



Following the

*Genealogy of Jesus Christ*

25 stories - 25 days

Abraham to Christ

by *Jessica Morris*

# Following the Genealogy of Jesus Christ:

25 Days of Christmas Readings

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## Introduction to The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

The greatest love story ever recorded is that of the Lord Jesus Christ giving His life for us – all while we were in a sinful, ugly condition.

His birth was planned from the beginning of time and when Adam and Eve sinned He was promised as the coming Savior. All throughout the Old Testament there are people, pictures and prophecy that point to the coming King.

But when He does finally come it isn't to a royal palace or with great fanfare as the Jews were expecting. Rather, as a fulfillment of prophecy, He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem and His humble beginning was in a manger. Not where one would expect to find a highly anticipated king!

His family tree is recorded for us in two of the gospels – Matthew and Luke. One traces Mary's lineage and the other Joseph's. Both assert that His earthly parents were of royal descent.

In Matthew Joseph's lineage is traced, starting with Abraham. For this countdown to Christmas twenty five of these characters have been chosen from this list of names and a little bit of their story has been shared. This is the tiniest glimpse into the lives of some of these men and women in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus, it is my desire to give a little life to the verses in Matthew 1 that otherwise seem dry. What we see in Matthew 1 is a long list of names – but they aren't just names. They are people with stories; adventures they have been through, and the goodness and mercy of God seen throughout the lives of these people.

My idea in writing this series with 25 characters from Abraham to the Lord Jesus is that from December 1 – December 25 a story would be read each day, counting down to Christmas day, the day we celebrate the birth of Christ. By all means though, adapt this as is most fitting for your needs.

## Day 1 :: Abram :: God is our Great Reward

Abraham is the first character we are going to look at in the long line of people in the genealogy of Christ. The genealogy is found in Matthew chapter 1. Abram was from the land of Ur. Ur was the place to live and was a hub of activity and advancements. God had a special plan for Abram and called him to leave this land and travel to a place that God would show him.

So Abram and his family, which included his nephew Lot, left Ur and headed to a n unknown place. Abram was like a stranger, wandering a strange land. God later changes his name to Abraham to mean “father of many” but at the point where we are going to pick up his story Abram is still his name, he is childless, and has not yet been given the land God had promised him.

One night God spoke to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram.  
I am your shield,  
your very great reward.” (Genesis 15:1)

Perhaps this was puzzling to Abram – he already had riches and he did not have a child to pass on his wealth to and here is God asserting Himself as Abram’s shield, or in some translations, king, and as his *very great reward*. Before Abram was given an heir to pass on his physical wealth, God wanted Abram to know of the spiritual wealth to be found in a personal relationship with God.

Do we look at God as our very great reward? Is He the one we desire and seek after?

Colossians 3 reminds us:

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” (Colossians 3:23)

Everything is about Him; it has been since the beginning, it is that way today, and it will be for all eternity.

Right after God tells Abram that He is his shield and great reward God takes Abram outside and tells him to look up at the night sky. He asks Abram to count the stars – an impossible feat! God then makes an incredible promise to Abram; He tells Abram that his offspring, his descendants, will be as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Abram knew that he would have an heir, his own child, but he didn't know when. His wife Sarai, whose name was later changed to Sarah, offered her own solution to the problem. Since she considered herself too old to have a baby she decided her servant girl could have Abram's child. But this was not what God's plan was – Abram and Sarai moved in their own timing and did not wait for the Lord.

But God was still working, His plan had not changed. When Abram was ninety nine years old God appeared to him and told him that He was going to change his name to Abraham, which if you remember means “father of many.” God was about to start the line that would come down through a variety of characters; men and women, good and bad, Jewish or brought in from other nations; all to lead us to God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. How do you think Abram felt when God called him to leave all that was familiar and go somewhere unknown?
2. When was Abram's name changed?
3. How might we look at God as our Great Reward? What would it change about how we live out our daily life?

## Day 2 :: Isaac :: God will provide the Lamb

Isaac was born to *old* parents. His father, Abraham was 100 years old and his mother, Sarah, was 90 years old when Isaac was born. Years passed and early one morning Isaac's dad took him, a donkey, two servants, and wood and traveled up a mountain to offer a burnt offering.

Back in Isaac's day – and all the way up until Christ – offerings were required to cover the sins of the people. God asked that the blood of an animal be shed and these sacrifices were made on altars, and eventually became the responsibility of the priests once the tabernacle, and then temple, were built.

After a three day journey Isaac's dad stops and tells the servants to stay put while the father and son continue on a ways to worship. Isaac carries the wood for the burnt offering and Abraham the fire and knife.

Isaac, understanding the requirements for a burnt offering, asks his father where the lamb for the burnt offering is.

Abraham replied:

“God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” (Genesis 22:8)

They walk on to the place where God had told Abraham to go and there Abraham builds an altar and arranges the wood. The aged father then binds his son Isaac – a young man certainly capable of overthrowing his father and yet obediently complying with his father's obedience to his God – his Great Reward.

As Isaac lays on the altar his father's hand reaches out with the knife to slay his son as an offering to God.

Instantly an angel of the Lord calls out to him:

“Abraham! Abraham!

Do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son.” (Genesis 22:11&12)

Abraham then looks up to see a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. He offers the ram as a burnt offering to God.

Within the first few chapters of John we can see how the story of Isaac was a type, or a picture, of the coming Christ.



In John 1 we read:

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said,  
‘Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29)

And in John 3 we read:

“For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son that whosoever believes  
in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

This story of Isaac is a precious one, both of Abraham’s obedience and faith and the  
foreshadowing of God’s promise that He would one day provide the Lamb.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. Why were blood offerings required?
2. What did the Angel of the Lord call out?
3. How is Isaac a picture of Christ?

### Day 3 :: Jacob :: God's familiar work is to bless

Jacob was Isaac and Rebecca's son and Esau's (younger) twin brother. Jacob, like his grandfather Abraham, had his name changed by God. Jacob's name was changed to Israel.

We are going to jump into the middle of his story; Jacob had stolen Esau's birthright and then fled. Jacob married, first Leah and then Rachel, after working 14 years for their father, his Uncle Laban. Jacob continued to work for Laban and accumulated cattle, servants and wealth.

Then one day God spoke to Jacob and told him to go back to his father's land, so Jacob set out on the journey home with a large caravan of people.

Jacob sent a messenger on ahead to respectfully let Esau know he was coming. The messenger returns to Jacob and warns him that Esau is now on his way, with four hundred men accompanying him.

Twenty years had passed since Jacob had seen Esau and he naturally assumed his brother was coming to attack. Jacob divided the people that were with him into two groups so that if Esau attacked half of the people would be spared.

In Jacob's moment of fear over his brother destroying his family Jacob turns to the Lord with this prayer:

"O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, Lord, you who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness You have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two camps. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. But You have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.'" (Genesis 32:9-12)

In Jacob's moment of deep despair and fear he claims the promises that God had made.

David wisely counsels:

"When I am afraid I will trust in You." (Psalm 56:3)

When we are facing circumstances that seem desperate and cause us to fear we can trust Him and His word. He is ever true and faithful.

The story of Jacob continues ... Jacob picked out a magnificent gift for his brother – a total of 550 animals including goats, ewes, rams, camels, cows, bulls and donkeys. He sent his servants ahead with the gift instructing them to tell Esau the gift is from him, and that he is following shortly behind the servants.

The servants went ahead with the gifts and Jacob sent his family across the stream and spent the night alone.

That night, while Jacob was alone, he wrestles with God;

“So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.

Then the man said; ‘Let me go, for it is daybreak.’

But Jacob replied, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’” (Genesis 32:24-26)

It is then that Jacob’s name was changed to Israel:

“Because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.” (Genesis 32:28)

And he is then blessed.

Jacob had first claimed the promises of God through his prayer when he was fearful of his brother’s reaction, and then he wrestled with God – he would not let Him go – until he was blessed. He knew the character of God was to bless and he clung to that. It is God’s familiar work to bless.

