

# Advent Calendar

By Janet Khokhar at [TheArtofContentment.com](http://TheArtofContentment.com)

I hope your family is blessed as you read every day about God's promises and His amazing gift to us—Jesus.

This calendar helps you count down the days until Christmas while renewing your spirit with biblical truths. Each day's reading features a Bible passage and a short devotional-style discussion. Day one begins at the beginning—Genesis—where you'll discover why God planned Christmas thousands of years before baby Jesus was born. As the days pass, you'll learn about the prophecies of the Messiah and how Jesus fulfilled them all. As you close in on Christmas day, you'll relive the birth of Jesus and what it meant to the world. When the calendar concludes, you won't finish your reading with the birth of Jesus—you'll continue to the cross. Because Christmas leads to the cross and the greatest act of love ever done.

## Contents:

Card sheets 1-24 with gray cutting lines  
Advent daily reading sheets

## Supplies:

Advent printouts  
Scissors  
24 Clothespins  
Ribbon (1" to 3" wide)  
String (or skinny ribbon)  
Thumbtacks or something to pin your ribbon to a wall

## Instructions for Assembly

1. Print out advent number cards and the daily reading sheets
2. Cut out advent numbers along the gray dotted lines.
3. Hang up three rows of ribbon (or one long ribbon if you have the wall space)
4. Use the clothespins to hang the advent number cards on the ribbons
5. Roll up the advent reading pages like scrolls and tie with string or ribbon and place in a basket. You can also pin them behind the advent numbers.





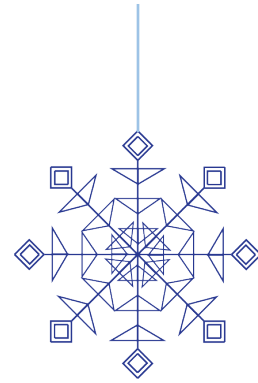
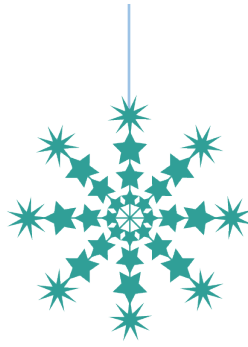
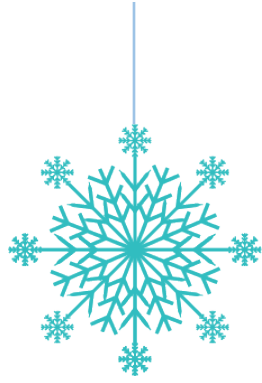
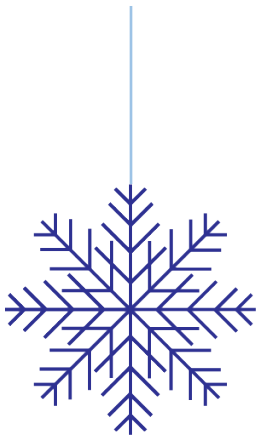










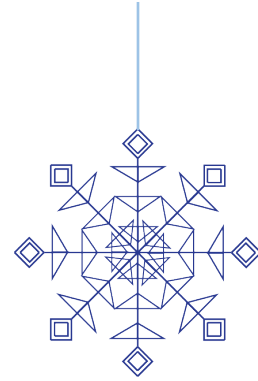
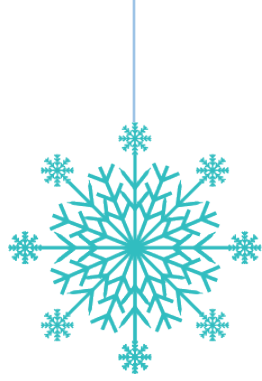
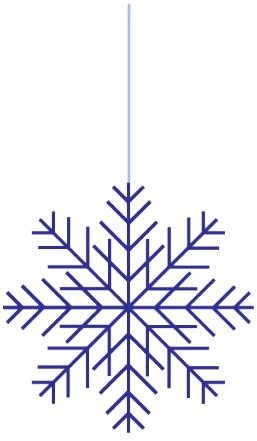


## Day 1

**Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."**

From the very first sin that separated mankind from God, God made a plan. Christmas was on its way from the moment Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden of Eden. The Lord could have walked away from people, or started over again, but He chose to save us instead. He would save us by sending His Son, Jesus, to be born as a baby. Baby Jesus would grow up into a man and die. But death was not the end for Jesus and, because of that, death is not the end for us, either.

