**” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

God calls a shepherd, David, to become King and rule over God’s people.

By the angel appearing to shepherds, it shows God works through the humble to being salvation.

*It points, symbolically, forward to Jesus as the true Shepherd-King. Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” (John 10). Like Moses, He rescues His people. Like David, He is the promised King (2 Sam 7). The birth announcement going to shepherds **highlights who Jesus is and the kind of kingdom He brings.***

It shows the Good News is for everyone

From the very beginning of Jesus’ life, the gospel is shown to be for:

- *the poor*
- *the overlooked*
- *the outsider*
- *those who feel unworthy*

The first to hear the news become the first to tell it (Luke 2:17–20).

“As a class shepherds had a bad reputation...More regrettable was their habit of confusing ‘mine’ with ‘thine’ as they moved about the country. They were considered unreliable and were not allowed to give testimony in the law courts.” (Morris)

3. How does the angel’s message contrast with the “**bad news**” of the shepherds’ world? (cf. Isaiah 40:1-2; Isaiah 52:7)

Isaiah 40:1-2: *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.*

From hardship to comfort (Isaiah 40:1–2)

*The shepherds lived with poverty, fear, and oppression. The angel brings a message of **comfort**—God is acting to save His people through a **Saviour**.*

From fear to joy

*The shepherds daily lives were marked by danger and uncertainty. The angel proclaims “**good news of great joy**”—God is breaking into their darkness with hope.*

From oppression to peace

*Israel lived under Roman rule and longed for deliverance. The angel announces **peace on earth**, fulfilling Isaiah’s promise that God would end His people’s struggles.*

***From outcasts to being the first to see Jesus!** The shepherds are privileged to hear about and see Jesus; even though they were seen as outcasts by society.*

From waiting to fulfilment (Isaiah 52:7)

They had long waited for God’s promised King. The angel announces the good news that the Messiah has finally come—just as Isaiah foretold: “Your God reigns!”
Isaiah 52:7 - *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”*

4. What is the meaning of the titles “**Saviour**”, “**Messiah**”, and “**Lord**”?

Saviour

- Means “**rescuer**” or “**deliverer**.”
- In Scripture, it refers to the one who **saves God’s people from sin, death, and judgment**.
- The angel announces that Jesus is the One who brings **God’s promised salvation** (cf. Matt 1:21).

Messiah (Hebrew Mashiach; Greek Christos)

- Means “**the Anointed One**” Or “**Chosen One**” – the One God would send to **save His people!**
- Refers to the long-promised **King from David’s line** who would rule God’s people, defeat evil, and restore God’s kingdom.
- By calling Jesus “Messiah,” the angel declares that **God’s ancient promises are being fulfilled**.

Lord

- Means “**master**,” “**ruler**,” or “**the one with authority**.”
- In the Old Testament, “Lord” (Kyrios in Greek) is often used to translate the divine name **Yahweh [YHWH]**.
- Calling Jesus “Lord” therefore proclaims that He is not only King but also **God Himself come near**—the divine ruler deserving worship and obedience.

5. Why is the sign—**a baby in a manger**—so surprising? (cf. Micah 5:2; Isaiah 53:2-3)

1. It contrasts sharply with expectations of a powerful king (Micah 5:2)

*Micah promised a ruler from Bethlehem whose origins were “from ancient times.” People expected a royal, mighty, triumphant Messiah. But **the sign is not a throne... but a feeding trough. God’s great King arrives in surprising humility.***

2. It reveals a Messiah who comes in lowliness, not splendour (Isaiah 53:2–3)

Isaiah foretold a servant with “no beauty or majesty,” despised and rejected. A baby lying where animals feed matches that unexpected picture—ordinary, overlooked, easily dismissed.

3. It shows God’s salvation comes in humility, not human glory

A manger is the last place you’d expect to find the Saviour, Messiah, Lord.

Yet this is precisely the point: God enters the world in weakness, to lift up the weak.

4. It makes the good news accessible to the lowly

Shepherds—poor, humble, marginalized—can approach a manger far more easily than a palace. The sign tells them (and us) that God’s King has come for ordinary people.

6. What does the angelic praise in verses 13–14 reveal about God’s plan? (cf. Isaiah 9:6; Ezekiel 37:26)

VV13-14 says - ¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth **peace** to those on whom his favour rests.”

God’s salvation brings glory to Him and grace to humanity

The angels sing, “Glory to God... and peace... to those on whom His favour rests.” God’s plan is beings both glory to God and a blessing to people—He acts for His glory and for our good.

God salvation brings peace through His promised King (Isaiah 9:6)

*The angels proclaim “peace on earth”, echoing Isaiah’s promise of the **Prince of Peace** whose kingdom would bring justice, righteousness, and lasting peace to God’s people. Jesus’ birth is the beginning of that promised reign.*

God’s peace is a gift of His favour, not human achievement

“Peace” comes to those whom God chooses to bless—not through political power, military strength, or human effort. This peace is spiritual, relational, and eternal.