The story of Jacob’s return to his homeland – the land God had instructed him to – concludes in Genesis 33:

“Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.”

A sweet reunion that brings Jacob back to the land of his grandfather, Abraham.

### **Questions to start the conversation:**

1. Which two men had their names changed by God?
2. Why was Jacob worried about seeing Esau again?
3. Why was his name changed to Israel?

## Day 4 :: Judah :: God is working

Judah was the fourth son of Jacob and Leah and had eleven brothers, one of them being Joseph. The brothers hated Joseph – when their father Jacob was returning to Esau and was fearful of Esau's wrath, Jacob placed Joseph and his mother safely at the back of the caravan. Later on Jacob gives Joseph a coat of many colors. And when God gave Joseph two dreams about his brothers bowing down to him Joseph shares these dreams with them. The brothers were jealous of Joseph and plotted to kill him. Judah instead suggested they sell him to a traveling caravan heading to Egypt, which is what they did.

Years pass by. Judah marries and has three sons; Er, Onan and Shelah. Er marries a woman named Tamar. God strikes Er down for his wickedness and, in following their custom; Tamar is then married to Onan. But Onan too is killed for his wickedness. Judah's last son is too young to be married so he tells Tamar to go back to her father's house and to wait until Shelah is old enough to marry her.

After a long time, Judah's wife dies. After his time of grieving Judah travels to where his sheep were being sheared, which was near Tamar's father's house. Tamar heard he was coming and since Judah had failed to keep his word and had not married off Shelah to her though he was now of age, she disguised herself and put herself in a position so Judah would lay with her. Judah did not know it was his daughter-in-law Tamar. He chose to sleep with someone he thought was a random woman, after he promised her a gift only he could have given; his staff, seal and cord.

Three months passed by and Judah got word that his daughter-in-law Tamar was pregnant. Death was the consequence for unmarried pregnant women so Judah requested she be brought out so they could burn her to death. Tamar was brought before Judah and she displayed the staff, seal and cord – showing to him that the child she bore was his.

Judah did not put her to death, nor did he ever sleep with her again. When it came time for her to give birth there were twin boys in her womb! The boys were named Perez and Zerah. As was the custom with twins, the midwife tied a scarlet cord around the wrist of the boy whose hand came out first – but surprisingly he drew his hand back in and his brother broke out of the womb first. Perez was the first born and Zerah was the one with the scarlet cord around his wrist.

Perez was an ancestor to David and ultimately of Jesus Christ.

This was the family line that Jesus Christ chose to come through.

Philippians 2 tells us:

“He made Himself of no reputation.”

We can see this through the characters in the genealogy of Jesus; all sinners, all in need of a Savior. The worthiness of Christ is found in Himself, not in His family tree.

Philippians 2 also tells us:

“Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Judah’s story continues ... a famine strikes the land where they were living and the brothers decided to travel to Egypt to get some food. They go and are told to return with their youngest brother, Benjamin. Their father Jacob is heartbroken – he had already lost his beloved son Joseph, he couldn’t lose Benjamin too. Judah shoulders the responsibility of guaranteeing Benjamin’s safety:

“I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.”

And so Jacob agrees to send Benjamin and they go to Egypt where they realize the brother they had sold into slavery was now second in power in Egypt and responsible for the mass of grain that had been stored up in preparation for the famine.

A little bit later in Genesis Joseph says to his brothers:

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

And this we can see through the life of Judah; despite his own missteps and failures God was working.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What other stories do you know about any of Judah’s brothers?
2. What personal items did Judah give Tamar?
3. What responsibility did Judah take for Benjamin?

## Day 5 :: Rahab :: God draws us out & draws us in

Rahab lived in Jericho, a city that God wanted His chosen people to destroy. When two spies entered the city she hid them on her roof and turned the soldiers away when they came to her door looking for the spies.

She tells the spies:

“I know that the Lord has given you this land.”

Of this she is convinced.

Then she asks that her household be saved from the coming destruction. They agree to save her life and promise that they would treat her fairly and kindly if she would not tell what they were doing. Then they tell her to tie a scarlet cord in her window.

Think for a moment how it must have felt for Rahab. She had heard of this great God and was convinced of the fact that God was giving His own people the very land she had spent her entire life in. How thrilling it must have been for her to spend those seven days watching and listening to the Israelites march around her city. How the anticipation must have grown! And finally, on the seventh day she heard a loud shout from the people and heard the walls around her crumble and to be utterly convinced that this was the work of the one true God.

Joshua 6 tells us:

“They brought out Rahab (and her entire family) and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.”

She was brought out and then brought in. Brought out of the destruction of Jericho and then brought into the privileges of God’s chosen people.

We today have been extended this grace, to be brought out from our sinfulness and impending death and into God’s grace and forgiveness and everlasting life.

Colossians 1 tells us:

“For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Rahab married Salmon, a descendant of Perez, a man in the line of Christ.

And while this scarlet cord that Rahab hung in faith brought her into the camp, another family was snuffed out right around this same time.

When God told Joshua to destroy Jericho He told them not to take any of the treasures from the city.

However there was one man who did not obey; Achan, from the line of Zerah – the twin who had a scarlet cord tied to his wrist before his brother Perez pushed out of the womb before him– stole some of the goods from the city and buried them under his tent. When his sin was made public Achan and his entire household was put to death.

Achan, a man from the tribe of Judah, one of God’s chosen people – and yet he was disobedient and as a result of his act of rebellion to God he was destroyed, along with his family.

And then there is Rahab, a foreign woman who worked an unrespectable job in a city God destroyed, and yet because of her faith she was brought out of that and was married into the direct genealogy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through this we can see that it is not what we were, where we come from, or who we are, but rather it is all about God’s unmerited favor; about His grace.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What was Rahab brought out of? What was she brought in to?
2. How is this a picture of the grace offered to us now in the church age?
3. Why was Achan put to death?

## Day 6 :: Ruth (& Boaz) :: Redeemer and Refuge

Ruth was a Moabite, a woman from the land of Moab. Remember Lot, Abraham's nephew who traveled with Abraham from Ur? One of Lot's sons was Moab and Ruth was one of his descendants. The Moabites were pagans and had rejected God, and that Ruth would have anything to do with the genealogy of Christ is a testimony to God's grace.

Ruth had married an Israeli man that had come to her land with his family when there was a famine in their home town of Bethlehem. Ruth's husband died, as did her father in law. Her mother in law, Naomi, heard that the food shortage was over in Bethlehem and decided to make the journey back.

Ruth chose to make the trip with her mother in law. Naomi didn't necessarily want Ruth to come, but Ruth was determined. In the first chapter of Ruth we read:

"Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

In this statement of faithfulness to her mother in law Ruth is acknowledging the God of Israel as her God.

Naomi and Ruth arrived back in Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. Needing to eat, Ruth goes out to the fields to glean. She follows along behind the workers, picking up any grains that may have been dropped. As only God can orchestrate, Ruth happened to be picking up grains in a field that belonged to Boaz; Boaz was the son of Rahab and Salmon.

When Boaz came to his field he noticed Ruth in his field and asked about her and was told who she was. He then extended great kindness to her – he told her not to glean in another field, not to leave his field, to stay close to his women, assures her that he had instructed the young men not to touch her and encourages her to drink water that the young men have drawn when she is thirsty. Ruth falls at his feet and asks him why he is showing her such kindness and he responds by telling her that he has heard that she left her family and the land of her birth to a people she does not know. And then we read these words that Boaz says to Ruth;

"The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

Remember who his mother was? A woman from the city of Jericho, an outsider that left everything she knew; one who found refuge under the wings of the Lord God of Israel.



When the entire city of Jericho was falling and Rahab and her family waited in her home with the scarlet cord in the window it must have felt a bit like baby birds nestled safely under the mama birds' wing, a safe refuge.

