

OLD TESTAMENT

Whispers
OF CHRIST THE LORD

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE
ADVENT 2018

Advent 2018

SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE AND HOPE

Sunday, November 25 | 5:00 p.m.

a time of worship for all supporting those who have experienced the death of a loved one

CHRISTMAS AT FIRST

Sunday, December 2 | 5:00 p.m.

a service of preparation for the Christmas season featuring our Children's, Youth, and Sanctuary Choirs and The Sanctuary Orchestra

CHRISTMAS WITH DENVER & THE MILE HIGH ORCHESTRA

Sunday, December 9 | 5:00 p.m.

a festive evening of music featuring special guests Denver and the Mile High Orchestra

CAROL-CANDLELIGHT CELEBRATION

Sunday, December 16 | 5:00 p.m.

a service of celebration with The Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra

CHRISTMAS EVE COMMUNION

Monday, December 24 | 5:00 p.m. – Sanctuary; 8:00 p.m. – Fellowship Hall

a special time of worship featuring carols, candles, and communion

All concerts are free and open to the public.

Free parking is available in lots surrounding the church.

For more information about any of these events, go to NashvilleFirst.org.



OLD TESTAMENT

Whispers

OF CHRIST THE LORD

“God is sovereign, and he has been laying the tracks for the glory of Christ throughout redemptive history.” (Erik Raymond) Some of this year’s Advent devotionals may seem more suitable for Easter than Christmas, but they are necessary parts of the same story. During Advent, we consider why we need Christmas.

Jesus left a glory that we cannot comprehend to be born as a baby who would become the single sacrifice for the sin of every believer.

Christ Jesus, ... existing in the form of God,
did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.
Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant,
taking on the likeness of humanity.
And when he had come as a man,
he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—
even to death on a cross.
(Philippians 2:6-8)

God is a Spirit (John 4:24). Does He have eyes and hands? Or does He speak of Himself in those terms because they are all we can understand? God, who loves us, wants us to know and love Him. To do that, He sent His Son to show us what He is like. Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? (John 14:8-9)

Throughout the Old Testament God *whispered*, preparing His people to recognize the Messiah who would come. He whispered through what we can hear with our ears and see with our eyes—songs, poems, concrete images, events, laws, celebrations, and more. Those who were listening waited in hope, anticipating the promised One. And then in the New Testament, He breathed life into the prophecies of old. Jesus explained that this is so:

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)

That is what Christmas is about.

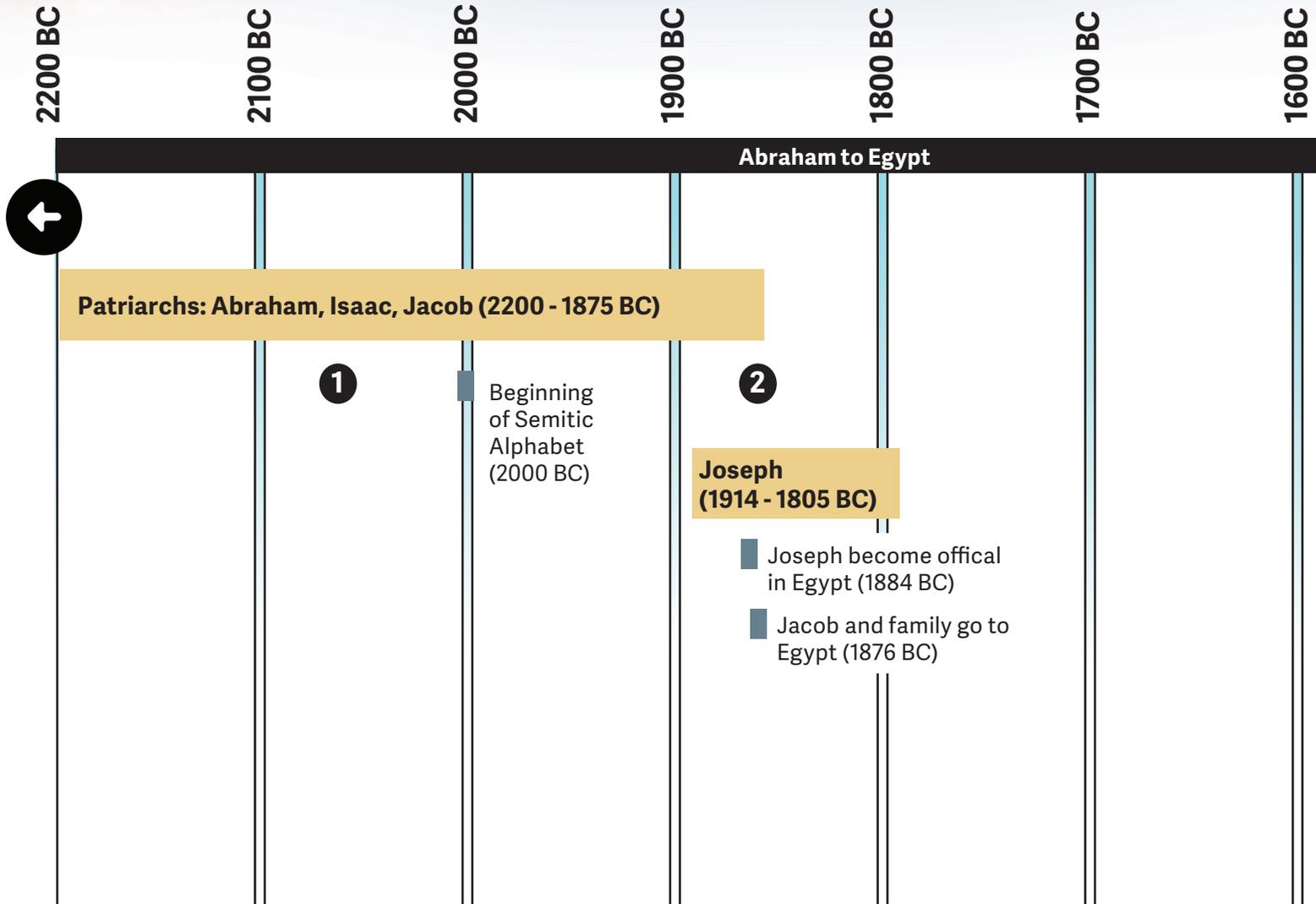
Yes, Yes! the Old Testament whispers about Jesus. The New Testament agrees and records. The Creator Father, Jesus the Savior, and the Holy Spirit, our Guide speak to us in those pages ... and hopefully in the pages of this book.

OLD TESTAMENT

Whispers

OF CHRIST THE LORD

Two travelers from Jerusalem to Emmaus suddenly became three. And while the stranger may have questioned the events surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection, He certainly understood their implications. Every word, sentence, and paragraph of Scripture to that point had been about the Messiah. Every jot and tittle served to prepare the hearts of those



WEEK ONE: Creation to the Promised Land (Beginning of time - 1406 BC)

Dec. 2, page 8

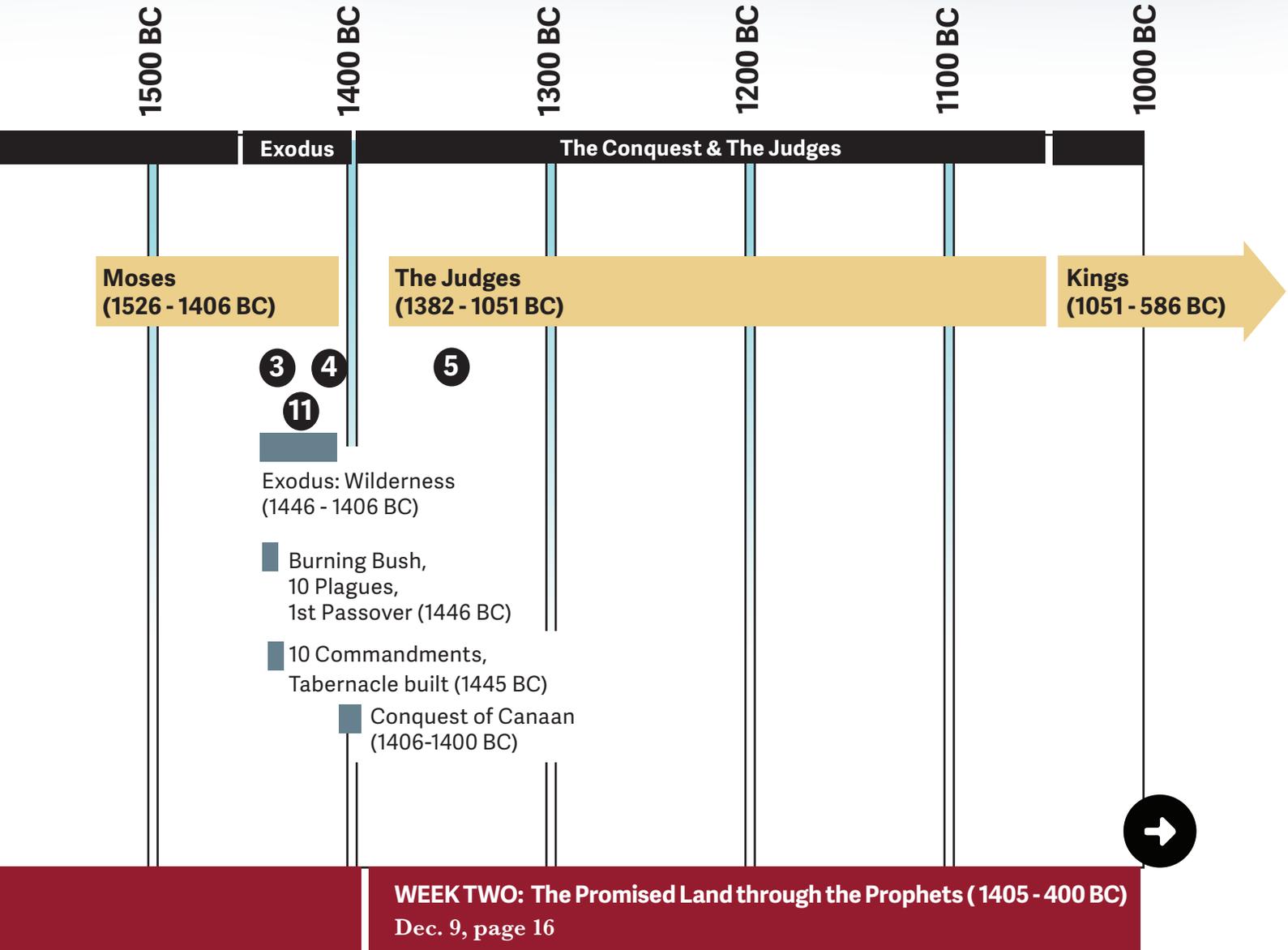
- **Creation:** Dec. 3, page 9 *(not on timeline)*
- **1 Abraham & Isaac:** Dec. 4, page 10
- **2 Joseph:** Dec. 5, page 11
- **3 I AM:** Dec. 6, page 12
- **4 Bronze Serpent:** Dec. 7, page 13

See corresponding numbers for where devotions fall on timeline.

who would receive Him. This is where the manger intersects with the empty tomb – in Jesus.