God fulfils His covenant promises (Ezekiel 37:26)

Ezekiel 37:26 says: *I will make **a covenant of peace** with them; it will be an **everlasting covenant**. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them **forever**.*

*Ezekiel promised a future “**covenant of peace**” where God’s presence would remain with His people forever. The angels announce that this peace and presence have arrived in the person of **Jesus**—God dwelling with His people.*

7. How do the shepherds respond to the announcement, and what does that teach us?

*They go immediately to see baby Jesus (v.15–16) They don't delay or debate—they obey God's word at once. This teaches us to respond to God's revelation/word with **prompt obedience**.*

*They seek, find and see Jesus for themselves (v.16) They personally witness what God has announced. This teaches us: Our faith seeks to **meet Jesus personally**, not just hear about Him. As Psalm 23:1 says "The Lord is MY shepherd" – He is a personal shepherd.*

*They spread the Good News (v.17) The shepherds tell others what was told to them about the child. This teaches us: Those who encounter Jesus naturally want to **share the good news**.*

They glorify and praise God (v.20) They return to their work transformed—worshipping as they go. This teaches us: true faith leads to joyful worship, even in ordinary lives!

"Their zeal in glorifying and praising God is an implied reproof of our indolence, or rather of our ingratitude. If the cradle of Christ had such an effect upon them, as to make them rise from the stable and the manger to heaven, how much more powerful ought the death and resurrection of Christ to be in raising us to God?" (Calvin)

The contrast between the angelic glory and the humble Jesus must have seemed extreme. God loves to put His glory in unlikely packages so His glory is more clearly displayed (2 Corinthians 4:7).

"It is a lovely thought that the shepherds who looked after the Temple lambs were the first to see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (Barclay)

8. Why does Mary "**treasure**" and '**ponder**' these things? (cf. Deuteronomy 6:6; Psalm 77:11-12; 1 Samuel 2:1-10)

Mary identifies these events are God's work - Like the psalmist in Psalm 77 who remembers God's mighty deeds (Ps 77:11–12), Mary stores these moments in her heart because she knows God is acting in a remarkable way.

Mary meditates faithfully on God's word and promises

Israel was told to keep God's words on their hearts (Deut 6:6). Mary reflects deeply so she can understand what God is doing through her Son.

Mary responds with faith just like Hannah did when she prayed for a son.

Hannah treasured God's deliverance and praised Him (1 Sam 2:1–10).

Mary similarly reflects, trusting that God is fulfilling His promises through Jesus.

Mary also realizes she is witnessing mysteries she cannot fully grasp just yet [We are often in the same position – there are mysteries we can never understand this side of Heaven] Mary treasures and ponders because she is seeing the beginnings of God's salvation plan—far bigger than she can yet fully comprehend.

Mary had good reason to 'treasure' and 'ponder'. What brought her to Bethlehem? A Roman emperor's great decree and perhaps gossiping tongues in Nazareth. God works through all kinds of people and all kinds of events to accomplish His plan.

9. **Ponder:** What does this passage teach us about who Jesus came for? (cf. Isaiah 61:1; Ezekiel 34)

Isaiah 61:1 - The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to **proclaim good news to the poor**. He has sent me to **bind up the brokenhearted**, to **proclaim freedom for the captives** and **release from darkness for the prisoners...**

*The first people to hear of Jesus' birth are **shepherds**—the lowly and marginalized. This fulfils Isaiah 61:1, where God's Servant comes to bring good news to the **poor, brokenhearted, and oppressed**.*

*Ezekiel 34 describes God as a Shepherd who will seek the **lost, bind up the injured, and care for His flock**. In Luke 2, Jesus—the true Shepherd-King—is born for exactly those kinds of people.*

*Also, Jesus came for “**all people**” - The angel declares “good news of great joy for **all the people**” (v.10). The gospel is not for the elite or powerful but for **ordinary sinners in need of God’s grace**.*

*Jesus came for those who **know they need saving** - The shepherds respond with eagerness and joy. Jesus comes for those humble enough to admit their need a shepherd and humbly hear, believe, and come to Him.*

10. How does the Christmas message turn our “**bad news**” into “**good news**”? The Christmas message announces that **in Jesus, God has come to deal with our deepest bad news—sin and the consequence of sin - death**.

- *We suffer because sin has broken our world, left us in a fallen condition and death is the consequence of sin!*
- *But the angel proclaims a **Saviour** (Luke 2:11): Jesus comes to **forgive sin, defeat death, and bring us peace with God**.*
- *What began as bad news in Genesis 3 is answered with **good news of great joy** in Luke 2.*

Because Jesus came, the guilt over our sin becomes forgiveness, our fear of dying becomes a certain hope of Heaven, and our death becomes life now with Jesus, leading to eternal life. Only, if we care to repent and believe (Mark 1:15)

11. **Ponder:** What should our response be today?

- **Repent of our sins** – genuinely say sorry for our sins – in thought, word and deed
- **Faith** – believe the Good News that Jesus brings forgiveness and eternal life
- **Obedience** – come to Jesus and follow His way – and not our own way
- **Give thanks to God** for the salvation we have in our Lord Jesus!
- **Worship** – praise and glorify God in everything we think, say and do
- **Witness** – like the shepherds – share the Good News with others
- **Meditate and Reflect** upon God’s word and treasure His word in our hearts – like Mary did!

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of this study?

In a world broken by sin – God brings Good News of a Saviour to restore peace and joy



What ***light globe moment*** did you have in this study?