Boaz recognized the magnitude of what Ruth had done by leaving everything she knew to follow the God of Israel as her own God as his mother had made the same choice. He must have grown up hearing the stories of God's redeeming work in his own mother's life and he knew that God was a God of refuge.

Boaz feeds Ruth a midday meal and instructs his workers to let extra grain drop for Ruth to glean from the field. When she goes back to Naomi at the end of the evening and tells Naomi of the days' work Naomi is delighted with how God worked and encourages Ruth to continue gleaning in Boaz's field, as he had invited her to do.

Barley season passes and Naomi tells Ruth what she must do in order to see what Boaz's intentions are; she tells Ruth to uncover his feet and lay at them and wait to see what he says. Ruth does this, and when Boaz discovers her she says these words to him;

"Take your maidservant under your wing."

It's interesting she asks to be brought in under his wing, the same analogy Boaz used earlier in reference to God, but she leaves off the part about refuge. Maybe she knew that refuge is found in God alone.

Psalm 46 tells us:

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble."

Boaz provided refuge, strength and help for her and if it could be said that that which we know of God is that which we reflect of God, then we can see even more in Boaz's life how he saw God as a Redeemer and Refuge for the outsider.

Boaz knew there was a member of the family that was of a closer relationship to Naomi's deceased husband's family than he was, and by their customs this was who could redeem the land and who Ruth was to marry. Boaz approached this man and was told that he could redeem the land and marry Ruth – what a happy day!

Boaz and Ruth were married and God gave them a son whom they named Obed.

Can you guess who Obed was going to become the grandfather of? If not you'll have to wait, as tomorrow we're going to read a bit about Obed's son, Jesse.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What is Ruth's family's history?
2. How committed was Ruth to Naomi?
3. Why might Boaz have treated Ruth – an outsider – with kindness?

## Day 7 :: Jesse :: God is King of Kings

Jesse was a shepherd who lived in the city of Bethlehem. He was alive during a unique time for the people of Israel; the people requested a king to rule over them just like the other nations had. The Israelites had never had a king before and God allowed them their request. The Israelites request for a king was their rejection of God as their king, and as we'll see in the characters to come the kings that reigned over the Israelites were sinful men all in need of their own King.

The first king of Israel was a man named Saul. When Saul went to war against the enemy, and saved lives and items that God had instructed him to destroy, God rejects Saul as king. Samuel, the prophet, delivers the message to Saul that he has been rejected by God because of his disobedience and Saul defends his actions, saying that he had saved the best in order to sacrifice it to God.

The context of that story is where we read these challenging words:

“Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”

When Jesus Christ took our place, when He was the sacrifice for our sins, it was because He was perfect and the only being capable of doing so. But it was also in complete obedience to His Father.

Philippians 2 tells us;

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!”

Obedience to God is a precious thing.

But let's get back to the story of Jesse. He is a shepherd, lives in Bethlehem, and has seen the rise of the first king of Israel. One day the prophet Samuel comes to his town - an unusual and unexpected visit. Samuel asks Jesse and his sons to come sacrifice to God with him. This is how God had instructed Samuel to anoint the next king, though Samuel does not yet know who the king will be.

Jesse and seven of his sons were present and each of the sons passed before Samuel. God told Samuel that none of those sons were the chosen king and Samuel asked if there were any more sons. Jesse tells Samuel that his youngest, David, is out tending the sheep. Jesse sends for David to come and when Samuel sees him God tells him to anoint David, he would be the future king of Israel.

In this story we see the verses in Isaiah 11 emerge;

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.”

There isn't much else shared about Jesse's story other than the fact that David, Israel's great king and a man after God's own heart, is many times referred to as “David son of Jesse.”

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. How was this a unique time for the people of Israel?
2. What does “to obey is better than sacrifice” mean?
3. Who is Samuel?

## Day 8 :: David & Bathsheba:: God forgives

David is a character we know well; he went from being a shepherd boy to being king. He was the slayer of a giant. Best friends with Jonathan, King Saul's son. He was the author of many of the Psalms and was called 'a man after God's own heart.'

But here is something you may not know about David; he had a group of Mighty Men. There are two that we will be looking at, Uriah and Eliam.

Let's first look at Eliam. There is very little said about Eliam, however his father is of great interest to our story. Eliam's father was Ahitophel. Ahitophel was David's councilor but when David's son Absalom rebelled against his father, Ahitophel switched his allegiance to Absalom. Ahitophel counseled Absalom on two strategic moves, one was to publically shame his father David and Absalom followed that advice. The second was a plan to kill David. When Absalom chose to take the advice of another man, Ahitophel went to his home, put it in order, and then hung himself.

Our second mighty man is Uriah. He was a Hittite and a loyal man, to his king, David, and to his God.

What do David, Uriah, Eliam and Ahitophel have in common? They are four men intimately connected to the life of Bathsheba.

Eliam is Bathsheba's father, Ahitophel her grandfather, Uriah her first husband, and David eventually becomes her second husband.

The story can be read in full in 2 Samuel. Bathsheba and Uriah are married, Bathsheba is at home and Uriah is off at war. David walks on his roof in the evening, sees Bathsheba bathing on her roof and asks about her. He is told that she is the wife of Uriah and the daughter of Eliam – two of his Mighty Men – and he asks for her to be sent to him. David then chose to sin and he slept with Bathsheba. Bathsheba got pregnant and when David found out he tried to cover up his sin by calling Uriah home from war and sending Uriah to sleep with her. Uriah's heart was with those out on the military campaign that were sleeping in tents in open country and he refused to go home.

David was desperate to hide his sin, and since he couldn't pretend that Bathsheba's baby was Uriah's he sent Uriah back into the battlefield with a note for the commander with instructions for Uriah to be placed at the front of the battle where he would be sure to die. And sure enough, Uriah does die. Bathsheba mourns for her husband, and once her time of mourning comes to an end David brings her into his house and makes her his wife and she has a son.

The prophet Nathan comes to David to tell him that God is not pleased with what he has done. Part of what Nathan prophesies is;

“Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you.”

Perhaps when Ahitophel chose to side with Absalom he may have known what Nathan had prophesied, and in part have been angered about what David had done to his granddaughter.

David confesses to Nathan;

“I have sinned against the Lord.”

And here it is; a great king and warrior, recognizing and confessing his own sin.

Romans 3:23 tells us;

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

It doesn't matter who we are, where we come from, or what great things we have done – we have all sinned.

And then what a comfort 1 John 1:9 becomes:

“And if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

David confessed his sin against the Lord, and God forgave him. A very sad consequence to David's sin was that his and Bathsheba's first son dies. Shortly thereafter Bathsheba gets pregnant again and has another son. This son is named Solomon. It is said that “the Lord loved him” and sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah, which means “beloved of the Lord.”

### **Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What do you know about the life of David?
2. What did David try to do with his sin?
3. What happens when we confess our sin?

## Day 9 :: Solomon :: God is the Giver of all good things

One of David's desires had been to build a temple for God, but because he had killed many people and fought many wars God said that David could not do that. Rather, David's son Solomon would be the one to build the temple.

David leaves provisions for the beginning of the temple, gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, stone, and skilled craftsmen.

Upon the death of his father David, Solomon becomes king. God appeared to Solomon one night in a dream and told him to ask Him for whatever he wanted.

Solomon's request was for discernment to govern the people and God was pleased to answer his request;

"I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you haven't asked for – both wealth and honor – so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings." (1 Kings 3:12&13)

Solomon becomes well known for his wisdom and people travel from all over to hear him speak on various subjects.

Solomon also completes the temple, which was to be the earthly dwelling place of God and a place for their sacrifices to be offered - a significant building in the lives of those in Israel wanting to worship God. Solomon dedicates the temple to God and turns to bless the people;

"May He turn our hearts to Him, to walk in obedience to Him and keep the commands, decrees and laws He gave our ancestors... And may your hearts be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by His decrees and obey His commands, as at this time." (1 Kings 8:58&61)

But Solomon's heart is not fully committed to God, he marries many women and he allows their traditions and their gods to enter his home and this eventually draws his heart away from the one true God.

