ADVENT JOURNAL

SIGNS AND SHADOWS

WHAT GOD PROMISED HE HAS DONE



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What God Has Promised He Has Done

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

Each day follows this same four-part rhythm:

THE SHADOW

What God revealed through His promises, prophecies, and pictures in Scripture.

THE FULFILLMENT

How that promise finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

How this truth gives us hope as we await Christ's return and the renewal of all things.

JOURNAL QUESTION

A personal question that invites reflection, prayer, and response.

The goal of this journal is to help you see that the Bible is telling one unified story: God promised a Redeemer, sent His Son, and will bring His people into the fullness of His promised kingdom.



WEEK 1

THE SEED

PRIMARY TEXT

Genesis 3:15

THEME

The promised Rescuer who would defeat the serpent

The story of redemption begins in the aftermath of humanity's rebellion. Sin has entered the world, fellowship with God is broken, and death now awaits humanity. Yet in the very place where judgment is pronounced, God speaks a promise: a descendant of the woman will come to crush the serpent. Before humanity can repair what has been broken, God declares what He will do. The first promise of redemption is an act of divine grace.

DAY 1

A WORLD BROKEN

Read Romans 5:12–21

THE SHADOW

God created humanity to know Him, enjoy Him, and live under His good rule. But Adam and Eve believed the serpent's lie and rebelled against their Creator. Sin brought shame, alienation, and death into God's good creation. Every generation since has lived with the consequences.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus entered the broken world that sin had ruined. Unlike Adam, He obeyed the Father perfectly. Where humanity failed, Christ remained faithful. He came not merely to improve a broken world, but to rescue sinners and begin the work of making all things new.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

Our world is still marked by suffering, injustice, and death, but brokenness will not have the final word. Christ will return to remove the curse and renew creation. Advent teaches us to be honest about the darkness while refusing to believe that darkness is the end of the story.

JOURNAL QUESTION

Where do you most clearly see the effects of sin and brokenness in your life or the world? How does the promise of Christ's redemption give you hope?

DAY 2

A PROMISE IN THE GARDEN

Read Genesis 3:14–24

THE SHADOW

God announces that the offspring of the woman will bruise the serpent's head, even as the serpent bruises His heel. From the beginning, God reveals that evil will not triumph forever. A coming descendant will enter the conflict and secure the serpent's defeat, though victory will come through suffering.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus is the promised Savior who enters the conflict with sin, Satan, and death. At the cross, He suffers for His people, bearing the judgment their sin deserves. Through His death and resurrection, He decisively defeats the powers that held humanity captive.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

Although Satan's defeat has been secured through Christ, we still experience temptation, suffering, and spiritual conflict. One day, the victory accomplished by Jesus will be fully displayed. Evil will be judged, the curse will be removed, and God's people will live in unbroken peace.

JOURNAL QUESTION

When you face the reality of sin or spiritual struggle, how does remembering that God promised a Rescuer before humanity could rescue itself change the way you respond?

DAY 3

THE PROMISE CONTINUES

Read Genesis 12:1–3, Galatians 3:8–16

THE SHADOW

God calls Abraham and promises that through his offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed. God's plan is larger than one person, one family, or one nation. He is establishing a people through whom His saving purposes will reach the world.

THE FULFILLMENT

Paul identifies Christ as the promised offspring through whom God's blessing comes to the nations. Through faith in Jesus, people from every tribe and nation receive the blessing of Abraham: forgiveness, the gift of the Spirit, and a place among God's people.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

The gospel continues to gather people from every nation into the family of God. One day, this redeemed multitude will stand before the throne and worship the Lamb together. God's promise to bless the nations will be seen in its fullness.

JOURNAL QUESTION

How does God's plan to bless the nations through Christ reshape the way you view people who are different from you or do not yet know Jesus?