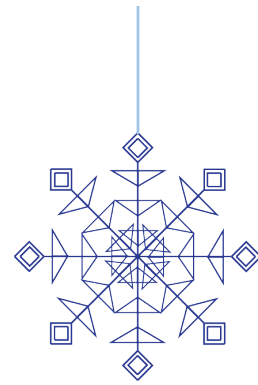
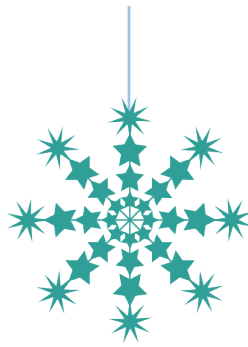
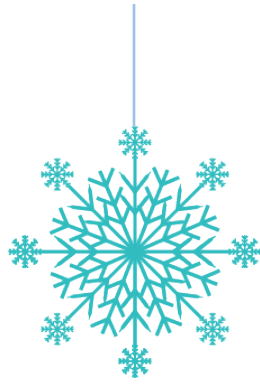
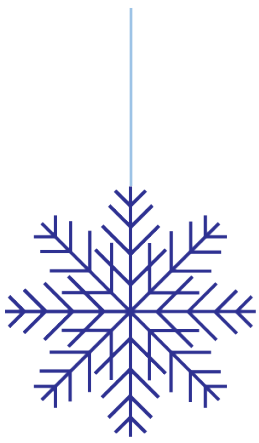




## Day 2

**Psalm 16:10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;  
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.**

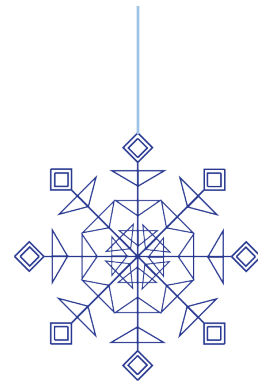
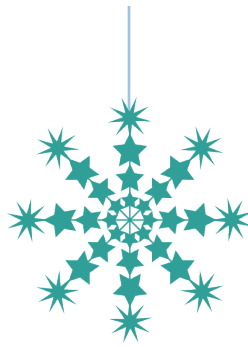
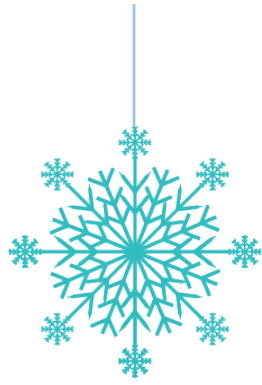
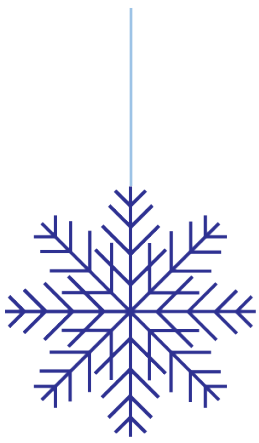
A prophecy is when God tells a person what He's going to do in the future. In the Bible, God gave many prophecies about the Savior so we would recognize Him when He came. Jesus had to exactly match several hundred prophecies about the Messiah. No one could do this either on purpose or by accident. Only Jesus matched all of the prophecies about the Messiah. In this verse, the prophecy says that the Messiah, who is also called the Holy One, will not stay dead. Jesus died, but He rose again. This is important because if God can raise Jesus from the dead, then God can raise us from the dead, too.