"As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been." (1 Kings 11:4)

When he grew old his heart was turned away – it took time for his allegiance to shift, but by associating with and being closely connected with those who worshiped false gods Solomon too began to worship false gods.

Up until this time there had been peace in Solomon's kingdom, but once he turns away from God men arise and cause problems for him. One of these men is Jeroboam. We will be talking about Jeroboam and his rebellion against Solomon tomorrow when we read about Solomon's son Rehoboam.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. Why was Solomon's father not allowed to be the one to build the temple? What provisions did he leave for Solomon?
2. What did Solomon ask God for?
3. What drew Solomon's heart from God?



## Day 10 :: Rehoboam :: God is whom we should seek

Rehoboam lived during a unique time for the Israelites; he was the last king to rule all of Israel and the first to rule just the tribe of Judah when the nation divided.

When Solomon was king he noticed a young man named Jeroboam and because of how well he worked Solomon put him in charge of the whole labor force of the tribes of Joseph. A prophet by the name of Ahijah told Jeroboam that God had said that the kingdom would be torn from Solomon's hand and ten of the tribes would be Jeroboam's to rule. Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam and he fled to Shishak, the king of Egypt, until Solomon died.

When Solomon dies Rehoboam is crowned king and Jeroboam returns from Egypt. The Israelites gather around Rehoboam and ask him to lighten the burden that Solomon had put on them, saying that they will serve him if he will do this. He tells them he will think on it for three days and seeks the advice of the elders, who advise him to give them a favorable answer so they will always be his servant. He rejects this advice and seeks the counsel of his peers. They advise him to be harsher in his ruling of the people and when Rehoboam gathers the people back he says to them;

“My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.” (1 Kings 12:14)

The people were not happy and went back to their homes. When they heard that Jeroboam had returned they crowned him king over Israel. Ten of the twelve tribes were for Jeroboam. Rehoboam gathered the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin to go into war against the rest of Israel. But God sent word to Rehoboam that this should not happen;

“Do not go up to fight against your brothers, the Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing.” (1 Kings 12:24)

Now Jeroboam realized that if the people returned to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the Lord they might return their allegiance to king Rehoboam, so king Jeroboam set up golden calves in his territories for the people to worship so that they would not have to travel to Jerusalem. He also built shrines and appointed priests that were not from the tribe of Levi, the only tribe that was to serve as priests.

A man of God came to Jeroboam as he was standing near the altar to make an offering. The man cried out;

“Altar, altar! This is what the Lord says: ‘A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you. This is the sign the Lord has declared: the altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out.’” (1 Kings 13:2,3)

King Jeroboam stretched out his arm and commanded for this man to be seized, but his hand shriveled so that he could not pull it back! Also, the altar split and the ashes poured out just like the sign the man said would happen. Jeroboam asked the man of God to pray that his hand would be restored, and the man does and the hand is healed. But we are told that;

“Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.” (1 Kings 13:33, 34)

Meanwhile, Rehoboam set up his kingdom in Jerusalem and he leads the people into idolatrous worship. During his reign Shishak king of Egypt attacked and carried off the treasures of the temple and the treasures of the royal palace.

We are told that Rehoboam did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord.

What things do we seek? In Matthew 6 the Lord Jesus told us;

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well.” (Matthew 6:33)

### **Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What is unique about Rehoboam’s reign as king?
2. Rehoboam and Jeroboam’s names are really similar! Which one ruled which part of Israel?
3. Jeroboam didn’t want to lose the allegiance of his ten tribes when it came time to make sacrifices in Jerusalem. What was his solution? Was it a good idea?

## Day 11 :: Abijah:: God is our leader

Abijah was Rehoboam's son and heir to the throne. Abijah wanted to reunite the two kingdoms and made a plea to king Jeroboam and his troops;

"People of Israel, do not fight against the Lord, the God of your ancestors, for you will not succeed." (2 Chronicles 13:12)

Abijah knew that those under the rule of Jeroboam were still worshipping the golden calf whereas his kingdom had submitted themselves to God, observing His requirements and asserting Him as their leader.

Despite the fact that Jeroboam's army was twice as large as his own – 400,000 men verses 800,000 men – Abijah confidently pled with Jeroboam's army to repent. Jeroboam was sneaky and sent an ambush around behind so that the smaller army was surrounded. When they saw that they were being attacked from front and back they cried out to the Lord God.

God delivered Abijah and his men and they were able to inflict some severe blows to the larger army, causing 500,000 casualties. They caused more casualties than there were people in their own army!

Abijah pursued Jeroboam and overtook several cities from him, and God struck Jeroboam down and he died.

While the kingdom of Israel did not prove to be a threat throughout the rest of king Abijah's reign, he did not succeed in reuniting the two kingdoms.

### **Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What did Abijah want for the two divided kingdoms?
2. How much bigger was Jeroboam's army than Abijah's army?
3. How many of Jeroboam's soldiers were killed by Abijah's army?

## Day 12 :: Asa :: God is the one we rely on

Asa, son of Abijah, became the next king. He was passionate about keeping the worship of the one true God and about destroying the idols. He even demoted his grandmother from her position as queen mother because of her worship of idols.

“Asa’s heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life.” (1 Kings 15:14)

When king Asa was faced with a large military opposition from Ethiopia he fully seeks the Lord;

“Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O Lord, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you” (2 Chronicles 14:11)

And we are told that the enemy was crushed before the Lord and His forces.

Baasha became king of Israel in the third year of Asa reigning as king of Judah. Baasha had served as a captain in the army to Nadab, who was the son of king Jeroboam. Nadab was an evil king, following in the ways of his father, and Baasha plotted to kill Nadab and all in the household of Jeroboam. Once Baasha was king there was war between Asa and Baasha throughout their reigns. Sadly, Baasha followed in the ways of Jeroboam and led the people of Israel in sinful ways.

Ben-Hadad was king of Aram, ruling in Damascus and he had a peace treaty with king Baasha.

King Asa took silver and gold from the treasuries of the Lord’s temple and offered it to king Bed-Hadad, asking him to break his treaty with king Baasha; he did and sent his men to fight against Israel where they conquered several cities and then took enough building supplies to build up two of their own cities.

Rather than rely on the Lord God to deliver him from his enemies King Asa took from the treasury of God and made an alliance with an enemy in order to conquer another enemy. The prophet Hanani comes to King Asa and reminds him of the ways God has worked in the past, helping him to conquer greater armies than that which he had just faced;

“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” (2 Chronicles 16:9a)

And then he rebukes King Asa for what he had done;

“You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.” (2 Chronicles 16:9b)

King Asa was furious at Hanani for speaking the truth to him, and throws him in prison.

A few years later he is afflicted with a severe foot disease. He does not seek help from the Lord, but instead turns only to his physicians. Two years later he dies.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. Why did Asa demote his grandmother from her position?
2. What mistake did Asa make out of his desire to protect the Kingdom of Judah?
3. What does Asa do to the prophet Hanani? Why?

## Day 13 :: King Jehoshaphat :: God is the One who saves us

Jehoshaphat was the son of Asa and the fourth king in the kingdom of Judah.

Jehoshaphat did four noteworthy things; he strengthened himself against Israel, he sought God and followed His commands with a devoted heart, he removed idols, and he sent out officials to teach the law of the Lord.

As a result the fear of the Lord fell on all the surrounding kingdoms, and they did not go to war against Jehoshaphat. In addition, the Philistines and Arabs brought him gifts of gold, silver, rams, and goats. Jehoshaphat became more and more powerful and wealthy.

In an effort to strengthen alliances Jehoshaphat marries his son, Jehoram, to Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, the wicked king of Israel.