DAY 4

THE VICTORY OF THE SEED

Read Hebrews 2:14–18, Colossians 2:13–15

THE SHADOW

The promise in Eden anticipated a victory that would come through conflict and suffering. The serpent would wound the coming Rescuer, but that wound would not prevent His triumph. God's plan was never to ignore evil but to overcome it.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus took on flesh and blood, sharing in our humanity so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death and deliver those held in lifelong slavery to fear. At the cross, what appeared to be defeat became the means of victory.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

We still face death and grieve those we lose, but death no longer has the final claim over those who belong to Christ. The resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of His people. The last enemy will be destroyed, and life with Christ will never end.

JOURNAL QUESTION

What fear or burden becomes different when you remember that Jesus has already won the decisive victory over sin, Satan, and death?

DAY 5

THE SEED HAS COME

Read Galatians 4:4–7, Luke 1:26–33

THE SHADOW

Generation after generation waited for God's promised Rescuer. The promise spoken in the garden echoed through the covenant with Abraham and the hope of Israel. God's people could not bring the promised Savior into the world by their own strength. They had to wait for God to act.

THE FULFILLMENT

In the fullness of time, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law. The promised Rescuer came not as an earthly conqueror seeking human glory, but as the Son who humbled Himself to save His people and bring them into God's family.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

Those who belong to Christ are already God's adopted children, but they still await the full experience of their inheritance. We look forward to resurrection, the end of sin's presence, and the joy of living with our Father forever.

JOURNAL QUESTION

What difference does it make to know that your salvation began with God's gracious promise and action, rather than your ability to make yourself right with Him?



WEEK 2

THE STAR

PRIMARY TEXT

Numbers 24:15–19

THEME

The promised King who would rise and reign

As Israel journeyed toward the promised land, a pagan prophet named Balaam was summoned to curse God's people. Instead, God placed a blessing in his mouth and revealed a future King. A star would come from Jacob, and a scepter would rise from Israel.

The star becomes a picture of God's sovereign faithfulness: no enemy, curse, or human scheme can prevent Him from accomplishing what He has promised.

DAY 6

A BLESSING NO CURSE CAN UNDO

Read Numbers 22:1–6, Numbers 23:19–24

THE SHADOW

Balak, king of Moab, feared Israel and sought to have Balaam curse them. But God would not allow His covenant people to be cursed. Balaam declared that God is not a man who lies or changes His mind. What He has promised, He will do.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's faithfulness to His promises. At the cross, He bore the curse of the law for His people so that the blessing promised to Abraham might come to the nations. God's blessing rests on His people not because they are deserving, but because Christ has acted on their behalf.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

The church may face opposition, suffering, and uncertainty, but nothing can overturn God's saving purpose. He will preserve His people and complete the work He began. Our confidence rests not in favorable circumstances but in the unchanging character of God.

JOURNAL QUESTION

Where are you tempted to measure God's faithfulness by your circumstances? What promise of God can you hold onto when circumstances seem uncertain?

DAY 7

A STAR WILL RISE

Read Numbers 24:15–19

THE SHADOW

Balaam prophesies that a star will come out of Jacob and a scepter will rise out of Israel. The language points to a coming ruler whose power will extend beyond the immediate circumstances of Israel. God's people can look forward to a King who will overcome His enemies and establish His rule.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus is the promised King from Israel. The New Testament connects His birth with the hope of a ruler arising from God's people. The wise men who follow the star in Matthew's Gospel come seeking the King of the Jews. Their journey shows that the promised King is worthy of worship beyond the borders of Israel.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

Jesus reigns now, but His kingdom has not yet been revealed in all its fullness. We await the day when every enemy is defeated, every injustice is answered, and the rightful King is acknowledged by all creation.

JOURNAL QUESTION

What competes with Jesus for authority over your heart? How might remembering that He is the promised and rightful King change your priorities?