## Day 3

**Psalm 118:22-23** The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.

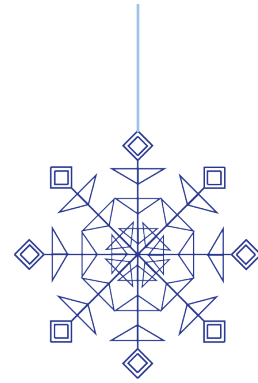
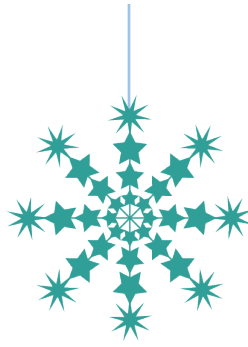
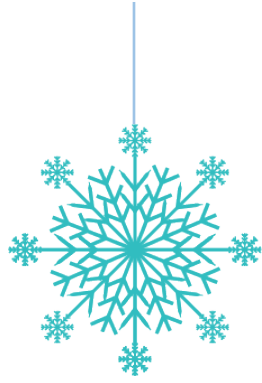
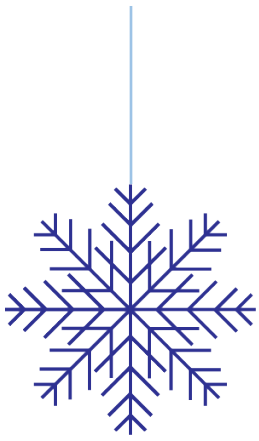
A cornerstone is the first large stone set down when builders begin to erect a stone structure, like a temple or a palace. The chief cornerstone is laid first and the rest of the building rises stone by stone from this one perfect block. This verse is a prophecy about Jesus written by King David, who was Jesus's great-great-lots-of-greats grandfather. Jesus wouldn't be accepted as the Messiah by everyone. When people read the prophecies about the Messiah, they were expecting a great king to conquer their oppressors. SWhen Jesus was born, the nation of Israel was ruled by a foreign kingdom called Rome. The Israelites wanted to be free and to rule their own country and they expected that the Messiah would be a powerful military leader. But Jesus wasn't what they expected, so they didn't believe in Him. But God knew what people needed. People needed a Savior for their souls more than they needed a savior for one small kingdom. Jesus is everything we need.



## Day 4

**Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.**

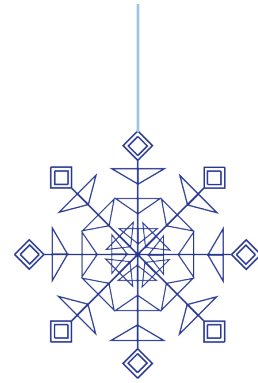
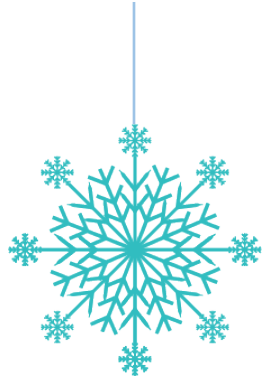
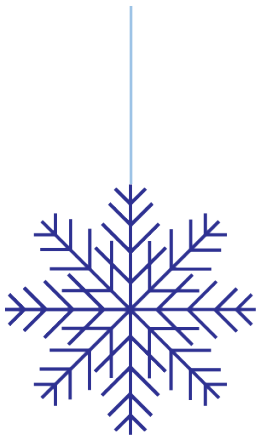
This was a very special sign of the coming Messiah: His mother would be a virgin. No other person in history was born in such a unique way. Only Jesus fulfilled this prophecy. And although Jesus was born by God's power, He was also born from a human woman, which made Jesus human, too. Jesus was both God and man. Why was it important that God became a human, too? Two reasons: Jesus knew what it was like to be human: to suffer pain and rejection, to be hungry and tired and lonely. Since He knew what it was like to be human, He could sympathize with us and help us when we are weak. The second reason is this: only a human can die. Jesus came to pay for our sins with His life, and to give up His life He had to be human.



## Day 5

**Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**

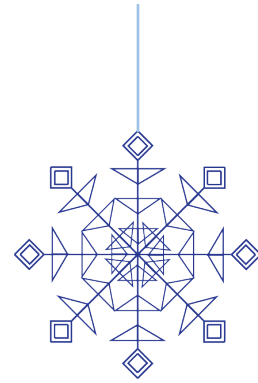
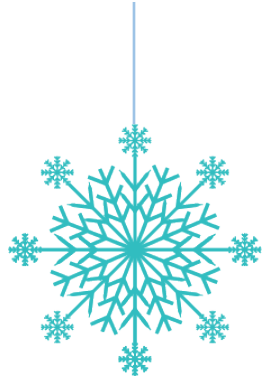
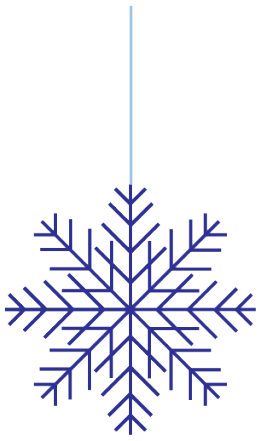
The prophet Isaiah describes to us what the Messiah would be like. First, Isaiah shows us that the Savior will be a child, a son. He will not be an angel or a spirit, but flesh and blood like us. The government will rest on His shoulders—this verse is probably the reason the Israelites were hoping for a conquering king. But Jesus wasn't confined to the role of an earthly king who would rule for a time and then pass his kingdom on to his successor; no, Jesus was King of kings and Lord of lords, who rules heaven and earth. Psalms says that He owns the cattle on a thousand hills—all that exists was made by Him anyway and it all belongs to Him. He is wonderful, mighty, eternal—a prince whose primary quality is peace.