What ***questions*** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

V11 - Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord

Finish in prayer: Gracious Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus, the Light who breaks into our darkness and the good news we so desperately need. As we reflect on the shepherds and on Your promises, fill our hearts with the same joy, wonder, and praise they experienced. Help us to treasure Jesus as Mary did, to respond in faith as the shepherds did, and to share Your good news with those around us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Study 4 – The Love that came down at Christmas

(Sermon on 21st December 2025)

Before you begin: When people say “**love**,” what do they usually mean? How is that different from the way the Bible describes God’s love? (cf. Hosea 11:1-4; Isaiah 54:10; Psalm 103:8-12)

*When people say “**love**” they usually mean:*

- *A feeling of attraction or affection or even lust!*
- *It’s conditional upon the other person conforming*
- *Often self-focused: how the other person makes me feel*
- *It’s temporary or changeable – shaped by mood, emotion, circumstance or performance*
- *They may mean “like” rather than “love”*

In Hosea 11:1-4:

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

*² But the more they were called,
the more they went away from me.*

*They sacrificed to the Baals
and they burned incense to images.*

*³ It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
taking them by the arms;
but they did not realize
it was I who healed them.*

*⁴ I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love.*

*To them I was like one who lifts
a little child to the cheek,
and I bent down to feed them.*

God loves first, like a parent teaching a child to walk, even when the child resists. The picture is of a parent teaching a child how to walk by holding the child’s arms and supporting the child as they make their awkward steps. His love persists despite rejection. God’s love – does not give up on people!

God remembered His tender love for Israel, when more than 500 years before the time of Hosea He brought them out of **Egypt**.

This is also an “unexpected” prophecy fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Matthew 2:15 shows how the words **out of Egypt I called My son** were fulfilled when the child Jesus returned from Egypt after escaping there on the eve of Herod’s massacre of the innocents.

God called Israel out of Egypt, but the idolatry of the Baals called to Israel, and they forsook the LORD and followed the Baals (the local deities of Canaan).

God does so much for His people that they are unaware of. Often, we attribute some blessing directly from the hand of God to some other source.

Even when God draws His people, it is with **gentle ties of love**, not with harsh manipulation or coercion. God wants to win us over, but not with brute force.

“Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn; but it is equally true that God draweth no man contrary to the constitution of man, but his methods of drawing are in strict accordance with ordinary mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is, and he acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that he uses, are ‘cords of a man.’ The bands he employs are ‘bands of love.’” (Spurgeon)

God humbled Himself [bent down to feed them] to minister to His needy people. One might almost think it is beneath the dignity and honor of God to stoop so for His people, but He never thinks so. This is the heart reflected in the servant nature of Jesus (Philippians 2).

In Isaiah 54:10: *Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.*

God’s love is more secure than mountains—circumstances may shake us, but His commitment will not be shaken; He will continue to show love and compassion.

In Psalm 103:8-12: ⁸ *The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

God's love flows from his character—slow to anger, rich in mercy—resulting in forgiveness and the removal of sin.

Read John 3:16-21

1. What does John 3:16 teach us about the nature of God's love? (cf. Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 53:5-6)

John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

*John 3:16 shows that God's love is **giving, costly, and purposeful**.*

*God's love is **initiating and generous and giving**. "God so loved the world that he **gave...**" Love begins with God, not with human goodness or worthiness. He gives what is most precious to him. **Isaiah 9:6** says: a **child is given**—God's loving initiative for a needy world.*

***God's love is costly and sacrificial**. God's love is not sentimental; it involves real sacrifice. The giving of the Son leads to suffering and death. **Isaiah 53:5–6** shows the cost: the Son is **pierced for our transgressions** and bears our sin so that we might have peace.*

***God's love is purposeful and saving**. The goal of God's love is not merely comfort but **salvation**—"that whoever believes in him **shall not perish** but have **eternal life**." God's love rescues from judgment and restores life.*

2. What does it mean that God "**gave His one and only Son**"? (cf. Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; John 1:14)

*It means that God **entered our world in the person of his eternal Son**, giving him for our salvation—at immeasurable cost.*

God gave his Son by sending him to step into our humanity

- *Isaiah 7:14: The Son is given as **Immanuel**—“**God with us.**”*
- *John 1:14: The eternal Word **became flesh and dwelt among us**. God did not save from a distance; He came near.*

God gave his Son in fulfilment of ancient promise/prophecy

- *Micah 5:2 says: The ruler will be born in Bethlehem who is truly human, yet his origins are **from of old, from ancient days**—i.e., from God. The eternal Son entering time and space.*

God gave his Son to be handed over for us

*“Gave” here, not only means the incarnation but also the **giving up of the Son to suffering and death** for us (cf. Isaiah 53). The Father lovingly offers the Son so that sinners might live.*

3. What is the goal of God’s love for the world?

The goal of God’s love is salvation that leads to eternal life.

The goals are:

V16 – whoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life

V17 – not to condemn but to save

V18 – to believe

V19 – for people to acknowledge Jesus as the ‘Light come into the world’

V20 – to come into the light and not reject it

V21 – to live by truth and come into the light

4. Why does verse 17 matter for understanding Christmas? (cf. Isaiah 61:1-2)

V17 matters because it tells us why Jesus came into the world on that 1st

*Christmas. He didn’t come to condemn but to **save**. Christmas declares God’s heart: **salvation before judgment**.*

Isaiah 61:1-2 - The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to **proclaim good news** to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness

for the prisoners, ² to **proclaim the year of the Lord's favor** and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

Jesus fulfils Isaiah's promise of gracious rescue. Isaiah 61:1–2 speaks of good news to the poor, freedom for captives, healing for the broken-hearted, and “the year of the Lord's favour.” At Christmas, Jesus comes to proclaim and embody this year of grace. (Notably, Jesus stops before “the day of vengeance” when he reads this passage in Luke 4.)