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)

This Advent season, let us join these two travelers on a journey through the Scriptures, looking forward to the coming of Jesus, the Christ, who is our hope and the evidence of God’s love. (John 3:16-17)

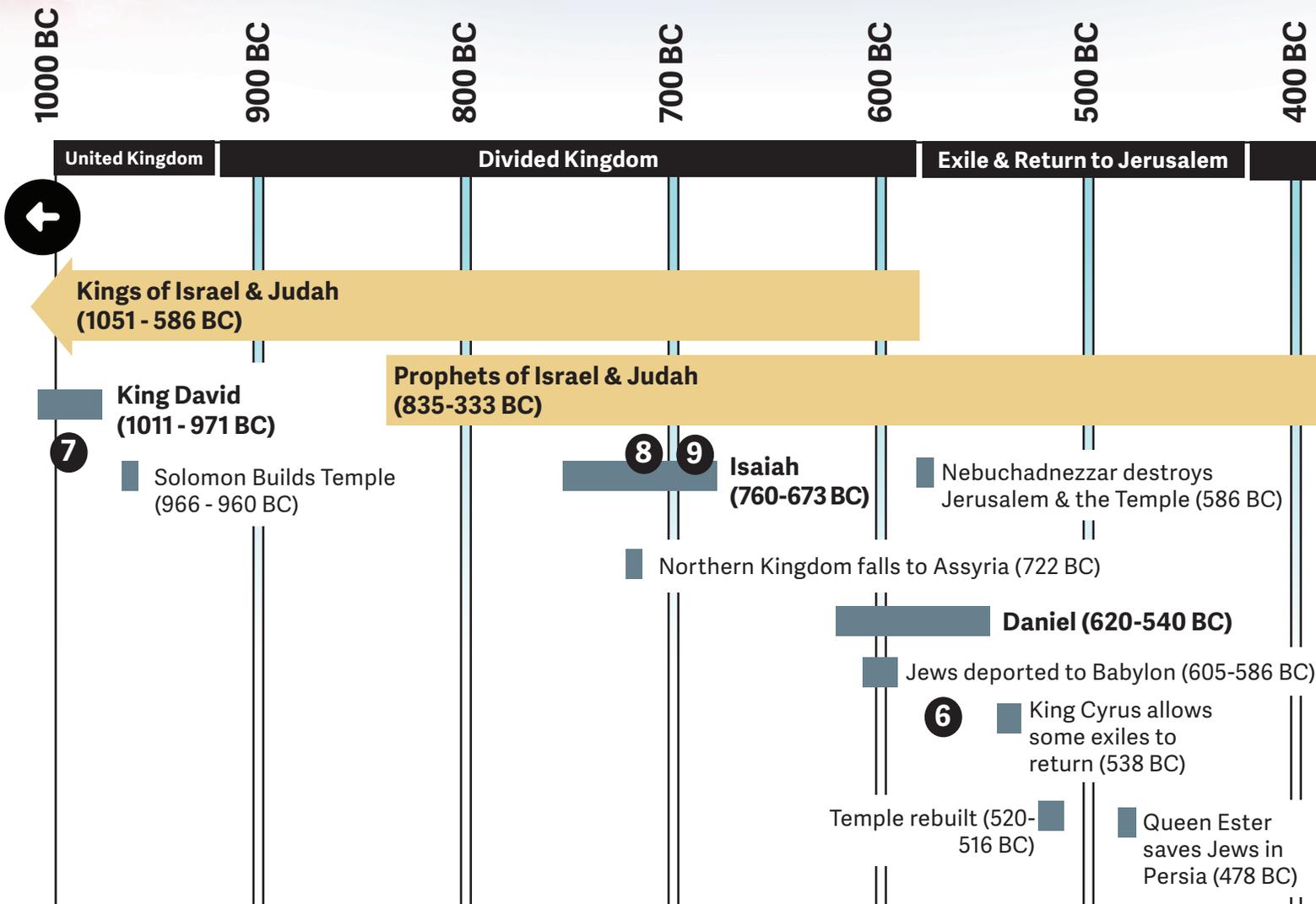


5 Joshua: Dec. 10, page 17

Note: All dates are best estimates from scholars and archaeologists. Consider them all approximate.
Source: Bible Timeline from Rose Publishing.

Whispers

OF CHRIST THE LORD



WEEK TWO: The Promised Land through the Prophets (1405 - 400 BC)
 Dec. 9, page 16

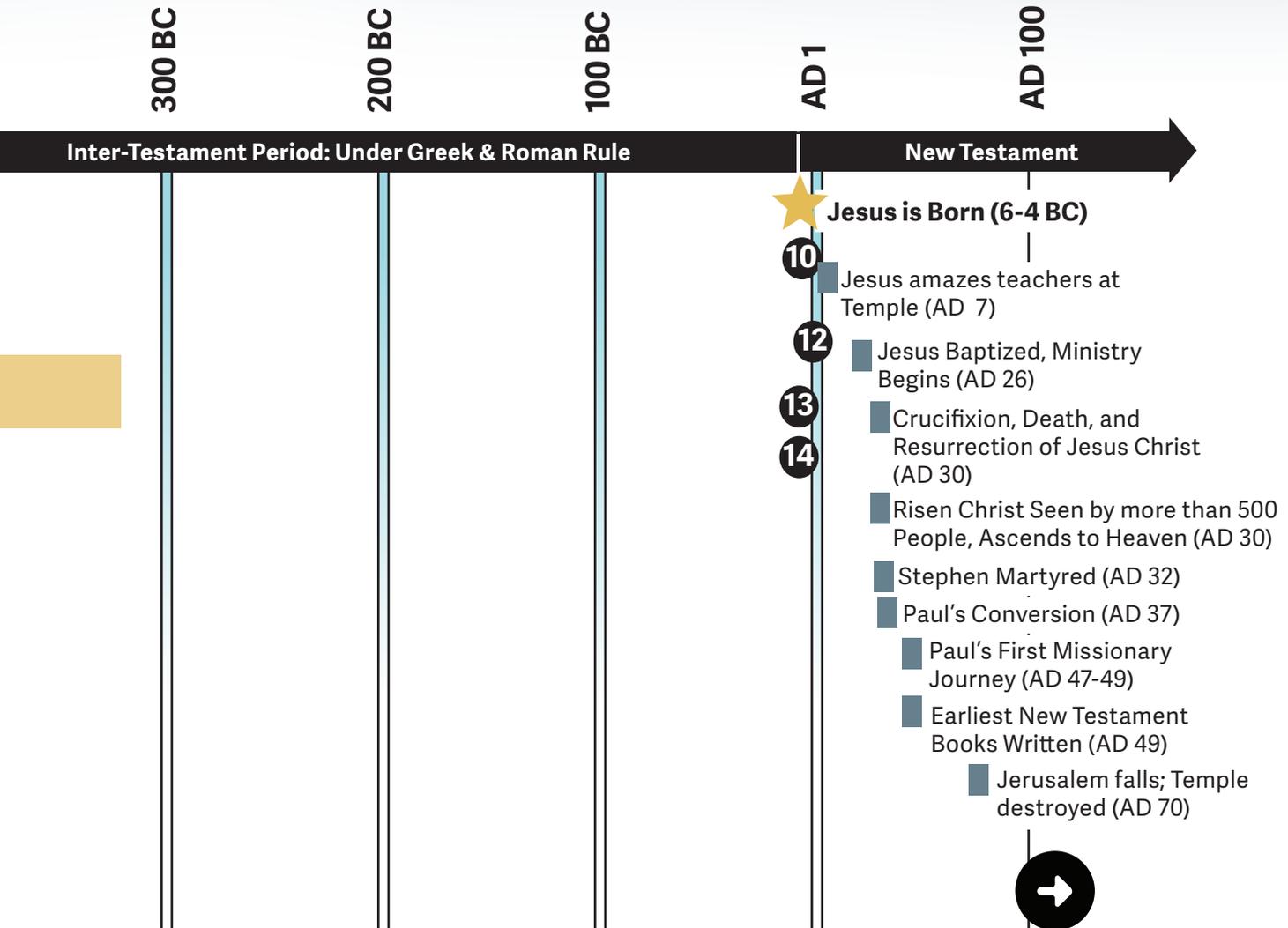
- 6** Daniel: Dec. 11, page 18
- 7** The Good Shepherd: Dec. 12, page 19
- 8** The Wounded Shepherd: Dec. 13, page 20
- 9** Prophecies: Dec. 14, page 21

See corresponding numbers for where devotions fall on timeline.

John 3:16, CSB

For God loved the world in this way:
He gave his one and only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him will not
perish but have eternal life.

c. AD 85-95



WEEK THREE: The New Testament (AD 6 - 70)

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10 Simeon Believed: Dec. 17, page 25

11 Manna in the Wilderness:
Dec. 18, page 26

12 The Seeking Shepherd:
Dec. 19, page 27

13 Joy: Dec. 20, page 28

14 Jesus' Birth: Dec. 21, page 29

**WEEK FOUR:
The Second Coming**

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Blessed Hope:
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(not on timeline)

*Note: All dates are best estimates from scholars and archaeologists. Consider them all approximate.
Source: Bible Timeline from Rose Publishing.*

From Creation to the Promised Land

(Beginning of time - 1406 BC)

The books of Moses are rich with imagery foreshadowing Jesus, beginning with the earliest days of Creation, through the Patriarchs, the Exodus, and the wilderness wanderings.

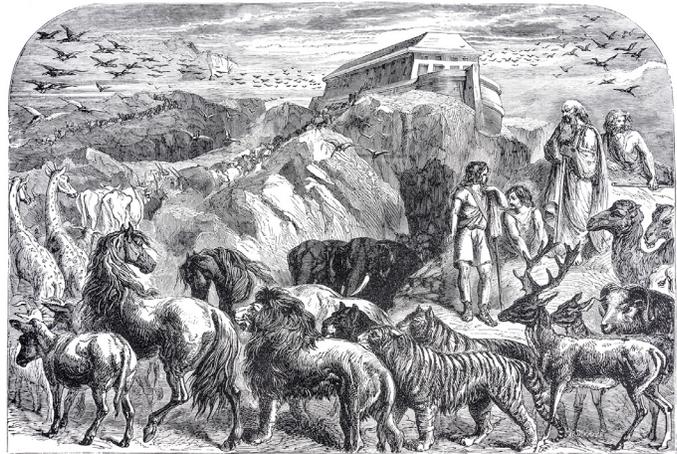
Consider these ancient examples.

- At least seven times the New Testament refers to the days of Noah. Think about Noah's Ark. No one survived the flood except those in the ark.

Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me."

The ark had many rooms to provide for every creature in it.

Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places. ... I am going away to prepare a place for you."



Engraving of animals entering ark

In Genesis, Noah's family stepped out of the ark onto a refreshed earth.

In Revelation, John saw a new heaven and a new earth where God lives with His people.

- How do we reach heaven? Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it (Genesis 28 - c. 1900 BC).

Jesus said (John 1:51), that angels would ascend and descend on the Son of Man. He is the way to the Father.

- God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt (Exodus chapters 5-15, c. 1446 BC). At that time, He instituted the Feast of Passover. Jesus was born to become the last Passover Lamb. At the Tabernacle, and later at the Temple, perfect animals were regularly sacrificed for their sins.

Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, willingly died for our sins, ending the requirement for sacrifices.