## Day 6

**Micah 5:2 "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, [Too] little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."**

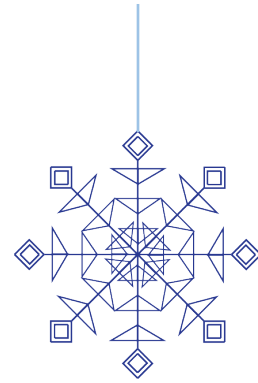
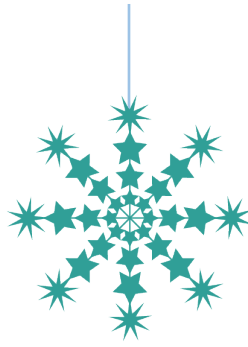
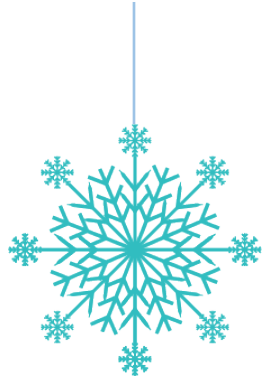
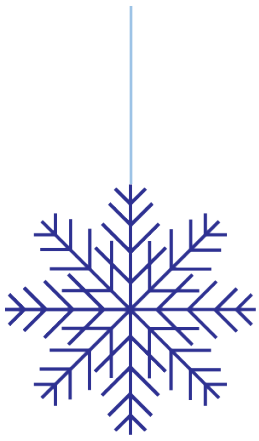
The Messiah was prophesied to come to a specific place at a specific time—God even named the little town where He would be born. That honor went to a town so small it wasn't even listed among the cities belonging to Judah. Yet from an unimportant village would be born God's greatest gift to humanity. Modern Bethlehem still exists today underneath new buildings that rose over the centuries after Jesus. In that dusty, arid land a tiny baby would open His human eyes for the first time.



## Day 7

**Jeremiah 23:5 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.**

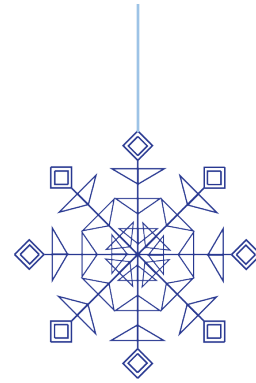
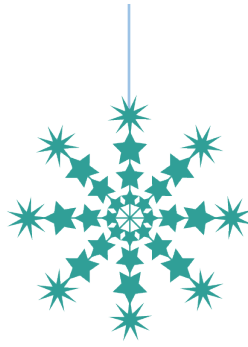
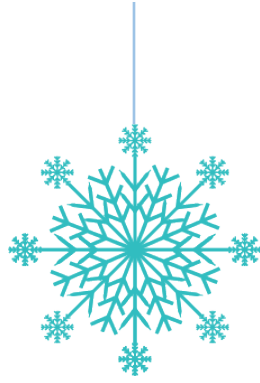
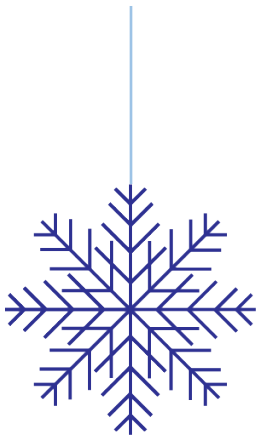
The Messiah had to meet another condition: He would be a descendant of King David, whom God described as a man after His own heart. God promised David that if his descendents loved and obeyed God, then David would always have a man from his descendents on the throne. But many of the kings who came after King David were corrupt, forgot God, and did evil in Israel. After that time, Israel was sometimes ruled by foreign powers, just as it was ruled by Rome when Jesus was born. But God did not forget His word, and promised that a righteous King—the King of all kings—would be born from among David's descendents.