*The incarnation at Christmas, shows God moving toward sinners in mercy, not standing back in accusation. Condemnation is deserved, but **salvation is offered first**.*

5. According to verses 18–19, why do some people reject Jesus even though He brings love and light?

*People reject Jesus because they **love darkness rather than light**—his love exposes sin and calls for change, and some prefer to remain hidden rather than come into the light. Some people are not willing to let go of their “old” life. Some people fear God's judgment and think if they hide, it won't happen.*

6. What is “the **verdict**” or judgement Jesus describes in verse 19? (cf. Isaiah 6:9–10; Psalm 107:10–11)

Isaiah 6:9–10 – ⁹ He said, “Go and tell this people: “**“Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.”** ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

Psalm 107:10–11 – ¹⁰ Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners suffering in iron chains, ¹¹ because they **rebelled against God's commands and despised the plans of the Most High**.

*The “verdict” is this: **light has come into the world, but people choose darkness instead**. Judgment is not arbitrary—it is the result of **willful rejection of God's light**, like **those who hear but refuse to listen** (Isa 6:9–10) and who sit in darkness because they **resist God's word** (Ps 107:10–11).*

7. Why do people “***hate the light***” according to verse 20 (Isaiah 29:15-16; Psalm 36:1-2; Isaiah 5:20), and how does this relate to God’s love?

Isaiah 29:15-16 - ¹⁵ Woe to those **who go to great depths to hide their plans from the Lord, who do their work in darkness and think, “Who sees us? Who will know?”** ¹⁶ You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, “You did not make me”? Can the pot say to the potter, “You know nothing”?

Psalm 36:1-2 – ¹ I have a message from God in my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: **There is no fear of God before their eyes.** ² In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin.

Isaiah 5:20 - Woe to those **who call evil good and good evil**, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

*People **hate the light because it exposes their evil deeds**—they want to hide from God, or have no fear of God, or want to justify their sin, or even redefine wrong as right (Isaiah 29:15–16; Psalm 36:1–2; Isaiah 5:20). This relates to God’s love because the light is not meant to shame but **to heal and save**; rejecting the light is rejecting the loving rescue God offers.*

8. What does it mean to “***come into the light***” in verse 20? (cf. Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 2:5)

Psalm 27:1 – *The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?*

Isaiah 2:5 - *Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

*To “come into the light” means to **turn to God in trust and repentance**, living openly before him. It is choosing the Lord as our light and salvation (Psalm 27:1) and **walking in his ways**, no longer hiding in darkness but living under his truth and grace (Isaiah 2:5).*

9. How does this passage reveal the connection between God's love and God's holiness?

*John 3:16–21 shows that **God's love and holiness work together**: His love provides salvation through Christ, while His holiness **demands justice against sin**. The Son is sent so that God can remain holy yet extend mercy—love rescues without ignoring righteousness. Those who reject the light experience judgment, showing that God's love never compromises His holy standard.*

10. What does this passage teach us about why Christmas had to happen?

*This passage teaches that Christmas had to happen because **the world was in darkness and under sin**, and God's love demanded a way to save us without compromising His holiness. Jesus came as the **Light and Saviour**, offering life [into eternal life] and forgiveness so people could be rescued and reconciled to God. Also, Christmas fulfils God's promises and prophecies and maintains His integrity that He always keeps His promises!*

11. How should a believer respond to the love described in John 3:16–21?

*A believer should respond by **trusting and following Jesus**, turning from sin [repentance], living in the light, and sharing God's love with others. This means **receiving salvation with gratitude, obeying God's ways, worshipping Him, reflecting his love in daily life towards others and sharing the Good News of Jesus with others!***

12. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to John 3:16-21?

Exodus 3:7-8

"The Lord said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land...'"

*Like John 3:16, Exodus 3:7-8 shows God's **compassion and a rescue mission** from slavery in Egypt — God hears suffering and **comes to save** His people. In John 3 we see that rescue fulfilled ultimately in Christ, who rescues us from the slavery of sin and death.*

Isaiah 63:7-9

⁷ *I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us—yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.*

⁸ *He said, “Surely they are my people, children who will be true to me”; and so he became their Savior. ⁹ In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.*

*This passage anticipates **God as Savior in love and mercy**, echoing John 3:16. It emphasizes that God **shares in our distress and rescues us**, prefiguring Jesus’ mission of salvation.*

Psalm 136

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever.” (repeated refrain throughout Psalm 136)

Psalm 136 celebrates God’s everlasting love shown in his mighty acts of salvation. This theme of unending, covenantal love underlies John 3:16’s message that God loves the world and gives his Son.

Deuteronomy 7:7-8

“The Lord did not set his affection on you... because you were more numerous... But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you...”

*This passage **shows that God loves without merit — not because of worthiness, but because of his love and faithfulness**. John 3:16 echoes this truth: **God’s love for the world is not based on our merit but on his gracious heart**.*

Zephaniah 3:17

“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you but will rejoice over you with singing.”

*Zephaniah describes God **as a rejoicing, saving God** who delights in his people. John 3:16–21 reveals the same God who **saves the world through his Son** and calls people into life and light, not judgment.*

What's the ***BIG IDEA*** of this study?

God's love offers salvation through Jesus, bringing life and light to all who believe.



What ***light globe moment*** did you have in this study?

What ***questions*** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Finish in prayer: Father God, thank You for Your incredible love, shown in sending Your Son to bring light into our darkness. Thank You that through Jesus we receive eternal life and the gift of salvation. Help us to walk in Your light, believe in Your Son, and reflect Your love to the world, rejoicing in the hope and joy of Christmas. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

Study 5 – God with us Immanuel

(Sermon on Christmas Day 2025)

Before you begin: Why is Christmas Day important to you?