DAY 8

THE KING FROM BETHLEHEM

Read Micah 5:2–5, Matthew 2:1–11

THE SHADOW

Micah prophesies that a ruler will come from Bethlehem, a seemingly insignificant town. This ruler's origins are from ancient days, and He will shepherd God's people in the strength of the Lord. God's promised King will not necessarily arrive according to the world's expectations of greatness.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus is born in Bethlehem, just as the Scriptures anticipated. He is both the promised descendant of David and the eternal Son who comes to shepherd His people. The wise men recognize that the child is worthy of worship, while the contrast with Herod reveals the difference between worldly power and the reign of God's true King.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

The Shepherd-King will gather His people and bring them into lasting security. We look forward to the day when His people will no longer be scattered by sin, fear, or death, but will live safely under His perfect care.

JOURNAL QUESTION

Where might you be overlooking God's work because it seems small, ordinary, or unimpressive? How does the birth of Jesus challenge your expectations of greatness?

DAY 9

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Read John 1:1–9, Isaiah 60:1–3

THE SHADOW

Throughout Scripture, light represents God's life, truth, salvation, and presence. Isaiah speaks of nations coming to God's light. The darkness of sin is real, but God promises that His light will arise and draw the nations to Himself.

THE FULFILLMENT

John identifies Jesus as the true light who gives light to everyone. The eternal Word enters the darkness of our world, revealing God and bringing life. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

The day is coming when God's glory will illuminate His people forever. Revelation describes the New Jerusalem as a city that needs neither sun nor moon, because the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp.

JOURNAL QUESTION

What darkness in your life or in the world feels overwhelming? How does Jesus as the true light give you a hope that circumstances cannot extinguish?

DAY 10

THE KING OF EVERY NATION

Read Psalm 72:1–19, Revelation 7:9–12

THE SHADOW

Psalm 72 describes a king whose reign is marked by justice for the poor, deliverance for the needy, and blessing for the nations. The ideal king would bring righteousness and peace that extend to the ends of the earth.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus is the greater King whose reign fulfills this hope. He welcomes the needy, proclaims good news to the poor, and gathers people from every nation through His saving work. His kingdom is not built through human conquest but through His sacrifice and resurrection.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

One day, people from every tribe, language, people, and nation will worship before the throne of God and the Lamb. The promise of a worldwide kingdom will be fully realized, and the redeemed will rejoice together in the presence of their King.

JOURNAL QUESTION

How does the promise of people from every nation worshiping Jesus challenge the way you think about the mission of the church and your part in it?



WEEK 3

THE CROWN

PRIMARY TEXT

Isaiah 9:1–7

THEME

The promised Son who will reign with righteousness and peace

Isaiah speaks to a people walking in darkness, facing fear and uncertainty. Into that darkness comes a promise: a child will be born, a Son will be given, and the government will rest upon His shoulders. His names reveal His greatness, and His kingdom will have no end.

The crown reminds us that Christmas is not merely the arrival of a baby. It is the coming of the rightful King.

DAY 11

PEOPLE WALKING IN DARKNESS

Read Isaiah 9:1–2, Matthew 4:12–17

THE SHADOW

Isaiah speaks to people living under the weight of darkness and oppression. Their circumstances seemed to contradict the promises of God, yet the prophet declared that a great light would dawn. The hope of God's people depended on His intervention, not their ability to escape darkness by themselves.

THE FULFILLMENT

Matthew connects Isaiah's prophecy to the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus comes into a darkened world proclaiming the kingdom of heaven. His presence brings the light of God's truth and the hope of salvation to those who cannot save themselves.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

We still experience the darkness of suffering, sin, and injustice. But Christ will return, and His light will fill the renewed creation. The darkness we see today is temporary; the glory of His kingdom will endure forever.

JOURNAL QUESTION

Where do you most need the light of Christ today? What would it look like to trust His presence even before your circumstances change?

DAY 12

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

Read Isaiah 9:6, Luke 2:1–14

THE SHADOW

Isaiah declares that a child will be born and a Son will be given. The promise combines the wonder of a human birth with the gift of a King whose names reveal divine wisdom, power, and peace. God's answer to humanity's darkness would come through a child He Himself gives.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus is born in Bethlehem, taking on true humanity without ceasing to be the eternal Son of God. The angels announce His birth as good news of great joy: a Savior has been born, who is Christ the Lord. God's promised King has entered His creation.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

The child born in Bethlehem will return in glory. The One who came in humility will be revealed as King over all. His people will see Him face to face and share in the life of His everlasting kingdom.