## Day 8

**Isaiah 53:1-4** Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no [stately] form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

It's hard to see the sweet face of a baby in this man, isn't it? But before we can celebrate the blessed baby, we need to know why He had to be born. This is a prophecy about what the baby Messiah would do when He became a man. Jesus came to this earth to bear our sorrows, to carry our griefs. Even though we didn't know Him or understand His purpose, He clothed Himself in flesh so He could bear our punishment in His body. People in Jesus's day thought that God must be punishing Jesus because God let Him suffer and die. But the truth is that Jesus agreed to suffer for us for one reason: love.

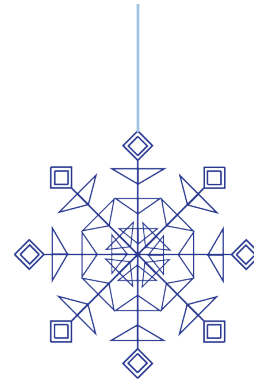
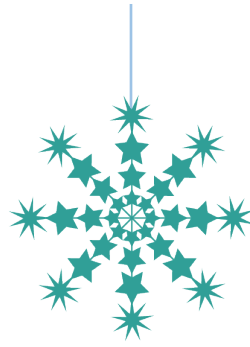
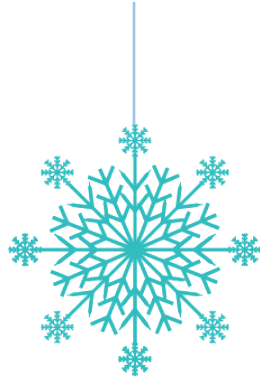
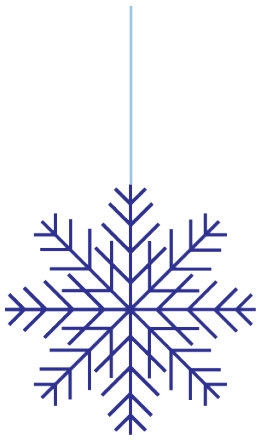


## Day 9

**Isaiah 53:5-7 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being [fell] upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.**

Can you imagine how one person's suffering can be good for us? Yet God's amazing plan was to let the Messiah hurt and die in our place. The Bible says that the soul who sins will die. If we die without accepting Christ, then we have to pay for our own sins. But Jesus, wonderful Jesus, never sinned, so His soul was perfect and could hold all of our sins. Yesterday we read about how much God loves us, which is why He sent Jesus to die for us. But we aren't the only things God loves: He also has a burning love for justice. So how could God be a good God and punish wrongdoing, while still forgiving sinners who deserved to die? Jesus was the answer. Jesus would die in our place so sin could be punished and we could be forgiven at the same time. If you ever want to know how much God loves you, then read this passage in Isaiah until it sinks in: He loves you all the way to the cross.

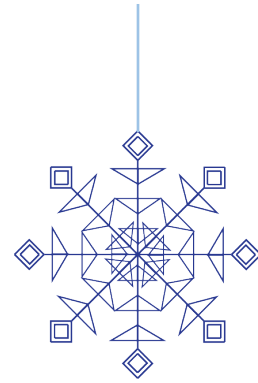
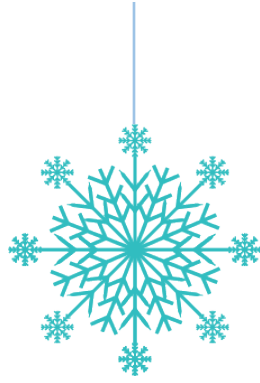
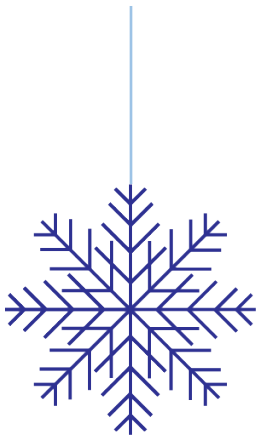




## Day 10

**Isaiah 53:8-9** By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke [was due?] His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