It's a time to really focus on WHY we celebrate Christmas and it's not all the festivities and commercialism; yet still a time to celebrate that God chose to GIVE UP His Son, to save humanity from themselves. God humbled Himself to leave Heavenly glory and live in this fallen, sinful, broken world and by doing so, He could relate to humanity at their level, without being sinful Himself. When we really think about that; it's mind blowing that He would do that! It's also lovely to be able to join together as a family and church family, and celebrate the birth of Jesus and remember Jesus was "born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of men; born to give them second birth!" as Hark the Herald Angels sing – written by Charles Wesley!

Before you begin: When you hear the word "**Immanuel**" or "**God with us**" what comes to mind?

I immediately think of Christ and the hymn "O Come, O Come, Immanuel and ransom captive Israel" and "Rejoice, Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to you, O Israel!"

Before you begin: Why do you think people long for God to be "**with us**" in hard times or uncertain situations?

In hard times and uncertain situations:

- *We often realize we can't help ourselves and so we look to God*
- *We need reassurance and God's presence/strength to keep us going*
- *We start to ask deeper questions like the purpose of life or the purpose of trials*
- *We are created in God's image and designed as relational beings – to have relationships with God and with each other*
- *God has put eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11) – so we yearn for something better!*

Read Matthew 1:18-25

1. What is significant about the circumstances of Jesus' birth in verse 18?

- **Mary is pregnant before marriage.** She is pledged to Joseph but not yet living with him, so the pregnancy would naturally bring suspicion and shame.
- **The child is conceived by the Holy Spirit.** This makes clear it that Jesus' birth is not the result of human decision or effort, but of God's sovereign action.
- **God enters human brokenness.** Jesus does not arrive in ideal or "respectable" circumstances, but into a situation marked by vulnerability, misunderstanding, and potential disgrace.
- **Jesus is fully human and fully God.** Born of Mary (truly human), yet conceived by the Spirit (truly divine), laying the foundation for who Jesus is and why he can save, because He is sinless – and can make the perfect sacrifice.
- **God keeps his promises in surprising ways.** What looks like a crisis is actually the unfolding of God's redemptive plan.

2. Why does Joseph consider quietly divorcing Mary in verse 19? What compassion does he show? (cf. Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, ² and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, ³ and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, ⁴ then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord. Do not bring sin upon the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

Why Joseph considers divorce:

- In Jewish law, **betrothal was legally binding**, more serious/formal than our current engagement. Ending the relationship required a formal divorce
- Discovering Mary's pregnancy before they lived together would reasonably lead Joseph to assume sexual unfaithfulness.
- As a righteous man, Joseph wants to act in a way that honours God's law.

The compassion that Joseph shows:

- **He does not want to expose Mary to public disgrace.** A public accusation could have led to severe shame and lasting social consequences.
- By choosing a **quiet (private) divorce**, Joseph seeks to obey the law while **protecting Mary from unnecessary harm.**

- *His righteousness is therefore not harsh or legalistic; it is **shaped by mercy and love**.*

3. What role does the angel play in verses 20–21? (cf. Numbers 22:31; Isaiah 7:14)

Numbers 22:31

Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the **angel** of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown.

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a **sign**: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Remember angels are God's messengers!

***Angels reveal God's hidden work/plans:** Like in **Numbers 22:31**, where the Lord opens Balaam's eyes to see the angel of the LORD, the angel in Matthew opens Joseph's understanding to what God is truly doing. What looked like sin is revealed as **the work of the Holy Spirit**.*

***Angels remove fear and confusion:** The angel addresses Joseph's fear: "Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife." God's word replaces suspicion with trust and obedience.*

***Angels confirm God's prophecy:** The angel's message prepares the way for Matthew to quote **Isaiah 7:14 later in v23** —that the virgin will conceive. This birth is not accidental but **the fulfilment of God's long-promised plan**. The angel fulfils the sign, God promised in Isaiah 7:14!*

***Angels deliver clear instructions from God:** Joseph is told: to take Mary as his wife; to name the child **Jesus**; and why: "because he will save his people from their sins"*

Angel clarifies Jesus' identity and mission

*Through the angel, God defines who Jesus is and what he has come to do —to be a **Saviour**, not merely a child of scandal.*

4. What is the meaning of the name "Jesus" (v. 21)?

"Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Yeshua / Joshua, which means "The LORD saves" or "The LORD is salvation."

5. Why is the prophecy "**Immanuel**" (v. 23) important? (cf. Isaiah 7:14; Exodus 33:14)

The prophecy “**Immanuel**” in **Matthew 1:23** is important because it declares **God’s presence with his people**.

- From **Isaiah 7:14**, it shows that Jesus’ birth fulfils God’s promise: God is acting in history to save his people.
- Immanuel means “**God with us**,” He is not distant or removed.
- This echoes **Exodus 33:14**, where God promises, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” God’s greatest assurance is his presence.
- In Jesus, God does not merely send help—**He comes himself**.
- The name explains the heart of the gospel: salvation is not only forgiveness, but **restored relationship with God**.

In short, Immanuel means that in Jesus, **God is truly present with us, to save, to guide, and to remain with his people**.

6. How does Joseph’s obedience demonstrate faith and trust in God? (Genesis 22:1-3; Psalm 37:5) What can we learn from Joseph’s obedience?