- God gave detailed instructions to build the Tabernacle (Exodus 25, from 8 - c. 1445 BC) where He would dwell in the midst of His people. People are physical and visual. They could sense His presence because of it.

Many years later, God sent Jesus to actually live among us.

Creation

Whispers of The Trinity

One of my favorite places to read the story of Creation is nestled in my children's beds with the *Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones. Her picturesque paraphrase of the Creation account, which she subtitled: "Song of Creation," begins with this loving image: "Like a mommy bird flutters her wings over her eggs to help her babies hatch, God hovered over the deep, silent darkness. He was making life happen." After saying 'Hello!' to the light, the day and night, all of the animals, and everything in between, "God saw all that He had made and He loved them. And they were lovely because He loved them."

But God didn't stop there. On the sixth day of creation, He created a people to be a reflection of Himself. I'm always struck by Genesis 1:26: "Let us make mankind in OUR image." Up until this point in the Creation account, you may have imagined God as a single, solitary being; or you may not have given much thought to His image other than Creator. But then, BOOM, you're hit with this possessive pronoun! ... God is not alone? He is in Relationship!

Colossians 1:15-17 says "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created. ... He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

The music of this glorious "song of creation" finds its sound in Christ. This amazing love story that begins in Creation is actualized for us "there, in the stable, amongst the chickens and donkeys and the cows, in the quiet of the night." And it is brought to its fullness in the hearts of all who receive and believe the message set forth in Ephesians 1:4 that "Before the world was made, God chose us in Christ." Through Him, we are invited into the Relationship!

Kimee Shideler is a daughter of God, wife to Joel, and mommy bird to three little chicks. She enjoys holding a space for others to become open and receptive to God's action in their lives as they align with their true identity in Christ. She does this primarily through the ministry of Holy Yoga.



Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ... And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

The Beginning

Colossians 1:15-17

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created. ... He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

c. AD 60–62, Paul

Hebrews 11:17-18, CSB

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He received the promises and yet he was offering his one and only son, the one to whom it had been said, "Your offspring will be traced through Isaac." c. 2066–1991 BC

John 3:16, CSB

For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. c. AD 85–95, John

Abraham & Isaac

Whispers of God the Father & His Son

I have always been awed by the story of Abraham. According to Galatians 3:6 and Genesis 15:6 Abraham’s faith was counted to him as righteousness. He was called to do what made no earthly sense: get up, leave his homeland, and move to a spot he had never seen. Abraham obeyed.

In Genesis 22, he was told to take his only son, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering. So early in the morning, Abraham took Isaac, his son, to do exactly that. Abraham said to the young men with him, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and WE will return to you.” Abraham had faith that God would provide a substitutionary sacrifice. As he stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son, the Lord called out to him and acknowledged his great faith and godly fear. God provided a ram in the thicket to offer as a sacrifice, instead of Isaac.

Verse 14 says that Abraham called the name of that place “The LORD Will Provide.” This whispers of Jesus for us. God provided for us, too. He willingly sacrificed His only begotten Son as a payment for our sin. He gave His Son to this world as a living example for us to follow. Jesus, the “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6), came to us as a babe in order to be numbered with transgressors, to bear the sin of many, and to intercede for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:12)

Thanks be to God, for the wonderful gift of His Son, Jesus, whose birth we celebrate, who showed us how to love and live, and who provided our redemption through His shed blood on the cross!



Catherine and her family, Mike, Valerie, and Meredith have been members of NFBC for six years. The entire family is very involved in the music ministries of the church. Catherine sings in the adult choir, plays in the adult handbell choir, and is director of the 4th-6th-grade children’s choir.

Joseph

Whispers of God's Plans for Good

Have you ever felt picked on? Did you ever think you got a “raw deal?” Sometimes we get the short end of the stick no matter what. Sometimes life just isn't fair.

Joseph certainly had those feelings. His own brothers tossed him in a cistern to die. When they realized they could profit from his misfortune, they sold him as a slave in country far from home. There, Joseph was falsely accused of raping his mentor's wife. So, he was tossed in jail. He interpreted the king's cupbearer's dream, asking in return that the cupbearer mention him to Pharaoh. The cupbearer forgot. Joseph remained in jail. Joseph got raw deal, after raw deal, after raw deal.

Like Joseph, Jesus' life was anything but a bed of roses. Jesus was also carried to a foreign land. His parents ran away with him because Herod plotted to kill him. His own people rejected him. They called him a traitor and a blasphemer. Because he taught the truth, Jesus was whipped and eventually killed by crucifixion.

We know how these stories end. God used Joseph to save from famine the very family who rejected him and nation who adopted him. God used Jesus to save his people from spiritual famine as well as all the people and nations who believe in and adopt him.

Through Joseph and Jesus, God shows us that He is at work in all things. He works in the ugly and the beautiful, the difficult and the easy, the blissful and the painful. He wants us to simply trust him through it all.

When life is ugly, trust Him.
 When life is beautiful, trust Him.
 When life is difficult, trust Him.
 When life is easy, trust Him.
 When life is blissful, trust Him.
 When life is painful, trust Him.
 Trust Him in all things.

Carol and Jim Bryson currently teach in the New Covenant department (Young Adults). They met in the NFBC singles group and married in our sanctuary in 1991. Both have been NFBC members for about 30 years. Carol and Jim have four children: Maria, Nick, Nadia and Alex.



Genesis 50:19-20

But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, ... you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.
 c. 1914–1805 BC

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law ...
 c. AD 48–55, Paul

The Joseph School was birthed from an NFBC mission trip following the devastating Haitian earthquake in 2010. Its mission is to educate students from among the poor and orphaned children of Haiti to lead their nation with the love of God. The school is named for Joseph, featured in this devotional, who overcame obstacles to save his family and his people from widespread disaster. God will use today's Joseph School children to be tomorrow's Haitian leaders.

Visit thejosephschool.org

Exodus 3:14

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"
c. 1446 BC

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
c. AD 26-30

I AM

Whispers of Jesus, the Way to God

Behold! One of my favorite words, especially around Christmas, is "Behold." It means "to see or observe something, usually something especially remarkable or impressive." The angel said to the shepherds, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10).

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, God called to Moses: "And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2). God said, "Go to Pharaoh and bring my people, out of Egypt."

Moses asked God, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask, 'What is his name?' what should I tell them?" God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you." (Exodus 3:13-14)

God didn't say "I was who I was." But He added: "this is my name forever." (vs. 15). Moses could tell the Israelites that God IS – a constant presence of love, mercy, and power.

Jesus' disciples wanted a glimpse of the Father. Jesus responded, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. ... whoever has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:6,9). Like His disciples, following Jesus is our way to know God, the great I AM.

During Christmas we celebrate that God has made a way. Because of Jesus, we don't have to live in our sin anymore. And we don't have to wait until heaven to feel His presence. We can live with God and know God right now. "And behold, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20)

Still today... "I AM WHO I AM."



Kaylee Dixon grew up in LaVergne, Tennessee and has gone to Nashville First since birth. She is currently a sophomore at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee. Kaylee worked this past summer as a staffer for CentriKid camps in Mississippi and absolutely loved it. Kaylee loves to take pictures, go to concerts, and do things with the BCM (Baptist College Ministry) in Cleveland!

The Bronze Serpent

Whispers of the Cross

In this first week of the Advent season, we are reminded of hope.

As Jesus speaks of Himself in John 3, He refers to a strange story in the Old Testament. The Israelites had been wandering for so long. Would it ever end? Would they be stuck in this desert forever or finally make it to the Promised Land? They were hopeless and grumbled – a lot. So, God sent poisonous snakes into their midst, magnifying the Israelites’ despair. Many people were bitten, many died. They came to Moses, repentant, and he cried out to the Lord on their behalf. God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it up on a pole. Anytime someone was bitten, all they needed to do was look at the bronze snake and be healed – God was unfolding His promise of salvation.



Modern sculpture of Bronze Serpent at Mt. Nebo in Jordan.

I used to gloss over John 3:14-15 looking ahead to more familiar verses. But, several years ago, I had the chance to stand on Mount Nebo in Jordan, the place where Moses looked into the Promised Land. Atop the mountain is a bronze serpent twisted into a cross with John’s verses engraved on the bottom: “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” There against the blue sky it was like God was shouting to me and to the nations, “Here is your hope! Here is your promise!”

The Israelites were looking for that promise of hope and relief from wandering and despair just as many of us are today. This Advent season may we find the hope and promise of Jesus, the Son of Man who was lifted up, as we continue looking forward to the day He comes again.

Mary Frances Satterwhite grew up at Nashville First Baptist and has many fond Christmas memories here. She works for Baptist Global Response and likes to read and crochet. She is married to Chuck, and they enjoy traveling around the world.



Numbers 21:8-9

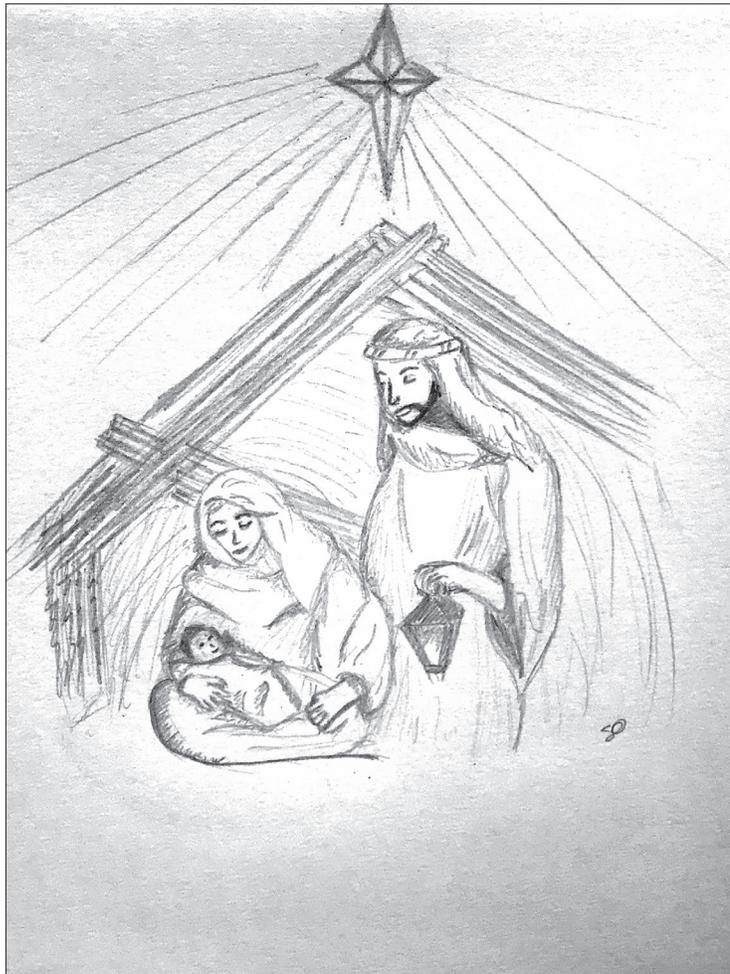
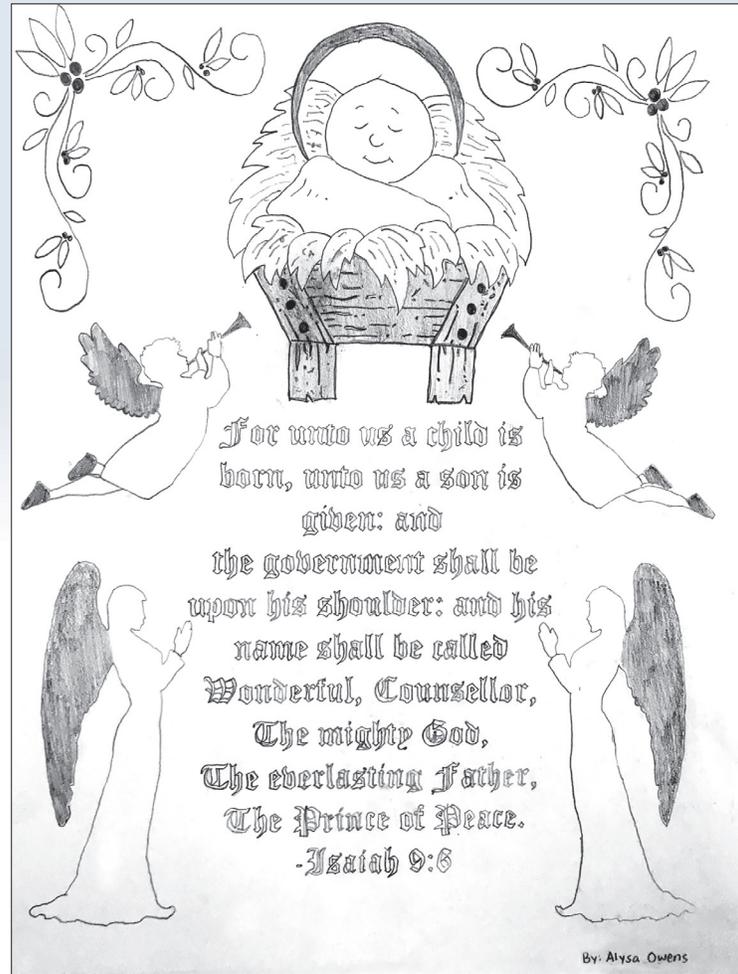
And the Lord said to Moses,
“Make a fiery serpent
and set it on a pole, and
everyone who is bitten,
when he sees it, shall live.”