Ahab asks Jehoshaphat to join with him to wage war against Ramoth Gilead. Jehoshaphat agrees, but counsels Ahab to seek God's counsel on this matter of war. Ahab turns to his own prophets, who urge him to go to war and assure him victory. Jehoshaphat wisely asks for a prophet of God to ask, and Ahab says there is one, but that he hates him as he always speaks bad things about Ahab. However this prophet, Micaiah, is summoned and while he agrees that the battle will be won, he warns that Ahab will die. Enraged, Ahab sends Micaiah to prison and when he goes to battle against Ramoth Gilead Ahab wears the clothes of a common soldier, while Jehoshaphat wears the robes of a king. At random someone drew his bow and shot an arrow that pierced the king of Israel, and he dies, just as Micaiah has prophesied.

When Jehoshaphat safely returns from the battle he is confronted by Jehu, the son of Hanani who was imprisoned when he confronted Jehoshaphat's father Asa. Jehu said to king Jehoshaphat;

"Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Because of this, the wrath of the Lord is on you." (2 Chronicles 19:2)

It is interesting to note Jehoshaphat's response to this chastisement, which stands in stark contrast to his father's response. Jehoshaphat went out among the people and turned them back to the Lord. He appointed judges throughout the land and encourages them;

"Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for mere mortals but for the Lord, who is with you whenever you give a verdict. Now let the fear of the Lord be

on you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery.” (2 Chronicles 19:6&7)

He appointed Levites to administer the law, and encouraged them;

“You must serve faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the Lord. In every case that comes before you ... you are to warn them not to sin against the Lord; otherwise His wrath will come on you and your people. Do this, and you will not sin... Act with courage and may the Lord be with those who do well.” (2 Chronicles 19:9&10&11)

After some time a vast army from the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat. We are told;

“Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.” (2 Chronicles 20:3)

And, as a result of the king's resolve;

“The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek Him.” (2 Chronicles 20:4)

Jehoshaphat then prays to God. He recalls the victories the Lord has given his ancestors over the enemy and asks for help with the current enemies;

“For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” (2 Chronicles 20:12)

As Jehoshaphat heads into battle he appoints men to sing to the Lord and praise Him for the splendor of His holiness. As they walked ahead of the army they gave thanks for His enduring love.

While they were singing and praising, God set ambushes against the enemy and when the men of Judah came to a place that overlooked the desert where the vast army was, all they saw were dead bodies. We are told that none of the enemy had escaped. Jehoshaphat and his men collected the plunder – it took them three days to collect it all! They returned to Jerusalem praising God for what He had done.

Later, King Jehoshaphat made an alliance with Ahaziah, king of Israel, who was a wicked man. Jehoshaphat agreed to help construct a fleet of trading ships. After they were built a prophet came to Jehoshaphat and told him that God would destroy what he had created because of his alliance with Ahaziah. The ships were wrecked and did not set sail to trade.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What are the four noteworthy things Jehoshaphat did?
2. What was the result of that?
3. When the Moabites, Ammonites and Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat, how did his men march in to battle?



## Day 14 :: Jehoram :: God is just

Jehoram was given the kingdom by his father Jehoshaphat because he was the first born son. When Jehoshaphat died Jehoram killed all of his brothers and some of the officials of Israel. Jehoram followed in the wicked ways of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for his wife was Ahab's daughter.

While Jehoram was king Edom rebelled against Judah and set up its own kingdom. Libnah also rebelled because of Jehoram forsaking God.

Jehoram set up places of worship for idols and led the kingdom of Judah away from God.

Elijah, the prophet, sent a letter to Jehoram chastising him for his evil ways and warning him that God was about to strike his people, sons and wives and everything that was his with a heavy blow. Elijah also tells Jehoram that he will be afflicted with a stomach disease that will eventually cause his bowels to come out.

The Philistines and the Arabs attacked Judah, invading it and carrying off all of the goods found in the king's palace, including Jehoram's sons and his wives. Only his youngest son, Ahaziah, remained.

After all this the Lord afflicted Jehoram with an incurable disease of the bowels. At the end of the second year of this affliction his bowels came out because of this disease and he died a painful death. We're told that he passed away to no one's regret. There was no funeral fire in his honor, as had been given to his predecessors, and while he was buried in the City of David, he was not buried in the tombs of the kings.

### **Questions to start the conversation:**

1. Was Jehoram a good king or a bad king?
2. What did the prophet Elijah write in his letter?
3. How did Jehoram die?

## Day 15 :: Uzziah :: God is to be worshiped in His way

While it is recorded in the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1 that Jehoram is the father of Uzziah, there are actually three kings between these two characters, none of them mentioned in Matthew 1.

Uzziah was sixteen years old when the people appointed him king in place of his father, Amaziah. He was instructed by Zechariah (not the well known prophet by the same name) and we are told that;

“As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success.” (2 Chronicles 26:5)

Uzziah became very powerful. God helped him win victories against his enemies and Uzziah’s fame spread as far as the border of Egypt.

Uzziah built towers in the desert and dug many wells. He also had people working his fields and vineyards and encouraged agricultural developments. He built up a strong military presence that was well trained, well organized and well equipped.

Uzziah invented devices to use on the towers so that soldiers could shoot arrows and hurl large stones from the walls.

This is the very first mention of a warlike device of this nature, and is mentioned long before any records indicate anything similar amongst the Greeks or the Romans.

With all of these accomplishments, and all of his power, king Uzziah becomes very proud and he forsakes God. Uzziah entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense. Back when God gave the Israelites, then a unified nation of twelve tribes, instructions about the tabernacle (which Solomon then built a permanent dwelling place, the temple) God instructed them that it was to be only those from the tribe of Levi that made offerings in His dwelling place.

But Uzziah chose to do this sinful act. Azariah, a priest, and eighty other priests follow him and confront Uzziah, telling him it is not right for him to burn incense to the Lord and reminding him that it is only to be those who are descendants of Aaron, the Levites, that have been consecrated. This angered Uzziah and he raged against the priests. While raging before the priests and the altar of incense, leprosy broke out on his forehead.

The priests hurried him out of the Lord’s temple, and he lived in a separate house because of his leprosy. His son, Jotham, took over the ruling of Judah.

When Uzziah died he was buried near his ancestors, but not with them, because of his leprosy.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. How old was Uzziah when he became king?
2. What were some of Uzziah's accomplishments?
3. Why was Uzziah in the temple? What happened to him?

## Day 16:: Jotham :: God is to be considered in all we do

Jotham became king when his father, Uzziah, was struck with leprosy. Jotham did what was right in the sight of the Lord as his father had done, but it is noted that he did not enter the temple, which is where his father had committed his sin by trying to offer burnt incense to God. It is a good thing for us to look at the lives of others and to be encouraged to follow God by their good actions and then to also learn from their mistakes.

Despite his godly leadership the people of Judah continued their corrupt practices, which was the worship of false gods. Perhaps this can be connected in part to the fact that their king did not enter the temple; the very place the one true God was to be worshiped. While we know that Jotham walked faithfully before God, perhaps it was a stumbling point to others that he did not eradicate the places of idolatrous worship nor appear at the temple, where God was to be worshiped.

“Jotham grew powerful, because he walked steadfastly before the Lord his God.” (2 Chronicles 27:6)

Jotham prepared his way before the Lord, and as a result he became a mighty man.

During his reign Jotham did a lot of repairing and building work, on the temple gate and in the hill country.

Jotham waged war against, and conquered, the Ammonites. The Ammonites paid him a hefty tribute for three years consisting of silver, wheat and barley.

Isaiah, Hosea, Micah and Amos were prophets contemporary to this time period.

Jotham was a good king and his strength lay in the fact that he considered God in all that he did. When King Jotham died he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David.

### **Questions to start the conversation:**

1. Where did Jotham not go in his lifetime?
2. What type of work did Jotham do during his reign?
3. What was the tribute the Ammonites paid him?

