

December 21/22, 2024

"Christmas 2024"

Pastor Aaron Buer



SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

December: Read Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Haggai to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

Day 1 [Luke 1:26-38](#) | Mary

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.
Luke 1:38

In this pivotal moment, an angel's announcement changes everything. Mary, a young woman from an ordinary town, receives extraordinary news that will shake the foundations of history. Gabriel's greeting—that God highly favors her—troubles her deeply. But what follows is even more astonishing: she will bear the Messiah promised throughout Israel's history. When Mary asks how this can be, given she is a virgin, Gabriel explains that God's own Spirit will carry out this miracle. Her response, "I am the Lord's servant," reveals remarkable faith in the face of news that would upend her entire life.

Mary's response is a testament to her faith and obedience. Her acceptance and surrender to God show us the power of saying "Yes" to God, even when we don't fully understand his plans. Her story also encourages us to trust God's promises and embrace our calling with courage and faith. God doesn't require perfect understanding—but faith and willing obedience. When we respond like Mary did, saying yes to God's purposes, we take part in his ongoing work of redemption through Jesus.

TODAY: As we head into this Christmas week, consider how God may be inviting you to trust him more fully. Write it down, then pray Mary's words: "I am the Lord's servant." Ask God to show you what it means to trust and serve him as you head into Christmas.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Habakkuk 1](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Consider Jesus's perfect trust in God's timing ([John 2:4](#)).

Day 2 [Luke 1:46-56](#) | Mary's Song

He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors." Luke 1:54-55

Mary responds to the angel's news with a song overflowing with praise and anticipation of God's promised work. Rather than shrinking from the magnitude of what God is doing, she magnifies him, celebrating how he sees the humble and fills the hungry with good things. Her song culminates in praising God's faithfulness to his covenant promises made to Abraham. She celebrates what God has done *and* what he is about to do. Her words express deep trust and profound joy as she looks forward to how God will fulfill his promises through the child she carries. She stands at the threshold of God's greatest intervention in human history and responds with worship.

On this Christmas Eve, we stand between promise and fulfillment, too. Like Mary, we can praise God for his faithfulness while anticipating his future work. Her song reminds us that the same God who kept his promise by sending Jesus will keep all his promises. The assurance of God's steadfast love and faithfulness is a source of comfort and hope for us today. In times of uncertainty or difficulty, we can trust that God is with us, fulfilling his promises and extending his mercy. As we await tomorrow's celebration of Christ's birth, we look forward with hope to his return and the completion of his redemptive work.

TODAY: As you anticipate tomorrow's celebration, write your own song of praise following Mary's pattern. Begin with what God has done, then express your hope for what he will do. Share this with your family or friends during Christmas Eve activities, letting Mary's spirit of joyful anticipation shape your celebration.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Habakkuk 2](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Focus on living by faith, quoted in [Romans 1:17](#).

Day 3 [Luke 2:1-20](#) | Jesus's Birth

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. Luke 2:17-19

Today, we celebrate the birth of Jesus! We remember how Mary and Joseph journeyed to Bethlehem, where she gave birth to the Savior of the world in humble circumstances. While no room was available in the inn, God orchestrated every detail—from the location fulfilling prophecy to the shepherds who came to worship. Mary continues with steadfast faith despite the difficult circumstances. Amid these extraordinary events, Mary treasures and ponders everything in her heart, showing how to respond to God's amazing work.

On this Christmas Day, we are also called to pause and reflect deeply on God's gift to us. As celebrations begin and presents are opened, Mary's example challenges us to take time to treasure the true meaning of Christmas. Like her, we can ponder the incredible reality that God became human, entering our world as a baby, all to accomplish our salvation. The busyness and excitement of Christmas can easily distract us from the wonder of what God has done. Yet, today of all days, we should follow Mary's example of deep reflection and worship. The shepherds rushed to tell others what they saw, but Mary took time to ponder—both responses honor God and show us different ways to celebrate his gift.

TODAY: Before your or even during your Christmas celebrations, find a few quiet minutes alone. Follow Mary's example by treasuring and pondering Christ's birth. Write down what amazes you most about God becoming human. Let this reflection deepen your worship and joy today.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Habakkuk 3](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note complete trust despite circumstances ([Matthew 26:39](#)).

Day 4 [Luke 2:22-40](#) | In the Temple

"For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." Luke 2:30-32

Mary and Joseph bring the infant Jesus to the temple to dedicate him to the Lord according to Jewish law. They encounter Simeon and Anna, two faithful servants of God. Moved by the Holy Spirit, Simeon takes Jesus in his arms and praises God, recognizing him as the promised Messiah who will bring salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. Simeon also warns Mary that her journey as Jesus's mother will include deep sorrow, foreshadowing Jesus's suffering. Anna, an elderly prophetess serving God day and night, also recognizes Jesus and begins

telling others how he will bring redemption. These temple encounters confirm Jesus's identity and mission and Mary's witness to God's plan.

We, too, must wrestle with the full implications of Jesus's life and suffering. Like Mary, our faith journey includes both joyful praise and painful challenges. Simeon's prophecy reminds us that Jesus came for blessing *and* sacrifice, bringing salvation to the world. Sometimes, embracing God's larger purposes means accepting difficult paths we wouldn't choose for ourselves. Like Mary, we are called to witness and share in Jesus's mission to the world.

TODAY: Look at your current challenges through the lens of God's larger purposes. Use Mary's continued trust in God to form a prayer: "Father, help me trust you even more as I continue to deal with _____. Help me trust you like Mary, fully convinced of your love and work in my life and the world. Thank you again for the birth of Jesus. Amen."

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Haggai 1](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Consider Jesus as the true temple ([John 2:19-21](#)).

Day 5 [John 19:25-27](#) | The Cross

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son." John 19:25-26

Simeon's prophecy about a sword piercing Mary's soul reaches its fulfillment at the cross ([Luke 2:35](#)). While most of Jesus's disciples flee and hide, Mary remains at the cross. She watches what she never could have imagined as Jesus suffers and dies to provide salvation to all who will believe in him. Jesus, even in his agony, shows care for his mother by entrusting her to John's protection (the "disciple whom he loved"). This scene powerfully shows the cost of God's redemptive plan and Jesus's perfect love as he provides for his earthly mother while completing his divine mission of salvation.

The manger ultimately leads to the cross. Like Mary, we must face the full reality of Jesus's sacrifice. Her presence at the cross challenges our tendency to keep Christmas sentimental and comfortable. Following Jesus means embracing both his humble birth and his sacrificial death. True faith, like Mary's, perseveres through both celebration and sorrow and puts faith and trust in Jesus for our whole lives.

TODAY: The celebration of Christmas points us in one direction: toward the cross. Thank Jesus for his birth in the manger and his sacrifice on the cross that brings us salvation. If you haven't yet trusted Christ as Savior, today is a great day to receive his gift of forgiveness and eternal life. Email btw@adabible.org if you want to learn more.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Haggai 2](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Reflect on Jesus as the true King ([Revelation 19:16](#)).