

“Advent”

Week #4

Introduction

This week concludes our study of Matthew’s account of the advent of Christ. In our culture, the end of the Christmas story usually focuses on a starlit manger with angels singing and wise men worshipping. But Matthew’s account continues beyond these pleasant scenes to a time when Herod pursues the Christ child with the intent to kill him, and in so doing takes many innocent lives. This study examines the tension we find between the beauty of God’s gift against the backdrop of a broken and sinful world.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

Have you ever discovered something beautiful or valuable in a place you would least expect to find it?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

Q1. Read Matthew 1:22-23; Matthew 2:13-23; Matthew 2:8

In the first chapter of his gospel, Matthew traced the birthright of Jesus through Joseph, establishing Jesus as a descendant of both Abraham and David. What prophetic credential did Matthew also include in Mat 1:23? Herod told the wise men he wanted to worship the newborn king (Matthew 2:8). What in fact was his true intent? (Matthew 2:16) As the powerful tyrant faced off against the newborn messiah, it would appear that Herod had the upper hand. But even before he could make a move, how did God intervene to protect Jesus? (Mat 2:13) Have you seen God intervene on behalf of yourself or another, to provide protection from impending disaster?

Q2. Read Matthew 2:5-6, 14-15, 17-18, 23; Jeremiah 31:10-17

Matthew is diligent to connect the birth of Jesus with the fulfillment of prophecy. What four prophetic details did he confirm in this chapter? (Matthew 2:5-6, 14-15, 17-18, 23) Perhaps the most disturbing of these is Mat 2:18 because it refers to Rachael weeping for her children because “they are no more.” Without the context of the original prophesy it might appear that God allowed the death of these children in order to fulfill the prophesy. This is not the case. How would you summarize the situation described in Jeremiah 31:10 -17 and what was God’s promise to His people in verse 16? Although Matthew

references the fulfillment of this when Herod kills the children of Bethlehem, in its original context Rachael’s weeping was for the Israelites taken into Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah’s prophecy promised, “They shall come back from the land of the enemy.” How does Jesus arrival on earth also make a way for those who would believe in Him to be delivered from their enemy?

Q3. Read Isaiah 9:2, 6; John 1:4-5; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 1:7

We live in a fallen, broken world that needs deliverance from captivity to sin. God’s solution was to send Jesus, but not through violence, shame, anger or even humanitarian efforts. How is Jesus’ presence described in Isaiah 9:2, 6, and John 1:4-5? Jesus stepped into this world to call us out of darkness and to bring light and hope to all. (1 Peter 2:9) If we walk in His light, what are we promised in 1 John 1:7? In recognition of the great gift God has offered us, take a moment to silently pray, confess and thank God for being your light in the darkness and healing for your soul.

Wrap-Up

When we hear the story of God coming near it forces us to ask, “How will we solve the problem of sin and evil in our own lives?” Will we recognize our need of a Savior? Christ is born in each of us by His Spirit when we recognize Him as Messiah. There is more than a historical Bethlehem where Jesus came in the midst of violence, pain, and suffering to heal. There is also a spiritual Bethlehem where Jesus comes near to the broken, sinful, areas of our lives to heal us. When Jesus comes, will we worship Him as Lord, or try to remove him? Will we make room in our life or turn him away?

Memory Verse

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

Isaiah 9:2 ESV

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life and other needs (see space to write on back).

Challenge:

Shine the light of Jesus into the light of someone who is walking in darkness.

Q1.

Matthew 1:22-23 ESV - 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

Read Matthew 2:13-23 in your Bible

Matthew 2:8 ESV - 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

Matthew 2:16 ESV - 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

Q2. Matthew 2:5-6, 14-15, 17-18, 23 ESV - 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" ... 14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." ... 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more." ... 23 And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Jeremiah 31:10-17 ESV - 10 "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.' 11 For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. 12 They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more. 13 Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into

joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. 14 I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the LORD." 15 Thus says the LORD: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." 16 Thus says the LORD: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. 17 There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country..

Q3

Isaiah 9:2, 6 ESV - 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. ... 6 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.

John 1:4-5 ESV - 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

1 Peter 2:9 ESV - 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 John 1:7 ESV - 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Prayer Notes cont.