So Moses made a bronze
serpent and set it on a pole.
And if a serpent bit anyone,
he would look at the bronze
serpent and live.
c. 1446-1406 BC

John 3:14-15

And as Moses lifted up the
serpent in the wilderness,
so must the Son of Man
be lifted up, that whoever
believes in him may have
eternal life.
c. AD 26-30

By Alysa Owens, 7th Grade



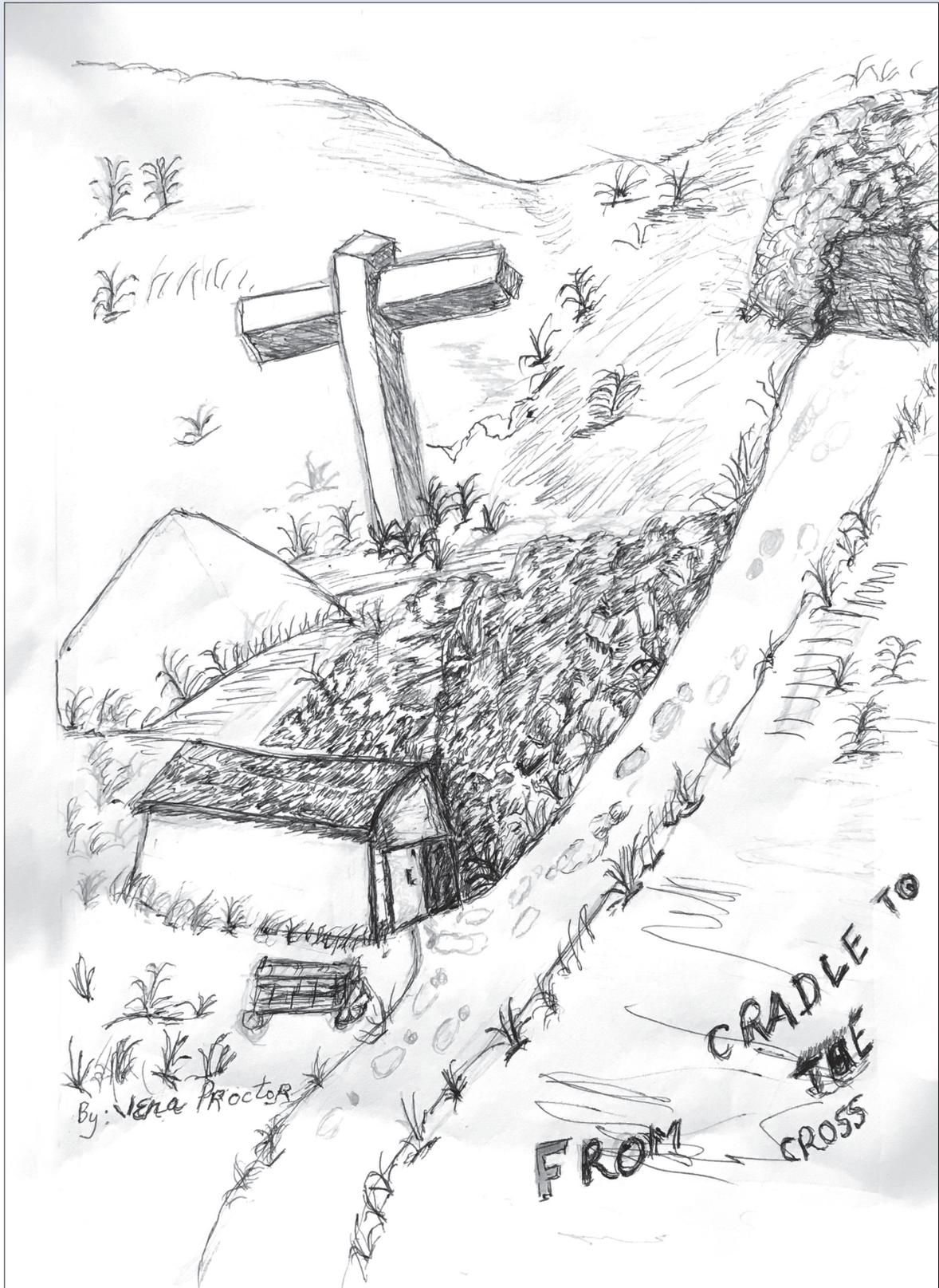
By Sara Owens, 10th Grade

Christmas Has Its Cradle

Christmas has its cradle,
where a Baby cried;
Did the lantern's shadow
show Him crucified?
Did He foresee darkly
His life's willing loss?
Christmas has its cradle
and Easter has its cross.

Words by Rae E. Whitney
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Christmas
ARTWORK



By Vena Proctor, 93 years old

The Promised Land through the Prophets

(1406 BC - 400 BC)

The historical narrative of the Old Testament is filled with priests and kings and prophets. In one way or another, they all point to the coming One. Jesus is the focal point of many images, symbols, and prophecies found in the centuries leading up to His coming – references to sheep and shepherds, vineyards, grain, wells, and other familiar elements of daily life in the land God had promised them. They whisper that our good shepherd, our redeemer, our great high priest and king, will come.

- David was the first king in the Messianic line (1011-971 BC). God promised that his kingdom would last forever because the Savior would come through his line. (2 Samuel 7:16) For hundreds of years, God’s people waited to see how that would happen.

That promise would be fulfilled in Jesus. In Revelation, Jesus says, “I, Jesus, ... am the root and the descendant of David.”

(Think about that!)

- Solomon built the Temple (966-960 BC). In the Temple was the Holy of Holies, God’s throne room. The Temple curtain separated this Holy Place from sinful people. Only the high priest could enter it, and he entered only once a year.

When Jesus died, the Temple curtain tore from top to bottom so that now we can now boldly approach the throne of grace. (Hebrews 4:16)

God’s people, those who loved and obeyed Him, longed for and watched for the promised Messiah.



Engraving of Solomon building the Temple.

Joshua

Whispers of Jesus' Strength

“**B**e strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them” (Joshua 1:6, NASB).

Joshua and Jesus, two individuals with the same Hebrew name – *Yeshua*, which means “God Saves.” Even though their earthly lives were separated by more than a thousand years, this call for strength and courage applied to both and to the same purpose. Joshua was facing conventional warfare to lead God’s redeemed people from slavery to conquer and possess the physical land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel. There was no room for weakness of character or lack of courage if he was to be successful.

The Old Testament Yeshua foreshadowed the New Testament Yeshua’s divine mission to conquer sin and death and lead the redeemed of all people groups into the eternal heavenly home promised by God. The infant Jesus/Yeshua, whose birth we celebrate, one day would be called upon to be “strong and courageous” to win an even more intense spiritual battle than the Old Testament Yeshua could imagine.

Yeshua Messiah would fast for 40 days and face extreme temptations; yielding to them would forfeit the mission before it started. He also struggled beyond what we can imagine in the Garden of Gethsemane as he pleaded, “Let this cup pass from me.” However, He was determined to secure the redemption price for all who believed in Him by his blood and lead them as a conqueror on a white horse to the praise and glory of God.

Let us also be “strong and courageous” to yield no ground to sin and to possess the spiritual inheritance promised to us through the one born and laid in a manger – Yeshua, our Lord.

Joshua 1:6, NASB

“Be strong and courageous,
for you shall give this
people possession of the
land which I swore to their
fathers to give them.”

c. 1406 BC

Matthew 1:21

“She will bear a son, and you
shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people
from their sins.”

c. 6–4 BC

Luke 9:51

When the days drew near for
him to be taken up, he set
his face to go to Jerusalem.

c. 26-30

Billy and Ruth Hoffman are from Texas. Billy was born a Texan. Ruth was born in New Orleans when her Texan parents were in seminary there. Ruth says she got to Texas as soon as she could and graduated from high school in San Antonio. Billy has been a church planter and Army chaplain and has worked at East Texas Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He retired from the International Mission Board in 2015 and is currently working with LifeWay and Reboot Alliance. Their daughter’s family lives in the Nashville area with their two grandchildren.



Daniel 3:25

He answered and said,
 “But I see four men
 unbound, walking in the
 midst of the fire, and they
 are not hurt; and the
 appearance of the fourth is
 like a son of the gods.”
 c. 605–535 BC

Luke 1:35

And the angel answered
 her, “The Holy Spirit will
 come upon you, and the
 power of the Most High will
 overshadow you; therefore
 the child to be born will be
 called holy—the Son of God.
 c. 6–4 BC

Daniel

Whispers of the Savior

Imagine—exiled at 15, you and your friends are taken to a foreign land and taught their language and culture. Your group quickly finds favor with the chief official. You are chosen to be leaders. How easily this could have caused a major ego inflation! However, this was not the case for Daniel and his friends Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach) and Azariah (Abednego). Faithfulness to their God was the foundation of their stories in the pages of Daniel.

At age 17, Daniel’s belief in a faithful God allowed him to search for and find meaning in a previously inexplicable and private dream, saving him and many others from death. His faithful God had rescued him.

Later, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship an idol and were thrown into the hottest fire imaginable to die. They were joined in the fire by “a son of the gods” – possibly a pre-incarnate appearance of the coming Messiah. Not only did they come out alive, they didn’t even smell of smoke. Their faithful God had rescued them.