JOURNAL QUESTION

What does the humility of Jesus' birth teach you about the character of God and the way He chooses to save His people?

DAY 13

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD

Read Isaiah 9:6, John 1:1–5, 14

THE SHADOW

Isaiah's promised Son is given names that go far beyond an ordinary earthly ruler. He is Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God. The coming King will possess the wisdom to rule rightly and the power to accomplish God's saving purposes.

THE FULFILLMENT

John reveals that Jesus is the eternal Word who was with God and was God, and who became flesh and dwelt among us. In Jesus, God's wisdom and power are revealed in person. He does not merely point us toward God; He makes the Father known.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

We live in a world filled with confusion, competing voices, and powers that fail us. But Christ's wisdom will never be exhausted, and His power will never fail. In the renewed creation, His people will enjoy the fullness of life under His perfect rule.

JOURNAL QUESTION

Where are you relying on your own wisdom or strength instead of looking to Christ? How does His identity as Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God reshape your trust?

DAY 14

THE GOVERNMENT ON HIS SHOULDERS

Read Isaiah 9:6–7, Luke 1:30–33

THE SHADOW

Isaiah promises a ruler whose government will increase without end. His kingdom will be established with justice and righteousness, and His peace will endure. Unlike earthly rulers whose reigns are fragile and temporary, this King's authority will not fade.

THE FULFILLMENT

The angel Gabriel announces to Mary that her Son will receive the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob forever. Jesus is the promised King whose authority is grounded in God's covenant faithfulness. His kingdom is established through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

Christ reigns now, but we still pray for His kingdom to come in its fullness. We await the day when every form of injustice is removed and His righteous rule is openly acknowledged throughout creation.

JOURNAL QUESTION

Where are you struggling to surrender control? What would it mean to live this week as someone who trusts the reign of Jesus more than your own ability to manage life?

DAY 15

A KINGDOM WITHOUT END

Read Hebrews 12:25–29, Revelation 11:15

THE SHADOW

God's people have always lived among kingdoms and powers that appear strong but eventually fall. The prophets promised a King whose reign would not be destroyed. God's kingdom would outlast every earthly authority.

THE FULFILLMENT

Through His resurrection and ascension, Jesus is enthroned as Lord. His kingdom cannot be defeated by human opposition or spiritual powers. Those who belong to Him receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, not because of their own strength, but because their King is faithful.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Every rival authority will end, and God's people will enjoy the peace and security of His unshakable reign.

JOURNAL QUESTION

What temporary source of security are you tempted to treat as permanent? How does belonging to Christ's unshakable kingdom change the way you face uncertainty?



WEEK 4

THE BRANCH

PRIMARY TEXT

Isaiah 11:1–10

THEME

The promised King who brings life, cleansing, and restoration

The image of the Branch is one of the most beautiful pictures of hope in Scripture. A tree has been cut down, leaving only a stump. What once stood tall appears lifeless. Yet from that stump, a shoot emerges.

God promises that a descendant of Jesse will rise to reign in righteousness. Through Him, God's people will be restored, the nations will find hope, and creation itself will experience peace.

The Branch reminds us that God can bring life where we see only loss. What appears to be the end is not beyond His power to redeem.

DAY 16

A SHOOT FROM THE STUMP

Read Isaiah 11:1–5

THE SHADOW

Jesse was the father of King David, and Israel's royal line was supposed to flourish under God's covenant promises. Yet because of sin, judgment, and the failure of Israel's kings, that royal line looked like a tree cut down. Isaiah promises that a shoot will emerge from Jesse's stump. God will raise up a King whose reign will be marked by the Spirit, wisdom, righteousness, and faithfulness.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus is the promised descendant of David who fulfills God's covenant purposes. He does not establish His reign through the corruption and pride that marked so many earthly rulers. Filled with the Spirit, He judges rightly and faithfully accomplishes the Father's will. What appeared impossible to accomplish through Israel's failing kings, God accomplishes through His Son.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

We still live in a world where brokenness can make restoration seem impossible. But Christ will finish what He has begun. The renewal He brings will extend beyond individual hearts to the restoration of God's people and, ultimately, the whole creation.