How Joseph shows faith and trust:

- **He acts immediately.** Like Abraham in **Genesis 22:1–3**, who rose early and obeyed God without argument or delay, Joseph does what the angel commanded as soon as he wakes.
- **He trusts God over his own understanding.** Obeying meant accepting social shame, misunderstanding, and long-term cost—yet Joseph entrusts his future and reputation to God (cf. **Psalm 37:5**).
- **He submits to God’s plan.** Joseph takes Mary as his wife and names the child Jesus, publicly accepting God’s purpose and aligning himself with it.
- **He obeys without full explanation.** **He does not see the whole story, but he trusts the God who speaks.**

What we learn from Joseph’s obedience:

- True faith is shown in **obedient action**, especially when obedience is costly.
- Trusting God often means **releasing control** and personal security.
- God works powerfully through **quiet, faithful obedience**, even when it goes unnoticed.
- When we commit our way to the Lord (Psalm 37:5), God uses our obedience to advance his saving purposes.

Joseph teaches us that faith is not the absence of fear, but choosing obedience because God is trustworthy.

7. What does this passage teach about sin?

- ***Sin is serious and real.*** The passage assumes the reality of sin—so serious that people need saving from it (v.21).
- ***Sin separates people from God.*** Jesus' mission is necessary because sin breaks relationship with God and cannot be ignored or excused.
- ***Sin brings shame and brokenness.*** The circumstances surrounding Mary's pregnancy highlight how sin (real or assumed) leads to fear, misunderstanding, and social pain.
- ***Sin cannot be dealt with by human righteousness alone.*** Joseph's goodness and obedience cannot remove sin; only God's action can.
- ***God responds to sin with grace, not distance.*** Rather than abandoning sinful humanity, God comes near in Jesus—Immanuel—to save.
- ***Forgiveness requires divine intervention.*** Salvation from sin is God's work, accomplished through the one who is conceived by the Holy Spirit.

8. What does this passage teach about God's ways and timing in accomplishing His plans? (cf. Esther 4:14; Isaiah 55:8-9 and Romans 5:6)

Esther 4:14 - For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Isaiah 55:8-9 - ⁸ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. ⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Romans 5:6 - You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Matthew 1:18–25 teaches important truths about **God's ways and timing** in accomplishing His plans:

- ***God works according to His perfect plan, not human expectations.***
Like Esther's call in **Esther 4:14**, God's purposes unfold in ways we might not anticipate, and individuals may find themselves in critical roles they never expected.
- ***God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours.***
Isaiah 55:8–9 reminds us that what seems confusing or untimely to us is part of God's greater design. Jesus' miraculous conception and Joseph's unexpected role show God's plan is beyond human reasoning.

- **God acts in the right time for salvation.**

Romans 5:6 says, “At the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.” Jesus’ birth happened at God’s appointed moment in history, fulfilling prophecy and accomplishing redemption.

Lesson: God’s plans may involve unexpected circumstances, delays, or apparent difficulties, but He is **sovereign, wise, and faithful**. Obedience and trust—like Joseph’s—allow God to work His purposes through us, in His timing and way.

9. Why is the **virgin birth** essential?

The **virgin birth** is essential because it highlights key truths about who Jesus is and what He came to accomplish:

- **Affirms Jesus’ **divine origin****
 - Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit, not by human means, Jesus is truly **God incarnate** (Matthew 1:18, 20).
- **Maintains His **sinless nature****
 - Jesus is born of a woman but without a human father, Jesus **inherits human flesh** yet is **free from inherited sin**, making Him the perfect Savior (Hebrews 4:15). If Jesus inherits sin then He can’t make a once and for all sacrifice because He would just be like the OT priests making sacrifices who had their own sin!
- **Fulfills prophecy**
 - Isaiah 7:14 foretold a virgin would conceive and bear a son called Immanuel. The virgin birth confirms God’s **faithfulness to His promises**.
- **Shows God’s miraculous power**
 - God enters human history in a way that **transcends natural processes**, demonstrating His sovereignty and intervention in salvation.
- **Demonstrates God’s presence with us**
 - Immanuel, “God with us,” means God personally enters our broken world, not just sending a messenger or example.

10. What does this passage teach about God’s character?

This passage teaches that God is:

- **Faithful in keeping His promises/prophecies (Isaiah 7:14)**
- **Loving and compassionate to humanity**
- **Sovereign and wise – His ways are not our ways**

- **Redemptive** – His desire is to redeem humanity
 - **Personal and present** – Immanuel means God's presence is always with us
11. How might we live life differently if we truly believed God is always with us?
- We can have **courage when we face trials/challenges** – trusting in God's presence, guidance and protection (Psalm 23:4)
 - Like Joseph, we could be willing to **act faithfully in obedience to God** even when what lies ahead seems risky or unclear – trusting in God's wisdom and timing
 - We can **hope in times of suffering** – understanding that difficult times are temporary and under God's sovereign control, which gives us perseverance and hope
 - We could **model God's character shown to us** and extend grace, mercy and forgiveness to others
 - We could **hand over all our worries, plans and ambitions to God**, and rest in His peace, knowing we can rely solely in His strength, not our own
12. What does this passage show us about God's love at Christmas?
- At Christmas, God's love is revealed as **personal, saving, compassionate, and faithful**, coming into our world to dwell with us and redeem [buy us back] us.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of this study?

God's love comes to us at Christmas, bringing salvation and His presence into our lives.