In his early 80’s, Daniel was thrown into a lion’s den when he refused to cease praying and giving thanks to God. He didn’t even suffer a scratch, though he spent an evening with the lions. God rescued.

God rescues.

I recently read a children’s Bible storybook to my nieces and noticed its tagline: “At the center of the Story, there is a baby ... every single story in the Bible whispers His name.”*

The rescues portrayed in the book of Daniel foreshadow a Great Rescue yet to come. The miracles of protection and deliverance from certain death point toward the Salvation yet to arrive. The baby at the center of the story would appear, and we would be the receivers of His “Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.”* Jesus would come to rescue.

* Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (Grand Rapids, Zonderkidz, 2009).



Bethany Bedford was born in East Tennessee and raised by parents who love Jesus. Her relationship with Christ truly became real through camp ministry and mentorship in her early teens. After a few twists and turns along the way, God brought Bethany back to Nashville to put down roots. Bethany says, “God is so gracious to call me His, and I am so grateful to call Him mine!”

The Good Shepherd

Whispers He Knows Us

Frances and I are parents of four children. From their childhood to young adults they depended on us, and we lovingly provided all they needed. This was because of our relationship. The children were our own and we loved them and wanted them to have all that was necessary. And we still love them dearly.

In 23rd Psalm, David wrote: “The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I lack.” This describes a relationship that God wants with His people. The shepherd led his sheep to good pastures, saw that there was water, protected them, and went out to find any lost sheep. He knew their names. The sheep lacked nothing.

Who remembers Sunday School picture of Jesus with a lamb? We have this image of our Lord’s care for us. Isaiah wrote: “He protects His flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them in the fold of his garment ...” (Isaiah 40:1). God wants us to depend on Him more than anything else in the world.

Believers know that this Shepherd is Jesus; He said: “I am the good shepherd, I know My own sheep, and they know Me” (John 10:14). Here is a relationship that we don’t want to miss. If we know Jesus, He knows us. He knows our names. He knows what we need. Jesus continues: “As the Father knows Me ... I know the Father” (John 10:15). That’s a relationship that is ours as well.

Our Shepherd loves us. That’s why He was born. That’s why we sing:

*Savior, like a shepherd lead us, much we need Thy tender care, ...
Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus, Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.*

Ken and Frances Casey are proud South Carolinians. They have been members of Nashville First Baptist Church for six years and are members of the Heritage Sunday School Class. Their 60-year marriage has been one roller coaster ride after another. Thrilling and memorable. They have lived in four states, three foreign countries, and 30 houses. After retirement they worked in Alaska for five months. Ken is a veteran of the U. S. Air Force and spent a year in Korea. They are always ready for the next ride.



Psalm 23:1-3

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in
green pastures.
He leads me beside
still waters.
He restores my soul.
He leads me in
paths of righteousness
for his name’s sake.
c. 1041–971 BC

Philippians 4:19

And my God will supply
every need of yours
according to his riches in
glory in Christ Jesus.
c. AD 60-62

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
c. 760-673 BC

John 10:14-15

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
c. AD 26-30

The Wounded Shepherd

Whispers of Sacrifice

Shepherd and sheep shared a relationship in biblical times that was understood and accepted as perfectly natural because flocks and herds were strands in the fabric of life. We would not have heard Jesus with the same understanding as His disciples did when He said, *“I am the Good Shepherd and know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep”* (John 10:14-15 TLB). The disciples understood the link between a shepherd and his sheep and the responsibility that love laid on the shepherd. However, they still had not caught on to the fact that their shepherd was actually going to lay down his life for his flock—for them.

However, Isaiah understood. He clearly pulled aside the curtain of time and pointed to the future when he declared, *“But because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received. All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way. But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved Isaiah”* (53:6 GNT). Isaiah saw the good shepherd lay down his life centuries before the fact.

In Isaiah’s words we see the fleeting shadow of a future holy moment planned in the dawn of creation—a moment when eternity would intersect time and the voices of heaven would be awed into hushed silence, when the earth would shake and the sun would refused to shine. In that moment the Good Shepherd would become the sacrificial lamb and be wounded—not for wrongs he had done but for His love of the ones who had done them.

This Advent, may we love our Shepherd with fresh affection.



Bill Latham is one of our very senior adults and declares he has been a member of First Baptist Church since before dirt was invented. He says he finds difficulty expressing adequately his gratitude for the encouragement and support he and his family have received from fellow church members through the years and for the various responsibilities with which he has been trusted.

Prophecies

Whisper of Messiah's Work

Take a moment to reflect on the reason why God sent us His Son. If you're anything like me, your immediate answer might be something like "God sent us Jesus to die on the cross so we could have eternal life." That's the answer we find in the ABCs of becoming a Christian, it's taught in our Sunday School lessons, and it's even in the Christmas carols we sing!

We often forget that Jesus did not just come to die ... He came to live. As the prophet Isaiah foretold, the Messiah was sent to release the captives, to give sight to the blind, to free the oppressed.

While Jesus did spiritually free us from sin, He also quite literally fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy: His death freed the murderer Barabbas from prison (Matthew 27:11-26). He gave vision to the man born blind (John 9:1-12). He spoke out against oppression that labeled people as "other" and affirmed that salvation was for all of humanity, not just those at the top of the cultural food chain (John 4:1-42).

The Messiah was sent not only to deliver us to God's kingdom in the afterlife, but to initiate God's kingdom here on Earth. Through Jesus's ministry, we witness a mercy great enough to redeem even the most heinous criminal, a power strong enough to perform miracles, and a love wide enough bring every citizen of the world together as one people. Talk about good news!

As Christians, we are given the privilege to continue the Messiah's work of furthering God's kingdom on Earth. How does this responsibility change the way we live? As you enter your quiet time today, thank God for His gift of the Messiah and ask Him to provide opportunities to love like Jesus in the day ahead.

Annie Roberson is Barry and Susie Roberson's daughter and Lilly Roberson's sister. She is a lifelong member of Nashville First Baptist, where she grew up in the church's children, youth, and choir programs. You might have seen Annie around at summer children's events over the past few years; she served as a Children's Ministry Intern in 2015. A recent graduate of the University of Alabama, Annie currently lives in Fort Worth, Texas, completing an internship in preparation to become a board-certified music therapist, but misses her home church dearly!



Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound
c. 760-673 BC

Luke 4:16-18a,19-21

And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, ... to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."
c. AD 26-30

Christmas

MEMORIES

Mary Lea Roselle

How can I ever forget the sweet memory of Christmas 1973 at Nashville First Baptist! My daughter Christine was just turning six months old – such a precious time. Richard and I looked forward to her first Christmas and our first holiday season as a mother and a father. The church was adorned in lovely decorations giving us such a joyous spirit.

One of the Sunday night events centered upon the biblical account of Jesus' birth and included a manger scene. Surprisingly, however, there were no baby boys in the cradle roll that season. Guess who was chosen to fill that cradle in the manger in 1973? Yes – our little Christine was the Baby Jesus! She “performed” brilliantly with no cries or whimpers much to our relief!

We told her through the years: “You started out ‘holy’; let’s see what will happen next as the years roll by!!”

Megan Wilson

Every year as a kid I always looked forward to Christmas time at NFBC, and not just because of the Candlelight Service; I loved the Craft Your Christmas programs our members hosted, especially Headly McMains’s glass ornament-making class. He was a kind man who knew I would be back every year, and I still have all of the ornaments I made. Whenever I see them I remember him and the classes I took.

Sharron Lyon, Organist 1964-2004

One of my favorite memories is our Hanging of the Green service. It was “Mike” Newman’s idea, and it began a wonderful tradition for our congregation. She commissioned some of our artists and seamstresses to create and make the banners we still use today, and she established the entrance of the heavy garland with red bows to wrap around our sanctuary. It was Mark Edwards’ idea to have all the choirs sing “The Very Best Time of Year,” another long-held tradition. When social media became popular, one of our former children/youth would post the first line “Christmas trees and boughs of holly,” and others would follow with the next line, on and on. It was heartwarming for me to read the names and their memories of Advents past at Nashville FBC.

Hundreds of Kids

Begun in 1986, 29 Cookie Bakes at the home of Martha Kirkland (Ms. K) bring memories of preparing dough in mixing bowls, cookie cutters, flour fights, beautiful decorations, sweet aroma. Not to be forgotten: a quick run-through of Christmas anthems, and on-our-knees to pray in the living room. Several hundred names in the guest books ... including Gregory & Lauren Lewis; Drew, Caleb & Katelin Rankin; Jordan & Justin Hester; Jacob Meadors; and Lesley Ann Howell Owen.



Becky Brooks

For five years I have been blessed by my involvement with the NBA Christmas Toy Store. Hundreds of donations and much work by many volunteers often bring about happy and thankful smiles from parents who otherwise would have no gifts for their children. We who work together have a spirit of Christian fellowship that crosses church and cultural boundaries. We create a fantastic shopping experience. I love to see the completed displays before parents arrive. I love the exciting and noisy atmosphere as volunteers and shoppers come together to pick out just the right gifts. I am most blessed by knowing each shopper has had an opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ.

Sharon Herrera

The stained glass windows and beauty of Nashville First Baptist always invoke special feelings within me. My favorite Christmas moment occurs weeks before when the kids bring the Christmas Shoe Boxes to the front of the sanctuary. The large stack of boxes filled with care and love is beautiful, and those boxes are destined to go so far and do so much. I have been blessed to fill boxes and then to help distribute them in Romania, where I've seen the awe and gratefulness of kids who have so very little. To me those boxes are a symbolic reminder of the Greatest Gift of all, Jesus Christ, that God gave us at that first Christmas so many years ago.

Fran Hoogestraat

For my first six years of school, I had the great joy of attending a one-room schoolhouse of 16 students (grades 1-8) in rural South Dakota. We were like a family. Although I never actually read *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens, I heard older students read it aloud every winter.

We hosted our own Christmas program for our families on a snowy Christmas night in our schoolroom, complete with "concessions" (goodies baked by our mothers) that we sold back to them at intermission. Drama, Music, and Small Business experience all in one evening!

Kimee Shideler

I have a collection of favorite memories throughout my childhood that always include us being with extended family during the holidays. One particular Christmas when I was a preteen, I remember aunts, uncles, and cousins all piling into vehicles to go caroling to several older adults who were special to our family. I had such a feeling of warmth, peace and belonging. I'll cherish it always!

Billy and Ruth Hoffman

A special Christmas memory is having Christmas dinner with Russian, Ukrainian, and Indian friends in Richmond, Virginia. Our friends had planned to buy the food earlier in the day and didn't realize all the stores would be closed on Christmas Day. This meant that we ended up having a traditional Russian meal instead.