JOURNAL QUESTION

Where in your life are you tempted to believe that something is too broken for God to restore? How does the image of a shoot growing from a stump encourage you to trust Him?

DAY 17

THE RIGHTEOUS BRANCH

Read Jeremiah 23:1–6, Luke 1:68–75

THE SHADOW

Jeremiah condemns Israel's shepherds for scattering and neglecting God's people. Yet God promises to raise up a righteous Branch from David's line who will reign wisely, execute justice, and bring salvation. God's answer to failed leadership is not simply a better human effort, but a King who will perfectly fulfill His calling.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus is the righteous King and faithful Shepherd. Unlike leaders who use others for their own benefit, He gives Himself for His people. He is the Son of David who brings the righteousness we lack and delivers us from the guilt and power of sin. In Him, God keeps His promise to provide a King who will save and shepherd His people.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

Christ will gather His people from every place and bring them into the fullness of His kingdom. There will be no corrupt shepherds, no injustice, and no abandonment. His people will be secure under the care of their perfectly righteous King.

JOURNAL QUESTION

Where are you most aware of your need for Jesus to be both your righteous King and faithful Shepherd? How can you rest in His care today?

DAY 18

THE BRANCH WHO CLEANSES

Read Zechariah 3:1–10, Hebrews 9:11–14

THE SHADOW

In Zechariah's vision, Joshua the high priest stands before the Lord wearing filthy garments. Satan accuses him, but God rebukes the accuser and commands that Joshua's guilt be removed and clean garments be given to him. God promises the coming of His servant, the Branch, and the removal of the land's iniquity in a single day.

The vision reveals both the seriousness of sin and the wonder of God's grace: cleansing must come from God Himself.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus fulfills the hope of the Branch as the One who both represents His people and provides the sacrifice that cleanses them. Unlike Joshua, who needed his own guilt removed, Jesus is the sinless High Priest who offers Himself for sinners. Through His blood, He secures forgiveness and cleanses the conscience of those who trust Him.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

Those who belong to Christ are already justified and cleansed before God, yet they still experience the struggle against sin. One day, Christ will complete His sanctifying work. His people will stand before Him without the stain of sin, clothed in the righteousness He has provided.

JOURNAL QUESTION

When you become aware of your sin, are you more inclined to hide, defend yourself, or turn to Christ? How does God's gracious cleansing in Jesus give you confidence to come to Him honestly?

DAY 19

THE BRANCH WHO REIGNS

Read Zechariah 6:9–13, Hebrews 7:23–28

THE SHADOW

Zechariah is instructed to place a crown on the head of Joshua the high priest and announce the coming of the Branch. This promised figure will build the temple of the Lord and bear royal honor, sitting and ruling on His throne while serving as priest. The prophecy looks forward to a King whose reign and priestly work will belong together.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus brings together what the Old Testament anticipated: He is the promised King and the great High Priest. He builds His church, represents His people before the Father, and accomplishes redemption through His once-for-all sacrifice. He does not merely rule from a distance; He has drawn near to save His people and now intercedes for them.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

Jesus' priestly work is complete, and His intercession never fails. We look forward to the day when the people He has redeemed will worship Him in the presence of God, with no remaining guilt, separation, or need for another sacrifice.

JOURNAL QUESTION

How does knowing that Jesus is both your reigning King and your great High Priest change the way you approach God when you feel weak, guilty, or discouraged?

