

"GOD AMONG US"

2025-St. John's Bible Challenge

"IF YOU ABIDE IN MY WORD, YOU ARE TRULY MY DISCIPLES, AND YOU WILL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE." JOHN 8

December 18- Colossians 1:15-22

What a beautiful picture of the preeminence of Jesus! He truly surpasses all others.... he is the image of the invisible God and He came with a great purpose. Our Jesus true God and true man from all eternity, came to earth to reconcile us to God the Father by his death on the cross. It is finish! The work of reconciliation is complete! And it is Jesus, the HEAD OF THE CHURCH who "holds all thing together." Jesus is still active and present. He cares- he cares for us, he sustains us, and he renews us!

December 19- Philippians 2:1-11

One word sums it up... HUMILITY. The same mind of Christ is the humble mind, wouldn't you say? It is the very model he set by his own life and example. Jesus left his rightful place to dwell among us. He came humbly as a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths. The same humility would lead him to "Serve rather than be served." In the greatest example of humility, Jesus would suffer and die for those underserving- you and me! He is truly the suffering servant as so rightfully described in Isaiah 53 and His name is truly, the name above every name- JESUS because he saves his people from sin!!

December 20- Luke 1:26-38

Mary.... One highly favored lady! have you every really thought about the spot Mary was in... what pressure, and yet she trusted and bore the Christ child into the world. You know, God is favored to do the same through us. He uses you and me to bear the Christ into the world through our spirit filled love and actions. It isn't easy, just as it wasn't easy for Mary. But friends, we aren't alone in it- God is with us. Perhaps at times we resist and we wonder, questioning capabilities. Nothing is impossible with God. Holy Spirit, Help us to get out of the way!

December 22-Luke 1:39-80

Isn't it awesome that John leapt for joy in the womb? A fetus was the first person to rejoice at the news of Jesus. Of course, John would testify to the life and ministry of Jesus through his own life and actions. There is much in this small little section of Luke's Gospel- Elizabeth, Zechariah, and John.... not only a gift to Elizabeth and Zechariah, but a true gift to all people in all places and all times because he prepared the way of the Savior. His pointing to the Savior brings to us joy as we consider the blessings bestowed on us through him; life and salvation, hope in disappointment, boldness and a renewed song to our lips!

December 23- Luke 2:1-7

For unto us a child is born.... (Isaiah 9) God is light, in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5), Jesus is the light of the World (John 8). And how the light of Christ burst in at just the right time. When you think about it, it was a time of uncertainty, one of unexpectedness... and God in the most unexpected way "wows" the world with Messiah's birth.... as a BABY in the humblest of beginnings. In comes the Christ as a child ... not as a mighty warrior or a king riding in on a chariot; but as a baby and this baby wrapped in swaddling cloth is JOY to the WOLRD! He is God's only son from heaven who came to save us!

December 27-Matthew 2:1-12

The visit of the wisemen. These Gentile wisemen probably came from Persia, Babylon, or Arabia. "Wise men" could be understood loosely as the "learned or those who were interested in dreams or Astrology." The wise men would have been acquainted with OT prophecy and thus made association with the coming of a Jewish King (Numbers 24:17) as they observed this "miraculous star." **The wise men are the first of many Gentiles to worship Jesus.** What about the arrival of the Magi.... it is believed months if not up to two years before they arrived to worship Jesus (based on Herod directive to kill baby boys up to two years old).

<https://witness.lcms.org/2010/the-visit-of-the-magi-fact-or-fiction-12-2010/>

Although the names of the Magi aren't mentioned in the Bible, tradition holds their names to be Melchior, Casper, and Balthazar. Tradition further holds that the wise men would have come from Persia, India, and Arabia (representing ALL NATIONS) and the gifts they brought were gold (symbolizing- Kingship), Frankincense (symbolizing prayer / divinity), and Myrrh (symbolizing Death / embalming).

December 29- Luke 4:16-21

A most remarkable quote in this section of Scripture from Isaiah 61:1-2! The year of the Lord's favor has come! Jesus is the fulfillment of all that Scriptures of Old pointed to! Of course in speaking this, the message was not well received. He was rejected just as he would later be rejected by many and led straight way to the cross for the sin of the world.

December 30-Revelation 21:1-5

A perfectly restored creation.... just as God intended at the time of creation before the fall into sin. Jesus is the victor over sin, death and the devil and because of Jesus all things will become new... a new and final creation will come through him when he comes again! Then and just then there will be NO MORE sin only complete and perfect peace in the presence of God and one another.

Of course the new creation has begun already, in us by way of our baptism and in the daily living out of our baptism (Romans 6). We die and rise each day, and as we do, God re-creates us.... he changes us and empowers us to live as his children!

Believers too know the benefits of the new creation in death- the culmination of our baptism; Jesus surely makes all things new when we close our eyes only to experience heaven's surprise no more suffering, no more death, only joy in the unspeakable bliss of heaven forever. Surely he has wiped away tears from the eyes of his own who have died in the faith.

Good things to come ALWAYS with Jesus!

January 1- Romans 5:6-11

What a beautiful picture of God's love, his grace, his mercy and his unconditional drive for us to know the gifts of his death and resurrection. While we were still sinners.... think about that! It might be more bearable to die for a "good" person, but here Jesus dies for the disobedient! He didn't die for those who helped him- no, he died for sinners. and by his death we are made right in the eyes of God. The guilty are declared innocent. THAT'S GRACE. Undeserved Love!

January 2- Galatians 4:4-7

Because Jesus has died for us, we are declared sons and daughters. This communicates something really powerful to us. Our faith in Jesus is RELATIONAL. We are his and we are heirs of the remarkable goodness of his grace! As sons and daughters, there is nothing that can separate us from his love (Romans 8). And as his sons and daughters, he gives to us the Holy Spirit to empower us to live as God's dear children sharing the love we have received and carrying his forward in our own lives!

January 3- Colossians 2:13-15

We who were dead to sin are made alive by the one who died and rose. We have been given a second chance. A new life!! The record of our sin has been nailed to the cross! Cancelled, just as if it never happened. The one from all eternity, born of the virgin accomplished this just for us! He did it all for you and me! WHY?

BECAUSE HE LOVES US!