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

²³ **"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").**

Finish in prayer: Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank You that in Jesus You have come to be truly with us—bringing salvation, hope, and Your comforting presence. Thank You for Joseph’s example of trust and obedience, and for fulfilling Your promises through Christ our Immanuel. Help us to walk in confidence that You are near, to obey Your Word even when it is costly, and to rejoice that Jesus is the Saviour who delivers us from our sins. In His name we pray, Amen.

Study 6 – Waiting for God’s **Salvation** and Finding **it** in Jesus! **(28-Dec-2025)**

Before you begin: What is the longest thing you’ve ever had to wait for?

Firstly, I had to wait several years for my application to emigrate to Australia from the UK, to be accepted.

Secondly, to enter into full-time ministry took from 2004 to 2012.

Before you begin: How do you usually respond when God seems slow to keep His promises?

I can have a range of emotions - frustration, impatience, doubt, resignation, quiet trust?

Sometimes I wait ‘actively’ – praying and obeying God’s Word

Sometimes I wait ‘passively’ – with my thoughts drifting or disengaging

Before you begin: What does **salvation** mean to you?

It is personal! It means I have repented of my sins and believe Jesus died on a cruel cross for my sins – He took my punishment – and forgave my sins – past, present and future! And because I believe Jesus did that; I also believe Jesus rose from the dead 3 days after His death, He rose from the dead to show that even death cannot hold Him down and it also means that death can’t hold me down – and I have the certain hope of Heaven that awaits me!

Read Luke 2:22-52

1. What do Joseph and Mary do in verses 22 to 24? Why? (see Exodus 13:1-2, 12-15; Leviticus 12:1-8)

Exodus 13:1-2 - The Lord said to Moses, ² **“Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal.”**

Exodus 13:12-15 - ¹² you are to give over to the Lord the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the Lord. ¹³ Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. **Redeem every firstborn among your sons.** ¹⁴ “In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed the firstborn of both people and

animals in Egypt. This is why I sacrifice to the Lord the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.'

Leviticus 12:1-8 - The Lord said to Moses, ² "Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. ³ **On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised.** ⁴ Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. ⁵ If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.

⁶ "When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, **she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering.** ⁷ He shall offer them before the Lord to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.

"These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. ⁸ **But if she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering.** In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.'"

Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the Temple Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord and they offered a sacrifice of a "a pair of doves or two young pigeons". Why? To act "according to the Law of the Lord".

Exodus 13:1-2, 12-15 says every first-born male belonged to the Lord, reminding the Israelites of God's rescue of Israel's first born at the Exodus from Egypt. The first born were therefore presented to God and redeemed. Leviticus 12:1-8 says that after childbirth, a mother was to undergo purification and offer a sacrifice. **The allowance of two birds shows provision for those who were poor.**

2. What does this say about Joseph and Mary?

It shows that Joseph and Mary are **faithful, obedient, and humble**—they carefully follow God's law, trust His promises, and raise Jesus within the ordinary rhythms of faithful Jewish life.

3. What does verse 24 say about Joseph and Mary's circumstances? (see Leviticus 12:8)

*Leviticus 12:8 explains that if a family could not afford a lamb, they were permitted to offer **two doves or two young pigeons** instead. Luke tells us this is exactly what Joseph and Mary offer, indicating they lived in **humble, limited circumstances**, not wealth or status.*

4. What is significant about Jesus being brought to the temple? (cf. Malachi 3:1)
*It shows that **the Lord has come to His temple**, fulfilling Malachi 3:1—quietly and unexpectedly—revealing that God's promised salvation arrives in humility before it is recognised in glory.*

5. Simeon's prophecy in verses 25 to 32 declare Jesus is the "**light for revelation to the Gentiles**" and the "**glory of your people Israel**" (verse 32). What do these titles reveal about the universal significance of Jesus? (cf. Isaiah 42:6)

*Together, these titles show that Jesus is God's promised Saviour for **both the nations and Israel**: as the "**light for revelation to the Gentiles**" He brings God's truth and salvation to those outside Israel, and as the "**glory of your people Israel**" He fulfils God's covenant promises, revealing Israel's true purpose as the people through whom God blesses the world.*

Isaiah 42:6 says: "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and **a light for the Gentiles**"

6. How does Simeon say that Jesus will 'affect' people in verses 34 to 35a?

*Simeon says that Jesus will **cause the fall and the rising of many**: He will **cause the fall** of those who resist God and reject Him, exposing sin and unbelief, and He will **cause the rising** of those who trust and follow Him, bringing salvation, hope, and restoration.*

7. What specific prophecy does Simeon direct at Mary in verse 35b?

*Simeon's prophecy to Mary in verse 35b is that "**a sword will pierce your own soul too.**" This warns Mary that following Jesus will involve **personal suffering and sorrow for her**, especially as she witnesses the opposition, pain, and ultimately the suffering and crucifixion death He will endure.*

8. Why is it significant that both Simeon and Anna, who were elderly and devout, were among the first to recognize Jesus as the Messiah?

*It is significant because it shows that **faithful, patient waiting is rewarded**. Simeon and Anna had lived long lives trusting God's promises, and their devotion made them **spiritually perceptive**—able to recognize God's salvation when it came. Their example highlights that **God often reveals His promises to those who faithfully wait and watch for Him**.*

9. In verse 38, Anna spoke about Jesus birth fulfilling the hopes of Jerusalem's redemption. What does she mean and how is it still relevant today?