DAY 20

ABIDING IN THE TRUE VINE

Read John 15:1–11, Revelation 22:1–5

THE SHADOW

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people are pictured as a vine that He planted and cared for, yet they repeatedly failed to produce the fruit He desired. The imagery reveals humanity's need for a source of life greater than itself. God's people cannot flourish apart from His sustaining grace.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus declares, "I am the true vine." He is the faithful Son who accomplishes what God's people could not. Those who belong to Him receive life through union with Him. Spiritual fruit does not establish our acceptance before God; it grows from the life Christ gives and sustains.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

The life we receive from Christ now will be enjoyed without hindrance in the world to come. Revelation's picture of the river of life and the tree of life points toward the abundance, healing, and communion that will characterize the New Jerusalem. The life begun in Christ will never end.

JOURNAL QUESTION

Where are you trying to produce spiritual fruit through your own strength? What would it look like to depend more intentionally on Christ as your source of life?



WEEK 5

THE CITY

PRIMARY TEXT

Revelation 21:1–22:5

THEME

The promised home where God will dwell with His people forever

The final image gathers the whole story into one glorious vision. The Seed has defeated the serpent. The Star has risen. The King has received His throne. The Branch has brought cleansing and life. Now we see the destination toward which all these promises were pointing.

The Bible begins in a garden where humanity is driven from God's presence because of sin. It ends in a city where God's redeemed people dwell with Him forever. What was lost through rebellion is restored through Christ, and what God began in the garden reaches its fullness in the New Jerusalem.

For Christmas Eve, this is the culminating truth: Jesus came not merely to visit our world, but to redeem a people for God's eternal dwelling place.

DAY 21

GOD DWELLING WITH HIS PEOPLE

Read Exodus 25:1–9, John 1:14

THE SHADOW

God instructed Israel to build the tabernacle so that He might dwell among His people. The tabernacle was a tangible sign of His presence, but access was restricted because of sin. Sacrifices, priests, and sacred spaces reminded Israel both of God's nearness and of the separation sin had created.

THE FULFILLMENT

John declares that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus is the true presence of God among His people. In Him, God comes near, reveals His glory, and makes a way for sinners to be reconciled to Himself. Through Christ, we receive access to the Father.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

Revelation 21 announces that God's dwelling place will be with humanity. The presence that was pictured in the tabernacle and revealed in Jesus will be enjoyed fully and forever. There will be no separation, no barrier of sin, and no fear of being cast out from God's presence.

JOURNAL QUESTION

How does the promise that God will dwell with His people forever change what you most look forward to about eternity?

DAY 22

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

Read John 1:1–18, Luke 2:1–20

THE SHADOW

God's promises throughout the Old Testament created an expectation for the One who would bring His saving purposes to completion. The prophets spoke of a coming King, a suffering Servant, and God's presence among His people. Yet the precise wonder of the incarnation remained beyond their full understanding: God the Son would truly become human.

THE FULFILLMENT

In Jesus, the eternal Word takes on flesh. The One through whom all things were created enters the world He made. He comes in humility, born into an ordinary human family, yet He is the glory of God revealed to us. The manger is not the story of God becoming less than God; it is the story of God the Son taking on our humanity to save us.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

The incarnation guarantees that God's redemption is not an escape from His creation but its renewal. Jesus rose bodily from the grave, and His people will also be raised. We look forward to a renewed creation where redeemed humanity will live with God in the fullness of His presence.

JOURNAL QUESTION

What does the incarnation reveal about how far God was willing to go to rescue sinners and bring them into fellowship with Himself?

DAY 23

THE LAMB WHO WAS SLAIN

Read Isaiah 53:4–12, Revelation 5:1–14

THE SHADOW

The sacrificial system taught God's people that sin brings guilt and death and that forgiveness requires atonement. Isaiah also spoke of a Servant who would bear the sins of many, be wounded for their transgressions, and yet see the fruit of His suffering. These pictures pointed toward a sacrifice that could truly deal with sin.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He bears the judgment His people deserve, dies in their place, and rises in victory. In Revelation, the Lamb who was slain stands at the center of heaven's worship because His sacrifice has ransomed a people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

The New Jerusalem will be a city of redeemed people whose hope rests entirely on the Lamb. Sin and death will be gone, and worship will never be interrupted by suffering or separation. The cross will forever stand as the display of God's justice, mercy, and saving love.