## Day 17 :: Ahaz :: God is angered

Ahaz did not follow in the ways of his father and he chose to do what was evil in God's sight. Ahaz followed in the ways of the kings of Israel and made idols for worshipping Baal. He sacrificed his own children by burning them in fire, practices taken from the nations God had driven out before the Israelites. He offered sacrifices and burned incense in many places.

Because of this God delivered king Ahaz into the hands of the king of Aram. They took many of his people to Damascus.

The king of Israel also inflicted heavy losses on the kingdom of Judah, in one day killing 120,000 soldiers. The Israelites also killed Ahaz's son, the officer in charge of the palace, and the man second to the king. They also took captive 200,000 women and children and took plunder for themselves.

Obed, a prophet of the Lord, met the Israelites and advised them to return their prisoners for the anger of the Lord rested on them. The soldiers gave up their prisoners and plunder and sent them back.

Meanwhile, king Ahaz asked for help from the king of Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser. The Edomites had attacked and taken prisoners and the Philistines had raided some towns, capturing and occupying several towns.

God had humbled the kingdom of Judah because of king Ahaz's evil ways.

King Ahaz took things from the temple of God, from the royal palace and from the officials and presented them to the king of Assyria, asking for his aid.

The king of Assyria agrees to help the king of Judah and attacks Damascus and captures it. King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet the king of Assyria. There he saw an altar used for worshiping false gods and sent a sketch of it to Uriah, the priest, along with detailed plans for its construction back in Jerusalem.

Uriah builds the altar in accordance to the plans of King Ahaz and finishes it before the king returns from Damascus.

Ahaz offers sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, those that had defeated him, reasoning that since they had defeated him perhaps their gods would help him.

"In his time of trouble king Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the Lord." (2 Chronicles 28:22)

Ahaz gathers all the furnishings from the temple of God and has them cut into pieces. He shuts the doors of the temple, which means the burning lamps were put out, incense was not burnt and burnt offerings were not being presented. He also sets up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem and in every town in Judah he builds places to burn sacrifices to other gods.

And then king Ahaz dies, and is not buried with his ancestors.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What did Ahaz do to his children?
2. What did the prophet Obed tell the Kingdom of Israel to do with their prisoners from Judah?
3. What was the sketch that Ahaz sent to Uriah, the priest? What did he want Uriah to do?

## Day 18 :: King Hezekiah :: God is our confidence

Ahaz's son, Hezekiah became king when he was 25 years of age. Hezekiah did what was right in the sight of God.

In the first month of the first year of his reign Hezekiah opens the doors of the temple for it to be repaired. He brings in the priests and the Levites and tells them to consecrate themselves and the temple and to remove all defilement. Then he says;

“Our parents were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the Lord our God and forsook Him. They turned their faces away from the Lord's dwelling place and turned their backs on Him.

My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him and serve Him, to minister before Him and to burn incense.” (2 Chronicles 29:6&11)

The extreme differences in this father and son illustrate so well what we can see throughout this genealogy; it doesn't matter who your parents are; each person has a personal responsibility to make themselves right before God. A father's right standing before God does not mean the child has a right standing before God unless the child purposes that for himself. And, as this story shows, an evil father that rejects God does not mean the child will also reject God. Hezekiah had such wisdom in starting out his reign by making things right in the dwelling place of God.

The Levites assembled themselves and consecrated themselves and then set about purifying the temple of the Lord, following the word of the Lord. Once this was completed they made a blood offering to the Lord, accompanied by singing and instruments and when the offerings were finished king Hezekiah and all those with him knelt down and worshiped.

Those in the assembly were invited to bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the Lord, and those that were of willing heart brought burnt offerings. There were so many burnt offerings that the priests were unable to skin all of them and they had to ask their relatives to help them!

Hezekiah was eager to commence with all of the traditional ceremonies God had ordained, and so being around Passover time he sent out letters inviting everyone to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, which had not been properly observed for a long time. Because there was not enough time to prepare for the Passover when it fell, they postponed it by one month as Hezekiah did not want to wait an entire year to be able to celebrate.

The letters that were sent out received a mixed response; some who heard scorned and ridiculed the messengers, others humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem. Those in Judah were unified in their desire to carry out what king Hezekiah and the officials ordered. All of the altars and incense altars made to the false gods were thrown away. A great crowd came to Jerusalem and the 7 day feast took place, with much rejoicing. At the end of the 7 days they all agreed to continue for another 7 days. After the celebrating the Israelites went out and smashed the various forms of idolatrous worship that were still standing.

Hezekiah continued to encourage the people to return to sincere and proper worship of God. Hezekiah gave from his own possessions for the burnt offerings, and then instructed the people to give for the priest's portion. And in everything that Hezekiah undertook in the temple he sought God and worked wholeheartedly, and he prospered.

After all this took place Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded Judah. Hezekiah consulted with his officials and military staff and it was agreed that they would block off the water supply. They then worked hard rebuilding the broken parts of the city wall, building towers, building another wall outside the first one, reinforcing the terraces of the city of David and making weapons and shields. Hezekiah then encourages the people to be strong and courageous, reminding them to not fear a man or his sizeable army because they have the greater power, God, on their side.

The king of Assyria sends a message to King Hezekiah and the people, ridiculing them for heeding Hezekiah's advice and for trusting God in light of the Assyrian power. In part of the letter the king of Assyria questions;

"In what are you basing your confidence, that you remain in Jerusalem under siege?" (2 Chronicles 32:10)

Hezekiah responds by going to the temple and spreading the letter before God. He then pours out his heart to God, asserts Him as the one and only God and asks that He will deliver the kingdom of Judah from the mighty Assyrians so that all the kingdoms would know that He alone is God. Hezekiah was basing his confidence in the one true God, and God delivers him, and his kingdom, from the Assyrian army. An angel went out at night and annihilated all of the fighting men. The Assyrian king withdrew in disgrace, and when he went to worship to his gods his sons killed him with swords. And so God saved Hezekiah from the Assyrians and from the hand of all others. God took care of them on every side. His care and provision is so thorough.

Hezekiah became ill to the point of death and prayed for deliverance.



But his heart was proud, and he had the wrath of God on him, until he repented of his sin.

God's wrath did not return during the reign of Hezekiah. He was honored by all at his death.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What did Hezekiah do in the first month of his reign as king?
2. What can we learn by looking at the extreme differences between Hezekiah and his father?
3. What type of worship did Hezekiah encourage the people towards?

## Day 19 :: King Manasseh:: God is compassionate

Manasseh was Hezekiah's son and was crowned king when he was just twelve years old. He was the first king of Judah to have no experience with the kingdom of Israel as they were wiped out and scattered by the Assyrians.

Manasseh chose the path of evil and rebuilt all of the places of worship to false gods that his father had destroyed, as well as altars to the false gods and poles.

Manasseh worshiped the stars and set up altars in God's temple to the starry hosts. He offered his children as sacrifices in fire, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritualists. He did much evil and aroused the anger of God. Manasseh led the people into greater evils than that of the nations God had wiped out prior to bringing the Israelites in.

God spoke to Manasseh and the people, but they would not listen. So God allowed Manasseh to be taken prisoner by the army commanders of Assyria. They put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress Manasseh cried out to God and humbled himself before Him. The Lord was moved by his plea, and brought Manasseh back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Manasseh then knew the Lord was God.

He then rebuilt the outer wall of the city of the city of David and made it higher. He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities throughout Judah. He removed all the foreign gods and altars and threw them out of the city. He restored the altar of the Lord and told the people of Judah to worship the Lord God.

Then, when Manasseh dies he is buried in his palace garden.

### **Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What happened to the kingdom of Israel?
2. In which way did Manasseh direct his people at the beginning of his life?
3. What happened that resulted in Manasseh humbling himself before God?

## Day 20 :: Josiah :: God is righteous

Josiah was 8 years old when he was crowned king. His father, Amon, was the son of Manasseh and Amon did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not repent. Amon's officials conspired against him and assassinated him. The people then had all those that had plotted against the king put to death and they made Josiah king. (Remember; Josiah had been talked about over 300 years earlier when Jeroboam, the king of Israel, was confronted by a prophet.)