The New Testament

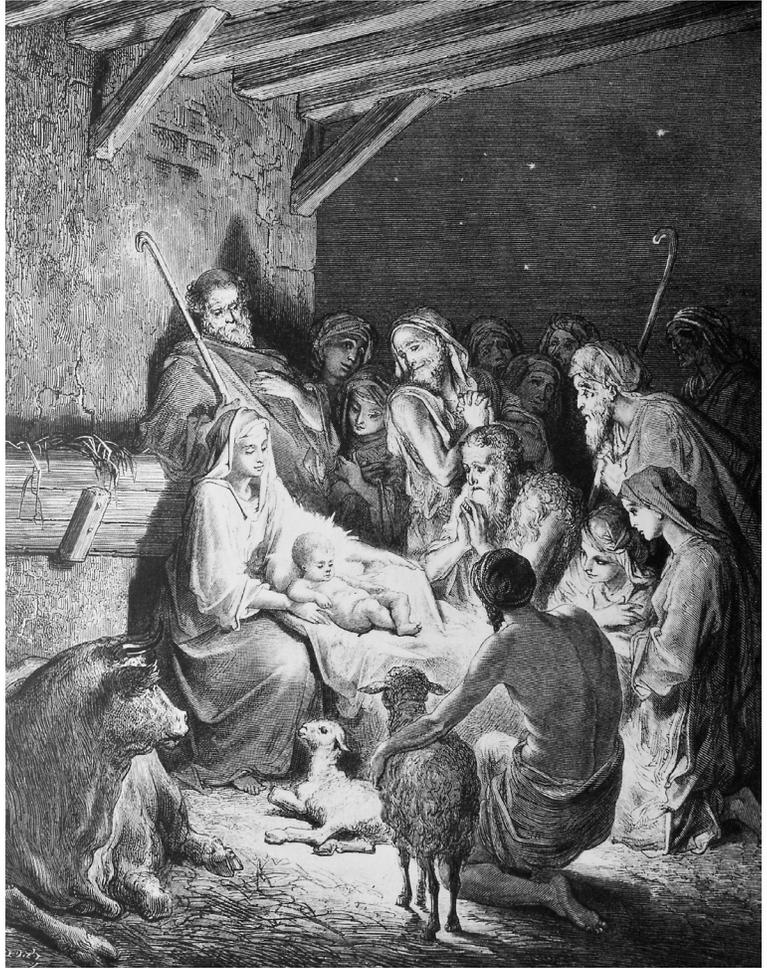
(6 BC- AD 70)

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law. (Galatians 4:4)

Luke 2 is the scene we most closely associate with Christmas. The birth of the Savior, the experience of the shepherds, and the song of the angels all speak to us each December. But it is good to remember that Jesus was more than a baby in the manger. He is the Messiah—the Savior who was born for the cross. Who was born to give us life!

The devotionals this week look back as they center around some of what Jesus did on earth – the whispers of the Old Testament in flesh. Others build anticipation for Christmas day, at the birth of the Messiah, who was present at creation while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy! (Job 38:7)

Hallelujah!



Engraving of Jesus' birth.

Simeon Believed

Whispers of the Comforter

Simeon knew the whispers – of a coming One. He looked forward to the comfort foretold by Isaiah. And then, when Mary and Joseph brought Baby Jesus to the Temple, Simeon recognized Him. Isaiah had said it:

(Isaiah 40:1-5, The Message) “Comfort, oh comfort my people,” says your God. “Speak softly and tenderly to Jerusalem, but also make it very clear that she has served her sentence, that her sin is taken care of—forgiven! She’s been punished enough and more than enough, and now it’s over and done with.” ... “Prepare for God’s arrival! Make the road straight and smooth, a highway fit for our God. ... Then God’s bright glory will shine and everyone will see it. Yes. Just as God has said.”

We all hurt, but not the same:

the boo-boos and broken arms of kids,
the heart pains of youth and young adults,
the stress and fear of sandwiched medians,
the bone pains and chest pains of the aged.

It seems each age,

each gender, each career,
each family situation, each individual

comes with a unique set of pains particularly suited to it.

And, often the pain comes from our own unique sins.

Isaiah, however, wants us

to be comforted,
to know our pain will end,
to rest in the fact that our sins are paid for.

And that’s not all –

One day in the future, or maybe even in the now, day-to-day,

the hills will be razed,
the valleys will be raised,
the peaks and depressions will be smoothed, made plains.

And then – (and here comes the really good part)

We’ll be able to see the glory, the power, the goodness of the Father, the Creator, the Comforter.

And Simeon knew that: “My eyes have seen your salvation, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

(Luke 2:30, 32)

Bob Grammer is a Professor of Biology at Belmont University. Grandson Cade is a student at Croft Middle School.



DECEMBER 17

Isaiah 40:1,3,5

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ...

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ...

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

c. 760–673 BC

Luke 2:30,32, CSB

For my eyes have seen your salvation. ...A light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel.

c. 6-4 BC

PRAYER: Father, thank you for the words of Isaiah, for noticing our pain, and for forgiving our transgressions through the baby so gently held in the arms of Simeon. Amen.

Exodus 16:4,6-7

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day." ... So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord."

c. 1446–1406 BC

John 6:35

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

c. AD 26-30

Manna in the Wilderness

Whispers of The Bread of Life

God has always provided for His people. In the Old Testament, Exodus 16:4, the Lord said to Moses, "I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day." In John 6:35, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

God has always provided for His people. Always! He provides for us – you and me – today just as He did to the Israelites in the desert and to the early day Christians as seen in John. Jesus Christ is our Bread of Life today! In 2018 He provides just as surely as He always has for His people. We may not always get all that we think we need at the time; but God, through our faith and trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, is providing what we need as we need it.

I have experienced this in my life. In October 2014, my husband passed away suddenly of a heart attack, leaving me with an 11-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son. More than at any other time in my life, I learned that the Lord provides "one day at a time" as the old gospel song says. The Lord provided for me and my children then and continues to do so today. I know that He will provide in the future if we continue to put our faith and trust in Him.

We sing a great hymn entitled "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah." One stanza says, "I am weak, but Thou Art mighty; hold me with Thy powerful hand; Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more." There is only one source of true joy, and that comes from feeding on the Bread of Life.



Carillon Bible joined Nashville First in 2003. She serves on the medical committee and is active in the Open Door Sunday School class. Carillon graduated from Belmont University School of Nursing and has been with Skyline Medical Group for 21 years. She is the very proud mother of Carrington (15) and Braxton (10).

The Seeking Shepherd

Whispers of Jesus

As we contemplate the question “Why was Jesus born?” it seems the answer is rather obvious. Jesus was born so He could take all our sin upon His shoulders and die the death we all deserve so we could wholly and unapologetically be in relationship with God. He came to take our place.

Jesus died and rose in such a way that it demands our attention, but He also lived a life that demands our attention. He showed us HOW to live. In Ezekiel 34, the Israelite leaders are admonished for living lives as shepherds who have not taken care of their sheep. Instead, these leaders took care of themselves and neglected to heal the sick, bind up the injured, and bring back the strayed. There was no grace in their rule, but force and harshness (v. 4).

BUT there is GOOD NEWS. GOD will be the shepherd of His people and will SEEK out His sheep (v.11). This, of course, foreshadows Jesus. Jesus sought out the lost, lonely, weak, injured, and sick sheep all throughout his ministry and He seeks US out now just as He did then.

Jesus was born, in part, to be God in the flesh so He could personally seek us out but also to show us what it looks like to seek out those around us. As the hands and feet of Jesus, too, we are tasked with being shepherds who seek out those who are lost, injured, and weak and walk WITH them as we let God guide them back to full health (v. 16). How are you being a good shepherd to those around you this Advent season?

Sonia Brady has been at Nashville First since fall of 2011. First moving to Nashville to go to graduate school at Vanderbilt, she is now in her second year of teaching physics and coaching track at Franklin Road Academy.



Ezekiel 34:15-16

“I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down,” declares the Lord God. “I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.”
c. 593-571 BC

Luke 19:9-10

And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since [Zacchaeus] also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”
c. AD 26-30

Luke 2:10

And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.
c. AD 57, Paul

Isaiah 12:3

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.
c. 760-673 BC

Joy

Whispers of Christ

“Joy to the World” is a glorious hymn that we all look forward to at Christmas. Even though Isaac Watts was originally writing about the second coming of Christ, the opening words of the hymn seem to perfectly describe our excitement over the birth of Jesus.

*Joy to the World, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King.*

There are many occasions for happiness in our lives, such as the graduation of a child, the achievement of a long-sought goal, or being cured of an illness. But lasting joy for those who follow Christ is more profound and brings a lifelong contentment to the soul. We can only experience this joy fully when we are walking closely with the Lord. Our relationship with Him will sustain us through many difficult and painful days.

In Luke 2:10, the angels predicted that Christ would be the source of our joy. They declared, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all people.”

Christ **wants** us to have joy, and He has given us a clear path for obtaining it. “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that **your joy may be complete.**” (John 15:10-11)

Paul also reminded us of this in Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” What **joy** we experience just knowing we will have eternal life.

This Christmas, once again, we celebrate the birth of our Savior. When we sing “Joy to the World,” we can rejoice with Watts when he proclaims, “Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!”



Judith and Don King moved from Falls Church, Virginia to Franklin, Tennessee in 2016, and joined Nashville First Baptist in January 2017. They feel very blessed to have found wonderful friends in the Encouragers Class, in the choir, in Don’s CLC group, and in other church activities. They have two married children. Judith has had a lifelong interest in arts and crafts. She was a potter for many years and now loves making quilts.

Jesus' Birth

Whispers of God's Love

Immediately following our wedding ceremony and reception, Kelly and I drove to Gatlinburg. Mentally reviewing our day, a thought came to my mind: "The two of you carry nothing to prove your recent nuptials." Our driver's licenses had different last names and home addresses, and we were traveling in a car borrowed from a friend.

Musing over our dilemma, I noticed my left hand was different. I was wearing a gold band on my ring finger, and Kelly wore the same, but smaller, ring just like mine. Both had been designed only for the two of us. We had placed these rings on each other's hands. They came with a blessing and announced we were wed to each other till death do us part. Such evidence bore witness to our marriage.

John's gospel (3:16) conveys evidence of God's love in the following three ways:

1. **God gave His only begotten Son.** Each word in John 3:16a amplifies a focus on grace through God's supreme gift. Carefully notice the absence of any conditions. Simply stated, such love prevails through Jesus Christ.
2. **God keeps His word.** How relevant for our times in days of frustration and seemingly lost hope. Isaiah's prophecy (7:14; 9:6-7) validated the coming of Christ.
3. **God receives all who believe.** A wide expanse of the holy offering is clearly expressed. His love reaches into the far country for the prodigal and even to Saul of Tarsus somewhere on the Damascus road.

Hopefully, during Christmas of 2018, we as a church family will trust His spirit to welcome again the miracle baby, Jesus Christ, who is the evidence of God's gracious love to all of us.

James Porch served as executive director/ treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention for 18½ years. Prior to that, he was a pastor in Tennessee and Mississippi. He has served as a deacon and on the Nominating Committee. He and Kelly have been married for 17 years. They are directors of the Pillars Sunday School Department. Kelly, a former teacher and tennis coach, is a deacon, usher, and a member of the Nominating Committee. Their grandson, Aaron, is a high school senior.