JOURNAL QUESTION

How does seeing Jesus as the Lamb who was slain deepen your gratitude for the cross and reshape what you consider worthy of your worship?

DAY 24

BEHOLD, I AM MAKING ALL THINGS NEW

Read Revelation 21:1–8, Romans 8:18–25

THE SHADOW

The Old Testament repeatedly anticipates a future when God will restore His people and renew the world. Isaiah speaks of new heavens and a new earth, and the prophets envision peace, righteousness, and the removal of sorrow. These promises reveal that God's saving purpose reaches beyond individual forgiveness to the renewal of His entire creation.

THE FULFILLMENT

Jesus' resurrection is the beginning and guarantee of this renewal. Through His victory over death, the new creation has begun. Those who belong to Christ are new creations, reconciled to God and given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of their inheritance. Yet the world still groans, awaiting the fullness of what Christ has secured.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

God promises a new heaven and a new earth. Death, mourning, crying, and pain will pass away. God Himself will wipe away every tear, and the curse that entered through sin will be no more. The story ends not with God's people abandoning creation, but with God renewing it and dwelling with His people.

JOURNAL QUESTION

What present sorrow or brokenness do you most long to see made new? How does God's promise of a renewed creation help you live with both honesty about suffering and confidence in His faithfulness?

DAY 25

THE CITY, THE RIVER, AND THE TREE OF LIFE

Read Revelation 21:9–22:5, Genesis 2:8–10, Genesis 3:22–24

THE SHADOW

The Bible begins in a garden filled with life, beauty, and God's presence. But sin brings exile, and humanity is barred from the tree of life. From that moment onward, the story of Scripture is shaped by the need for redemption and restoration. The garden's loss creates a longing for the day when God's people will live with Him without fear of judgment or separation.

THE FULFILLMENT

Through Jesus, the way back to God is opened. He bears the curse, defeats death, and reconciles sinners to the Father. The promises of Scripture find their yes in Him. The child in the manger is the Lamb who was slain, the King who reigns, and the Savior through whom God's people receive eternal life.

THE PROMISE AHEAD

John sees the New Jerusalem descending from heaven. The river of life flows from God's throne, the tree of life bears fruit, and the curse is gone. God's servants see His face, His name is on their foreheads, and they reign forever. The story that began in a garden ends in a restored creation filled with God's glory.

This is the destination of redemption: not merely that we escape judgment, but that we enjoy God forever. Every sign, every shadow, every promise has been pointing toward this glorious reality.

JOURNAL QUESTION

When you picture the New Jerusalem, what fills you with the greatest longing? How does the certainty of God's promised future change the way you want to live today?



CLOSING REFLECTION

THE STORY GOD HAS WRITTEN

THE SEED. THE STAR. THE CROWN. THE BRANCH. THE CITY.

Five images. Five themes. One unfolding story of redemption. The God who spoke in the garden is the God who made a covenant with Abraham. The God who promised a King through the prophets is the God who sent His Son in the fullness of time. The God who raised Jesus from the dead is the God who has promised to make all things new.

Christmas is the declaration that God has acted in history to accomplish what He promised. We do not have to wonder whether He is faithful. We look to Jesus Christ—His incarnation, His life, His death, and His resurrection—and see the faithfulness of God on display.

And because God has kept His promises, we can trust Him with the promises that are still ahead.

We wait for the day when the serpent's defeat is fully revealed, the King's reign is acknowledged by all, the Branch's restoring work is complete, and the city of God becomes the eternal home of His redeemed people.

Until that day, we remember what God has done, we worship the One who came, and we live in hope of the One who is coming again.

The signs have pointed to Him. The shadows have given way to the Savior. The promise has come in Christ. And the story will end in glory.

Come, Lord Jesus

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