In the eighth year of Josiah's reign, when he was 16 years old, he began to seek the Lord. In his twelfth year he began to get rid of the idol worship; thoroughly destroying everything connected with idolatry throughout Israel. And in his eighteenth year he begins to repair the temple. While working in the temple an old copy of the Law was found and read to the king. This upset the king and caused him to tear his robes because he realized how far they had wandered from God. He sent for Huldah, the prophetess, to see if there was still a chance for mercy since the generations of people had forsaken the Law. Huldah confirmed that God's wrath was coming, but that Josiah would be spared because his heart was responsive and he had humbled himself before God.

Knowing God's wrath is going to be coming on them Josiah still gathers the people and reads to them the book of the Law. He then renews the covenant to follow the Lord and keep His commands, statutes and decrees with all of his heart and soul and had all of his people do this too. Josiah led all of the people in Israel to serve the Lord God because of his strong leadership and his resolve to follow God himself.

As his great grandfather Hezekiah had done, Josiah encouraged the Levites and Priests in their service in the Lord's temple, and he instructed them to prepare for the celebration of the Passover.

When it came time for the Passover Josiah provided 30,000 lambs and goats for the poor, and 3,000 cattle, all from his own supply. The Passover was one unlike any that had been observed since the time of Samuel, the prophet who declared David to be the second king of Israel. This Passover was unique in its absolute devotion to God and His written Law.

Time passes, and Necho, king of Egypt, went to fight the Assyrians at Carchemish on the Euphrates River. Josiah pursues and Necho sends a message to Josiah, telling him to stop opposing him, that God has told him to make haste. Josiah did not cease his pursuit, but rather disguised himself to engage Necho in battle. Archers shoot King Josiah and he is badly wounded. He is put in a chariot and brought back to Jerusalem,

where he dies. The people all mourn his death and Jeremiah the prophet composes laments for Josiah that the people sang.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. How old was Josiah when he became king?
2. What was found in the temple?
3. How does Josiah die?

## Day 21 :: Jehoiachin (also known as Jeconiah) :: God is the one true king

After Josiah's death the people crowned his son, Jehoahaz, king. He reigned for three months and then the king of Egypt dethroned him and made his brother, Eliakim, king over Judah. Eliakim's name was changed to Jehoiakim and he reigned for eleven years and was a bad king. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, attacked him and bound him with bronze shackles and took him and articles from the Lord's temple back to Babylon. (This was the first of the exiles and is believed to be when Daniel was taken captive.)

Jehoichin, also called Jeconiah, was Jehoiakim's son and was the next crowned king. Jehoiachin was also a bad king just as his father had been. He rejected the ways of God. In the spring time Nebuchadnezzar and his army again come to Jerusalem to capture it. Jehoiachin, his mother, and others in the kingdom surrender to Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar takes Jehoiachin as his prisoner and takes more gold from the temple. He takes Jerusalem into exile; taking all of the fighting men, the officers, the skilled workers and artisans, a total of ten thousand people, leaving only the poorest behind in Jerusalem. (This is the second exile, and amongst those taken captive with Jehoiachin is Mordecai, the future Queen Esther's cousin.)

Nebuchadnezzar crowns Jehoichin's Uncle Zedekiah (Josiah's third born son) as the next king. Zedekiah is a puppet king for Nebuchadnezzar, until he tries to rebel which results in the entire Babylonian army marching against Jerusalem. Zedekiah is struck blind and bound in bronze shackles and taken to Babylon. The Babylonians set fire to the temple of the Lord, to the palace, to the houses, and to every important building. The walls around Jerusalem were broken down. (This is the third of the Babylonian attacks.)

Jehoiachin is eventually released from the Babylonian prison when Nebuchadnezzar dies and his son, Awel-Marduk, takes the throne. Jehoiachin is treated well by the new Babylonian king, eating at his table and being given a daily allowance for the rest of his life.

The era of the kings has ended; and the people failed to turn their hearts to God. God's chosen people remain in captivity in Babylon for many years – Daniel and Esther are two well known characters whose stories occur during the Babylonian captivity.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What happened when Nebuchadnezzar attacked the first time?
2. After the second attack who was left in Jerusalem?
3. What happened to the city of Jerusalem in the third attack?  
-extra- what stories do you know that happened during the Babylonian captivity?

## Day 22 :: Zerubbabel :: God is worthy of praise

Zerubbabel was a governor of the Persian province of Judah and was the grandson of Jehoiachin. Under the rule of King Cyrus of Persia, Zerubbabel led the first group of Jews from the Babylonian captivity back to Jerusalem. King Cyrus ordered the neighboring nations to contribute generously to the returning remnant, and he gave some of the possessions that had been stolen from the temple in Jerusalem. About 50,000 Jews return to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel.

Jeshua is the high priest that returns to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, and together they build an offering to the Lord for burnt offerings – desiring to honor Him so that He would protect them. Under Jeshua and Zerubbabel they move forward with plans for building the temple. When the foundations of the second temple were built the priests and Levites had a service, dedicating it to the Lord. Older men in the gathering wept when they compared this plain building with the former splendor of the temple Solomon had constructed, but their weeping was mixed with shouts of joy from others. The old weeping because what currently existed was not as splendid as what they once knew and the young rejoicing as what currently existed was better than anything they had ever known.

Zerubbabel was approached by a group of people wanting to help with the rebuilding of the temple. These people were descendants of colonists from other countries and they had married with the Jews that had remained in Jerusalem during the Babylonian captivity. These people became known as the Samaritans.

When the Samaritans offer was refused by Zerubbabel, for they did not worship God alone, they took to discouraging the Jews, making them fearful, and meddling in the building to the point the rebuilding of the temple came to a complete stand still. Letters were also written to the king of Persia resulting in orders from him for the building to cease.

Haggai and Zechariah were prophets during the days of Zerubbabel and they told the Jews that they were to resume the building of the temple. Opposition arose and the Jews were challenged as to whose authority they were under in resuming the construction of the temple. They responded that it was first God's authority, and secondly that the former King Cyrus had agreed and supported the notion. This was all sent in a letter to the current reigning king, Darius.

King Darius searched the archives and found that King Cyrus had supported the rebuilding of the temple. He then issues an order that the rebuilding must continue, the

Jews are not to be hindered, provisions were to be made to assist them, and that it would be considered a crime for anyone to try to stop this project.

The building continues with great diligence, being completed four years later – about twenty years after the foundation was first laid. The people were joyful and worshiped the Lord.

The temple they had constructed was not even close to the spectacular one Solomon had made. The sacrifices made in worship were not as many as previous times had been. But the God of the good and plentiful times is still the God through the poor and trying times and He is worthy of praise and honor for He is always good.

We aren't told how Zerubbabel dies. According to the genealogy records in Matthew 1 he is the father of Abihud, who is the father of Eliakim, who is the father of Azor, who is the father of Zadok, the father of Akim, who is the father of Elihud, who is the father of Eleazar, who is the father of Matthan, the father of Jacob, who is the father of the man we will read about tomorrow.

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What went back to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel?
2. Why did the old weep and the young rejoice in the rebuilding of the foundation of the new temple?
3. What was King Darius' order concerning the rebuilding of the temple?



## Day 23 :: Joseph :: God is our Father

Joseph was not Jesus' biological father, but it was through Joseph's lineage that the inheritance of David's throne was passed on to Jesus.

Joseph's story starts with him betrothed, or engaged, to be married to Mary. But Mary is found to be pregnant with child and by Law he could have her stoned to death, or at the very least, break the marriage agreement. We see a bit of the character of Joseph by the mere fact that he determined to put her away quietly rather than publically disgrace her. While Joseph was trying to decide what to do about the matter an angel appears to him in a dream.