Isaiah 9:6-7

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given; and the
government shall be upon
his shoulder, and his name
shall be called Wonderful
Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of
Peace. Of the increase of his
government and of peace
there will be no end, on the
throne of David and over
his kingdom, to establish it
and to uphold it with justice
and with righteousness
from this time forth and
forevermore. The zeal of the
LORD of hosts will do this.
c. 760-673 BC

Isaiah 7:14

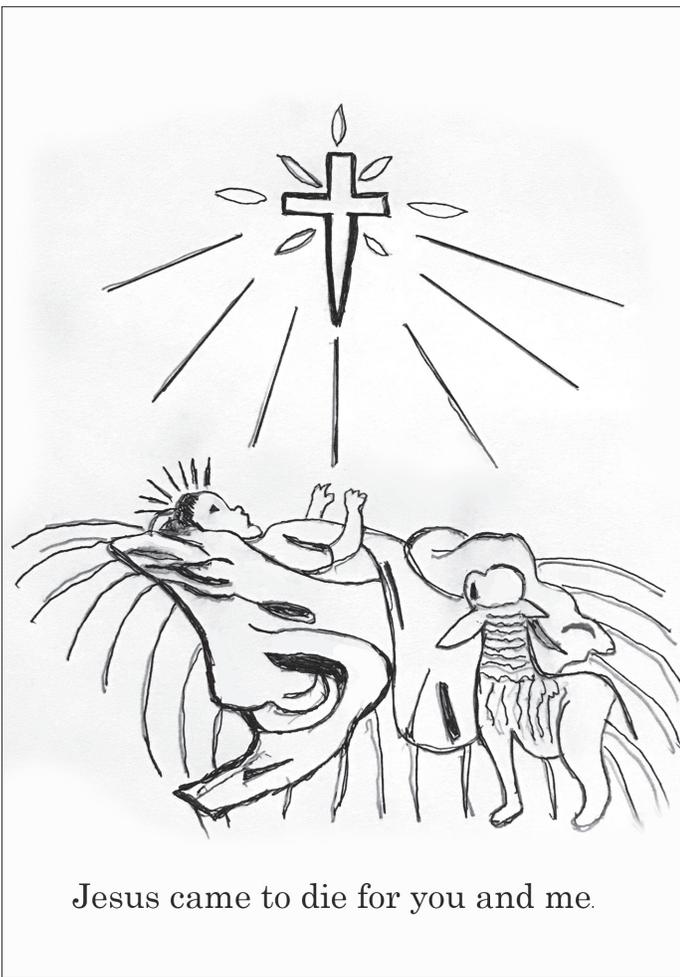
Therefore the Lord himself
will give you a sign. Behold,
the virgin shall conceive and
bear a son, and shall
call his name Immanuel.
c. 760-673 BC

John 3:16, CSB

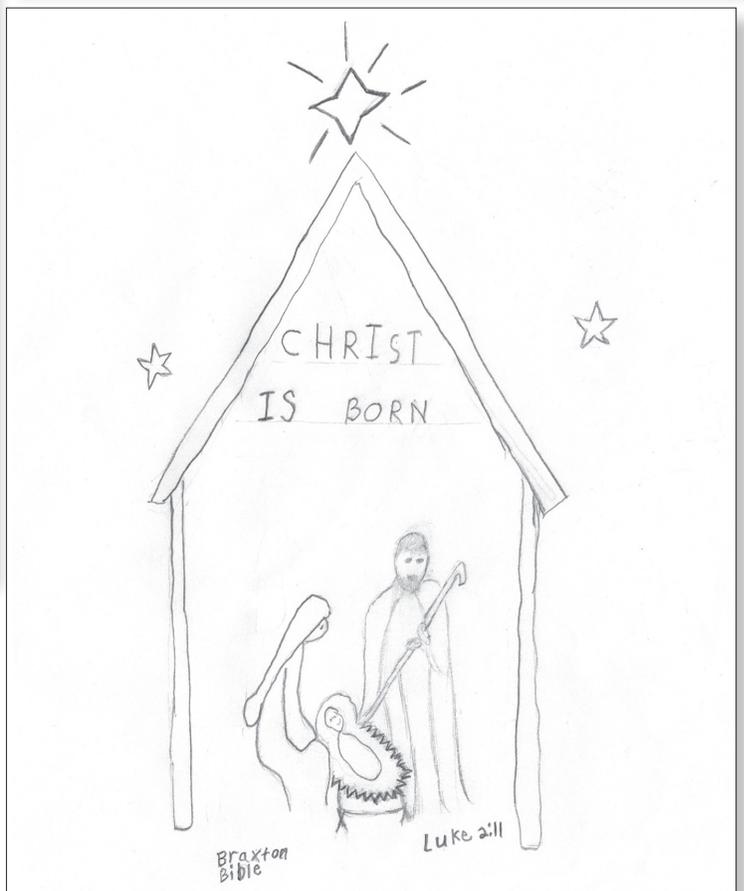
For God loved the world in
this way: He gave
his one and only Son,
so that everyone who
believes in him will not
perish but have eternal life.
c. AD 85-95



*“And the Angel Said”
By William Carver*

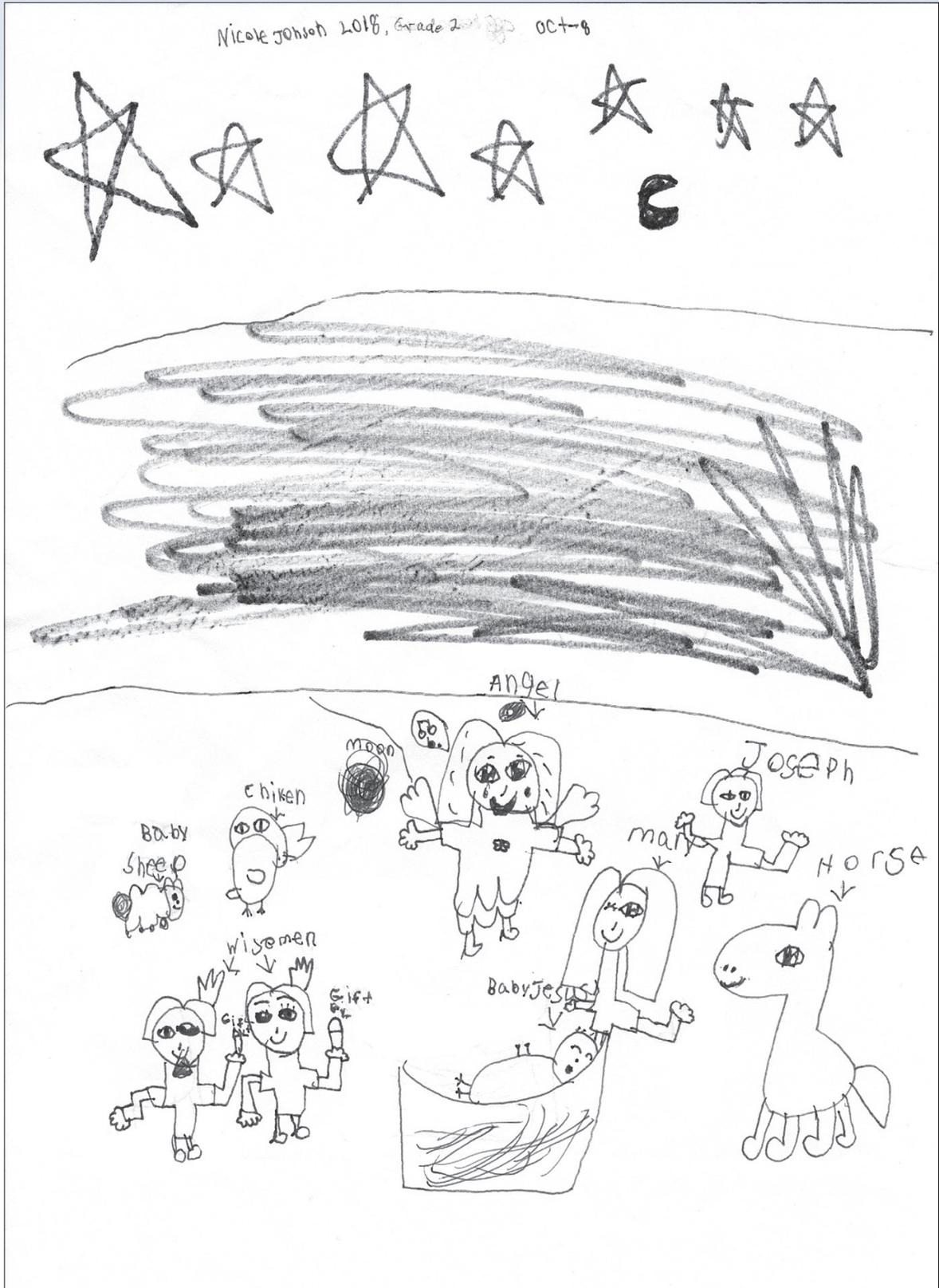


By Jerry Brown



By Braxton Bible, age 10

Christmas ARTWORK



By Nicole Johnson, Grade 2

The Second Coming

(WAITING AND WATCHING)

The gospels provide the clearest picture of who Jesus is and what He came to do. But it's easy to take those familiar stories for granted instead of remembering they weave an incredible story of the Creator coming to earth to live among and provide salvation for His creation.

The Book of Acts reveals how the Messiah's life was lived out by His people through the Church after He returned to heaven. By AD 70, many of the founding apostles, including Peter and Paul, had died. The early church was expanding throughout the world, and letters in the New Testament defined its teachings. Believers were living in difficult times (as are we). While we are 2000 years removed from Jesus' life on earth, we live with the same expectation as the early believers: Jesus' second coming.

Christmas revolves around the birth of the Savior. It's a great reminder that He became flesh to become one of us. However, Jesus' first coming is a prelude to His second coming. One day He will return as the conquering King! We will live with Him in the place He has prepared for us – a place of peace, joy, and love! Do you look forward to His return?



Engraving of Ascension of Christ

Blessed Hope

Whispers of Christ's Return

In the language of the New Testament, the word translated “waiting” usually implied a sense of eagerness. For the past several weeks, many of us have eagerly awaited the holidays so that we could spend time with family and friends. Children eagerly waited for the day to open gifts. Many eagerly awaited the hope that this season brings because of the soul-weariness that we have experienced this year as life unfolded with all of its ups and downs. These examples, common to all, illustrate the kind of waiting, the kind of eager expectation that marks our lives as Christ followers.

The eager anticipation of Christ's return does not happen without the practice of an intentioned will. That attitude which causes us to “listen for trumpets” is fostered only as a spiritual discipline. At times, it is hard and demanding work, but it cultivates the priceless characteristics:

- purity: *And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.* (1 John 3:3);
- comfort: *Comfort one another with these words.* (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18);
- joy: *Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.* (Romans 12:12);
- and spiritual confidence: *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil.* (Hebrews 6:19).

Eagerly expecting the return of Christ opens the way for God to train the hearts of Christians to live each day for Him. A positive attitude, a sense of optimism, or even wishful thinking are good characteristics, but they pale in comparison to the confidence that comes when our hope is in Christ. This kind of hope is a firm conviction that the future promises of God will be fulfilled.

Just as we have celebrated the whispers of God that pointed to the birth of Jesus, our Savior, I pray that this day you will be filled with the hope, the blessed hope, of His return.

Merry Christmas!



Frank R. Lewis

Pastor

Frank and Lori Lewis have been a part of our church family for 21 years serving as our Senior Pastor and First Lady.