Anna means that Jesus' birth fulfilled God's promise to bring salvation and deliverance to His people. Today, it's still relevant because Jesus continues to be the source of hope, redemption, and spiritual renewal for all who trust Him.

10. **Ponder:** What can we learn from Simeon and Anna's example of devotion and faith?

*We can learn that **faithful waiting and devotion matter**: a life spent in prayer, obedience, and trust prepares us to **recognize God's work** when it comes. Like Simeon and Anna, our patience and attentiveness allow us to experience the joy of seeing God's promises fulfilled.*

*Simeon and Anna's example shows that **we should never write older people off**. Their age did not prevent them from being **used by God in significant ways**—they were among the first to recognize and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. It reminds us that **experience, faithfulness, and devotion grow over a lifetime**, and older people can have profound spiritual insight and impact.*

11. What does this scene teach us about waiting for God?

- **Waiting requires faithfulness and obedience** - Joseph and Mary faithfully follow God's law, even when they don't fully understand His plan.
- **Waiting is often quiet and unnoticed** - God's salvation comes humbly—Jesus is brought to the temple as a baby, not in public fanfare
- **Waiting develops spiritual perception** - Simeon and Anna, who waited faithfully, are the ones who recognize Jesus as God's salvation
- **Waiting involves hope and trust** - Simeon and Anna exemplify patient expectation, showing that God's promises are certain even when delayed

- ***Waiting prepares us for God's timing*** - Jesus grows in wisdom and favour, showing that salvation and God's work unfold according to His timing, not ours.

12. We don't have many details about Jesus' childhood, but what are we told in verse 40?

Jesus grew physically – He developed in stature.

He grew intellectually and spiritually – He grew in wisdom.

He grew relationally and spiritually – He gained favour with God and people.

13. Jesus (aged 12) stayed back at the temple (verse 43). Why do you think Jesus, even at this young age, was so focused on His Father's house and His mission?

*He was fully aware of **His divine identity**. He prioritized God's work over routine or convenience – His mission mattered more than immediate comfort or human expectations. He modeled spiritual attentiveness and devotion – Listening, asking questions, and engaging with the teachers shows a heart aligned with God's priorities.*

14. What do we learn from Jesus' posture in the temple—"sitting among the teachers, listening, asking questions"? (v46)

*We learn that **Jesus valued learning, engagement, and humility**. Even as the Son of God, He **listened and asked questions**, showing that growth in wisdom and understanding requires active attention and a teachable heart.*

15. How do the teachers respond to Jesus? Why is this significant? (v47)

*The teachers are **amazed at Jesus' understanding and answers**. Even at a young age, Jesus demonstrates **wisdom beyond his years**, showing that God's truth can surprise and impress, and that spiritual insight is not limited by age.*

16. **Ponder:** What does it look like in your life to seek God's house (His presence) above all else?

For all of us it is meant to look like:

- ***Prioritizing time with God*** – regular prayer, Bible reading, and worship take precedence over other activities.

- **Aligning decisions with God's will** – letting His purposes guide our work, relationships, and choices.
- **Cultivating attentiveness and learning** – listening to God, asking questions, and growing in understanding like Jesus in the temple.
- **Trusting God even when it's inconvenient** – following Him faithfully, even when others don't understand.
- **Living with God's presence at the centre** – letting His guidance and love shape how we interact with the world around us.

17. What does verse 49 reveal about Jesus' understanding of His relationship with God the Father? What "Father's business" has God placed in front of you today?

Jesus fully understood His unique relationship with God the Father—His identity and mission were rooted in God, and He prioritized God's work above all else. God has placed specific tasks, responsibilities, or opportunities for obedience and service in front of each of us today. Like Jesus, we are called to focus on our Father's business, even when it may be challenging or unexpected.

18. Why are Mary and Joseph "**anxious**" (v48) and why did they "**not understand**" (v50)?

*Understandably, Mary and Joseph were **anxious** because they **didn't know where Jesus was** and feared for His safety. They **did not understand** because Jesus' mission and identity as the Son of God were **beyond their full comprehension** at that time.*

19. In these verses in the temple, we see the family dynamic and the obedience of Jesus to His parents (verse 51). Read the following verses; how do they teach us our priority:

Psalm 27:4

"One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life..."

- Emphasizes **desiring God's presence above all else**.
- Like Jesus in the temple, our **first priority** should be communion with God, even above other responsibilities or comforts.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children.

- Highlights **obedience and instruction in God’s ways**
- Teaches that **prioritizing God includes learning, teaching, and living His commands in daily life.**
- Jesus’ obedience to His parents models **faithful submission within God’s design**, while keeping God’s mission central.

20. Where do you need to grow in wisdom as Jesus did? (v52)

- Wisdom in God’s Word
- Wisdom in relationships
- Wisdom in decision making
- Spiritual maturity - growing in prayer, obedience, and dependence on God

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of this study?

Waiting and trusting in God’s Salvation in Jesus with faithful obedience



What **light globe moment** did you have in this study?

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

Share the verse that had a special meaning to you in this study?

Luke 2:49 (NIV):

“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”

Finish in prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You that in Jesus You have kept every one of Your promises. We thank and praise You for sending Your salvation into the world. Teach us to wait faithfully as Simeon and Anna did, to trust Your timing, and to welcome Jesus as Your light for all people. Help us, to walk in obedience to You as Jesus did. Make us a people who recognize Your Son, delight in Him, and follow Him all our days. In His name we pray. Amen..