The angel addresses Joseph as "son of David" – a vivid reminder to him of his royal line. Joseph is assured that he should continue with the marriage to Mary and that the child she bears is a result of a miraculous act of God. Joseph is told she will bear a son, His name would be Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. Joseph's first introduction to the boy he would raise as his own is that of a Savior, coming from God – an introduction that is still relevant for each of us to be making today.

While Mary is pregnant Caesar Augustus issued a decree for everyone to go to their home town and be counted. Since Joseph was from the line of David he had to return to Bethlehem, the town of David. This decree from Caesar brought Mary and Joseph to the city of David at just the right time for the birth of Jesus Christ so that the prophecy could be fulfilled that He would be born in this city.

It is said that an orthodox Jew, which Joseph was, would never leave on a journey without taking with them their own burial linens in the event that they should die enroute. The Law required that the deceased be buried as soon as possible and in carrying their own burial linens with them they would provide the means by which a stranger could fulfill this law. These burial linens would have been narrow, fine linen strips, wrapped around their torsos and were called swaddling bands. Perhaps it was the swaddling bands of Mary or Joseph intended to be used in the event of their death that first swaddled the infant Jesus.

Of interesting note too is the practice of shepherds when they saw a spotless lamb be born; it was their practice to take a newly born spotless lamb and wrap it in swaddling bands and lay it in a manger to protect it from the filth of the floor.

While these are interesting observations, and we can appreciate the imagery displayed, what we do know for certain is this; Joseph was there the night the Lord Jesus, in the

form of a baby, entered the world. The Lord Jesus was born to die and He was born as a spotless Lamb.

Joseph leads his family to participate in three different rituals, as per the Law and Jewish tradition. Jesus was circumcised, Mary was purified from child birth, and Jesus was dedicated at the temple.

Joseph had a second visit by an angel – this time the angel of the Lord warns him that Herod is about to embark on a mission to slaughter boys under the age of two in hopes of cutting off the King of the Jews the wise men had been seeking. Joseph flees to Egypt with his family. Upon Herod's death he is again visited by an angel, assuring him that it is safe to return to Israel. Through the leading of the Lord, Joseph settles his family in Nazareth.

Joseph would have taught his sons his own trade, which was that of a carpenter. We know that the Lord Jesus worked as a carpenter before He started His earthly ministry; working alongside His earthly father with materials His heavenly Father had spoken into existence.

The last mention of Joseph is when the Lord Jesus is twelve years old. The family had gone to Jerusalem for the yearly Passover and upon its completion headed home. After a days journey Mary and Joseph noticed that Jesus was not with them.

They head back to the temple to search for Him and are amazed to find Him sitting amongst the religious teachers. Here we have the first recorded words of the Lord Jesus. When His mother questioned Him as to why He had not traveled home with them He responds;

“Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?”  
(Luke 2:49)

How often do we travel on, unaware that we are not journeying with Jesus? And do we then, like Joseph, search for Him until we are then reunited?

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What did the angel tell Joseph in the first dream?
2. Why did Joseph have to go to Bethlehem?
3. What was Joseph told in the second dream?

## Day 24 :: Mary :: God is preeminent

Mary was a young woman when an angel appeared to her with the news that would change her life; she, a virgin girl, was to carry God's Son. Mary wondered how this could be and the angel responded that it would be a work of the Holy Spirit.

The angel then told Mary that her cousin, Elizabeth was pregnant. Elizabeth was an older, barren woman and this news must have served as an added assurance to Mary that with God nothing was impossible.

After this message Mary traveled to visit Elizabeth, who greeted her warmly and saluted her as the mother of her Lord. Mary sang a song, the Magnificat, and praised God for what He had done, for His mercy through the generations and for His faithfulness in fulfilling the promise made to Abraham – the family line that we have been following this past month. It is worth noting too that Mary spoke of God as her Savior, showing her own need for forgiveness of sins.

When the census was called Mary traveled with Joseph to Bethlehem and gave birth to the Savior of the world in a stable, as there was no room for them anywhere else. The first visitors were shepherds, who had been told of the birth by angels. The shepherds went to see the Christ child, and Mary pondered those things in her heart.

40 days after the birth of Jesus a purification ceremony was performed for Mary. Ordinarily a lamb was required, but allowance was made for those who could not afford one and we can see a glimpse of the poverty of the family Jesus was born into by the fact that Mary's offering was two young pigeon doves.

Simeon was a Jewish man, one of the godly Jews that was looking forward to the day the Messiah would come. God had promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Anointed One. On the day Mary and Joseph dedicated Jesus at the temple Simeon was also at the temple. Simeon held the Christ child – his Salvation. He blessed Mary and Joseph and then spoke prophetically to Mary saying;

“Yes, a sword will pierce your own side also.” (Luke 2:35)

A prophetess by the name of Anna, another of the faithful remnant of Israel awaiting the Messiah, was also at the temple. She was an old lady, and a faithful worshiper of God. Upon seeing Jesus she thanked God for Him and spoke about Him to the faithful ones in Jerusalem.

We see Mary again in the story of twelve year old Jesus at the temple, which we talked about yesterday. She again kept of all these things in her heart. How full her heart must have been in reflecting on the worship of her Savior and the works of Him.

In the gospel of John we see Jesus and Mary at the wedding in Cana – she is referred to here, and other places – as “the mother of Jesus.” He was not known for being the son of the virgin, but rather she was known for being the mother of our Lord. The pre-eminent place is given to Christ.

The wine at the wedding runs out and Mary brings the problem to Jesus. He gently rebukes her, communicating to her that in His divine mission He was not subject to His earthly mother, but rather to His Heavenly Father.

Later we see Mary at the cross – a fulfillment to Simeon’s prophecy that she too would have a sword pierce her side; a sword of agony and pain to watch her Son die a brutal, undeserved death in order to redeem her and all else who would accept Him as their Lord and Savior. And then a bit later we see her gathered with others in continual prayer.

But it is the last recorded words of this woman that pondered so dearly the worship of her Savior and the works of her Lord that we should take notice of. Back when Jesus so gently rebukes her at the wedding she responds by saying to the servants;

“Do whatever He tells you.” (John 2:5)

And so today, we must consider the words of the person whose heart was tied the closest to the Christ – do we do whatever He tells us?

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. To whom did Mary travel after hearing the news of her pregnancy?
2. Who were the first visitors after the birth of the Christ child?
3. What was the offering made for Mary’s purification ceremony?

## Day 25 :: Jesus Christ :: God incarnate

Each one of the characters we have read about this month did one of two things; they either had burnt offerings and sacrifices being made for their sin through the shedding of animal blood, or they rejected the Laws of God and did not deal with their sin. But even through the shedding of animal blood, the sin itself was not dealt with. It was covered, but animal blood cannot remove sin.

Now we have the long awaited Savior come to earth.

God became flesh – the One who was there before time, who spoke the world into existence and created man in His own image – now comes to earth in the form of a baby; born to poor parents, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Worshiped by humbled shepherds, later rejected and despised by men and eventually brutally treated and hung on a cross – all this because He was the only one who could remove our sins. He was the Spotless Lamb.

His death on the cross was the punishment for our sins. Three days later He rose from the grave – a conqueror over death because He was perfect – sinless - and death had no power over Him.

Through the birth, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus the need for people to bring their burnt offerings and sacrifices ended with the obedience of Him going to the cross as our sacrifice. The punishment for the things that we do wrong - our sin - is death, but the gift that God offers us is eternal life through His son the Lord Jesus Christ. Because God loved us so much He sent His one and only son to die in our place and He offers us this choice to believe in Him and have eternal life in a home He is preparing for us.

As we celebrate this Christmas day with our loved ones, let us strive for the same attitude of humility that our Savior had and celebrate the birth that led us to the cross where the punishment for our sins was dealt with.

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus; who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage, rather He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human form. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:5-8)

**Questions to start the conversation:**

1. What can animal blood not do?
2. Why did the need for burnt offerings and sacrifices end with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus?
3. What does it mean to you that “God became flesh”? Take the time to tell Him and thank Him!

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