DECEMBER 24

Titus 2:11-13

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, instructing us ... to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

c. AD 64-66, Paul

Nashville First Christmas Banners

A Short History

It was in 1986 that Mrs. “Mike” Newman was planning the Christmas program for the Children’s Choirs. She wanted the children to process into the Sanctuary following banners depicting the Christmas story but didn’t have the time to work on them before the program. Enter ... Debbie Pitts.

From Concept to Design

Hampton and Debbie Pitts had joined Nashville First Baptist Church in 1975. Debbie was an artist and sculptor who preferred working with materials rich in texture. Mike approached Debbie about developing a design and creating the banners. Debbie was ecstatic to help, and she immediately went to work.

The following weekend, at a couples’ retreat, Debbie, Hampton, and Pam Nixon, an excellent artist herself, spent their free time poring over hundreds of possible design ideas. Their charge: to depict the Bethlehem star, the heralding angels, the shepherds, the wise men, and Mary and Jesus in five banners. They quickly went to work, with Debbie sketching out designs that would translate well into felt or other fabric.

One of Debbie’s artistic attributes was the ability to work quickly. Another was her enthusiasm, paired with her amazing creative vision. To save time, Debbie considered gluing felt cutouts onto a banner background. Soon she and Pam had five promising designs. After they enlarged them to full-size, Debbie took her sketches and the enlargements to the church to cut out the templates on the big table that stands in the church foyer.

Mike Newman was amazed and delighted! She proposed another masterstroke: Mrs. Olive Ackland, who had grown up in Great Britain and had worked in a lace factory. Mrs. Ackland worked on the childhood clothes of Queen Elizabeth and is credited with embroidering the lace on Queen Elizabeth’s wedding gown.

Once Debbie and Olive were introduced, they both got very excited! Although two generations apart, they were of the same creative mind and heart. They immediately dropped Debbie’s “gluing” idea and focused on pulling together a team of seamstresses. They went out that very same day to acquire samples of the finest, yet affordable, materials—fabric that flowed and rippled to capture the rich and textured effect that Debbie most enjoyed.



Banners on display above Sanctuary Choir

Adding a ripple in a robe here and a curl in a cloak there, working with tassels, cords, and a wide variety of fabrics, the team quickly assembled five richly textured works of art that would be enjoyed for decades to come by worshipers during Advent at Nashville First Baptist Church.

The Final Touch

It was almost time for the initial presentation. The banners were fantastic, but the faces of the figures depicted in the banners were blank and lifeless. On the very last day, Debbie grabbed some makeup, artist pencils, and paints. With her characteristic “We can do this!” attitude, she sketched in the features you see on the faces today.

You May Not Know ...

The lowly shepherds and the noble wise men are mirror images of each other, reflecting the significance of the birth of Jesus to all people, regardless of their station in life.

On a lighter note, the complexions of some of the figures are enhanced with Debbie’s own rouge.

The original design called for a halo over Mary’s head, as is typically depicted in Renaissance art. However, Debbie removed the halo.

The banners were used during the first Hanging of the Green ceremony in 1988 and for more than 30 years since.

This history was written by Hampton Pitts, who enjoyed the love of Debbie for nearly 5 years of courtship and more than 35 years of marriage. It is dedicated to Mike Newman, Olive Ackland, all of those who worked on and helped preserve the banners, and the late Debbie Pitts, wife, mother, and artist extraordinaire.

Luke 2:8-11 (KJV)

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Matthew 2:1-2,9-10 (KJV)

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.



Nashville First Chrismon Tree

A Short History

In 1989, Wayne Jenkins was chairman of the Flower Committee. Wayne asked committee members Pam Sloan and Debbie Roach to make Chrismons for a Nashville First Baptist Christmas tree. Pam and Debbie recall the project.

Pam had seen Chrismon trees at St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church and First Baptist Shreveport. She contacted these churches, and each sent one of their ornaments as an example. St. Bart's ladies advised Pam on how to order the Styrofoam shapes. Pam and Debbie appealed to Nashville First Baptist's women for contributions of old costume jewelry. We had a wonderful response!

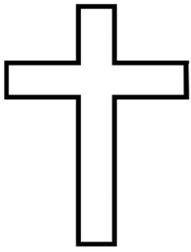
We began to research materials needed: gold lamé fabric, sequins, and pins. Then on Sunday and Wednesday nights, in Fellowship Hall, we held workshops for assembling the ornaments. Many ladies of the church created the ornaments you see on the tree in the church reception area. The published invitation to participate read: We want every family represented on our Chrismon tree! (Bring your own sewing scissors.)

The word Chrismon means "Christ's monogram." It is a symbol representing Christ. Chrismons are made of gold and white beads. White is the liturgical color for joy, purity, and perfection. Gold represents our Lord's majesty and glory. The evergreen Christmas tree is a symbol of God's constancy. The white lights on the tree represent Christ's presence as the "Light of the World."

Chrismons were first developed by Frances Spencer and the women of Ascension Lutheran Church of Danville, VA, in 1957.

Writers: Pam Sloan and Debbie Roach

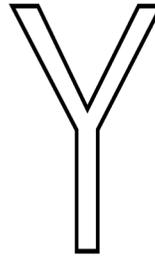
Below are some symbols that are common Chrismons and what they represent to Christians.



The Cross symbolizes that Christians believe Jesus Christ died for everyone on a Cross.



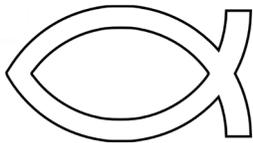
The Irish or Celtic Cross is a normal cross with a circle in the middle to symbolize eternity.



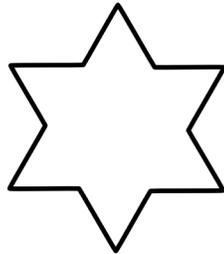
The Furca or Upsilon Cross comes from the Greek letter Y. It is also called 'The Thieves' Cross' from the two robbers who were crucified on each side of Jesus. It also symbolizes the choice between good and evil.



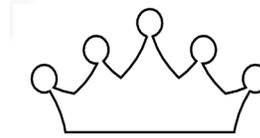
Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. Used together, they symbolize that Christians believe Jesus is the beginning and end of all things.



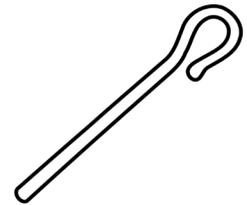
The Fish is one of the oldest Christian symbols. The letters, from the Greek word for fish (ichthys), stand for Jesus (I), Christ (X), God (Q), Son (Y), Savior (S). Some of Jesus' disciples were fishermen.



The Star of David, sometimes called the Star of Creation, is a symbol that Jesus was a Jew and a descendant of King David.



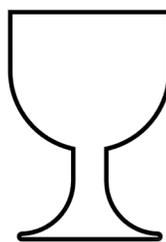
The Crown is the symbol that Jesus is King. It shows that Christians believe Jesus is ruler over heaven and the earth.



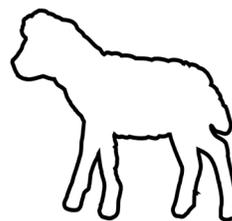
The Shepherd's Crook or Staff remembers that Jesus sometimes called himself a shepherd. It can also represent the shepherds who were the first people told about the birth of Jesus.



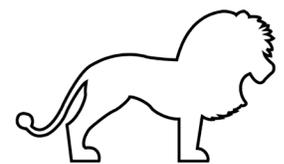
The Dove is the symbol of peace and the Holy Spirit. It is shown pointing down to represent the Holy Spirit that appeared as a Dove when Jesus was baptized.



The Cup or Chalice is a symbol of the Mass, Eucharist or Communion. It also represents God's forgiveness.



The Lamb is a symbol for Jesus who is sometimes called 'The Lamb of God'.



The Lion is a symbol for Jesus who is sometimes called 'The Lion of Judah'.

SCHEDULE OF HOLIDAY EVENTS

Sunday, November 25	Service of Remembrance and Hope	5:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 1	Nashville Christmas Parade Outreach	
December 2 – 9	Week of Prayer International Missions/Lottie Moon	
Sunday, December 2	Christmas at First	5:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 9	Christmas with Denver and the Mile High Orchestra	5:00 p.m.
Tuesday, December 11	TubaChristmas	11:00 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.
Sunday, December 16	Carol-Candlelight Celebration	5:00 p.m.
	Churchwide Fellowship	6:15 p.m.
Monday, December 24	Christmas Eve/Church offices closed	
Monday, December 24	Christmas Eve Communion Services	5:00 & 8:00 p.m.
Tuesday, December 25	Christmas/Church offices closed	
December 25–28	Silent Week	
Wednesday, December 26	No Evening Activities	
Tuesday, January 1	New Year's Day/Church Offices closed	
Wednesday, January 2	No Evening Activities	
Wednesday, January 9	Regular Wednesday Activities resume	

REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

Sundays	The Service of Word and Table	8:15 – 8:45 a.m.
	AXIS Students	9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
	Bible Study	9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
	The Sanctuary Service	10:30 – 11:30 a.m.
	The Fellowship on Broadway	10:30 – 11:30 a.m.
	Youth Choir Lunch / Youth Choir	11:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
	Sanctuary Ringers / Adult Handbells	12:30 – 1:30 p.m.
	Youth Handbells and Visual FX	1:30 – 2:30 p.m.
Wednesdays	Fellowship Supper	4:30 – 6:00 p.m.
	Children's Music (age 4 – grade 6)	5:40 – 6:30 p.m.
	Student Midweek	6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
	Sanctuary Orchestra	6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
	Mid-Week Prayer Service / Business Meetings	6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
	Kids on Mission / Mega Rec (age 3 – grade 6)	6:30 – 7:30 p.m.
	Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

For more information about the ongoing services and ministries of Nashville First Baptist Church, visit NashvilleFirst.org or call 615.664.6000.

The 2018 Advent Devotional Guide is a Christmas gift to your family from Nashville First Baptist's Devotional Service Group: Bob Bunn, Jerry Brown, Joy Fisher, Martha Kirkland, Fred Linkenhoker, Helen Owens, and Grace Wilkinson

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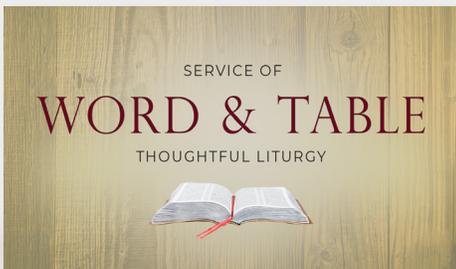
NOTE: Printed Scripture passages are taken from the English Standard Version or Christian Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.



NASHVILLE
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Join us for Worship

Sunday Mornings



Service of Word & Table
8:15 a.m. | Room 140

Thoughtful liturgy is centered around Scripture, and communion is served in a reflective atmosphere.



Fellowship on Broadway
10:30 a.m. | Fellowship Hall

In our contemporary service with a band, you'll experience great community, authentic worship, and Bible-based teaching in a warm and inviting atmosphere.



The Sanctuary Worship Service
10:30 a.m. | Sanctuary

Genuine worship experiences are richly shared through the powerful preaching of God's Word. Our choir and orchestra help lead believers in an inspirational time of worship with the Lord.

CONTINUING THE LIFE AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE

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The Advent devotionals in this book
can also be found on our FaceBook page
(Nashville First Baptist Church)
or on our website NashvilleFirst.org/Advent.