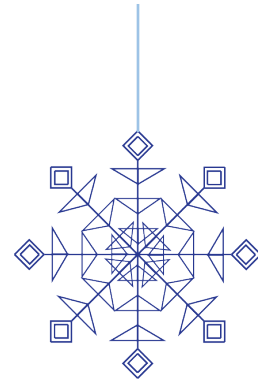
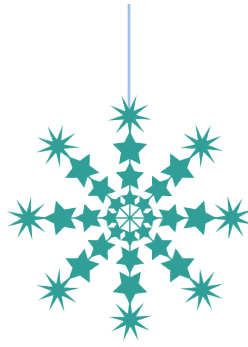
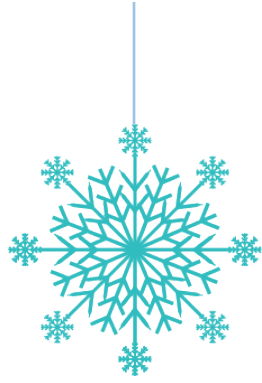
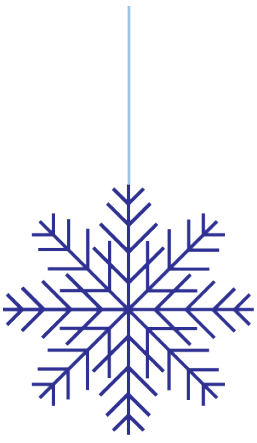
This prophecy reminds us again that the Messiah would be killed through oppression and evil judgment, yet He was innocent. Although the Messiah's body was assigned to a common poor people's grave, He would lay in a rich man's tomb. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy when He was murdered but hadn't done anything wrong. When people were executed as criminals in Jesus's time, their bodies were buried in a common grave, without honor and without a name. But Jesus never lay in that grave. Instead, a brave believer named Joseph of Arimathea asked for Jesus's body and lay the Lord in Joseph's new tomb. So Jesus lay in a place of honor, just as the prophecy told us. We can trust the truth of the Bible: Jesus was the only person in history who fulfilled all of the prophecies about the Messiah. Jesus is King of king and Lord of lords.



## Day 11

**Isaiah 53:10-11** But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting [Him] to grief; If He would render Himself [as] a guilt offering, He will see [His] offspring, He will prolong [His] days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see [it and] be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

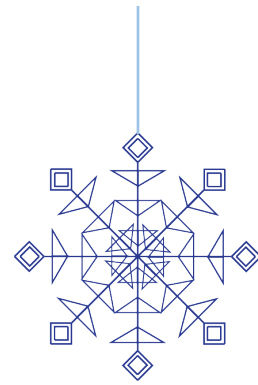
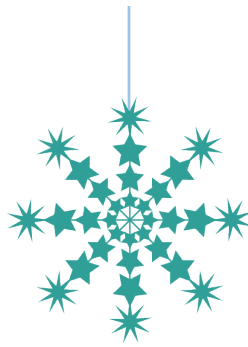
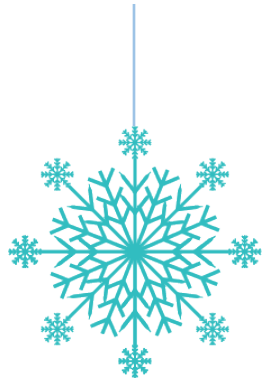
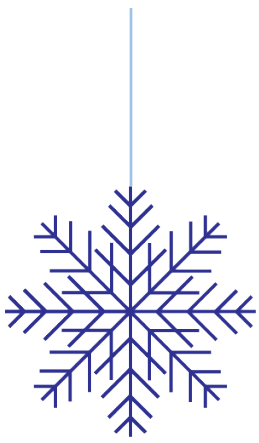
Love and justice collided at the cross. This prophecy was written over 500 years before Jesus took His slow steps toward Golgotha, where He would be crucified. God loved us so much that He was willing to let His one and only Son die. And death wasn't enough. The Savior had to suffer. When God looked at His righteous soul as Jesus died on the cross, God was satisfied. Sin was paid for. We who love Jesus can be justified, which means that we can be found innocent. Are we really innocent? Not a chance. But when God forgives our unrighteousness, He accepts Jesus's payment for our sins. We are free. This prophecy says that the Messiah will see His offspring. Who is His offspring? Us! We are God's children because of Jesus. Now we can call God our Father.



## Day 12

**John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**

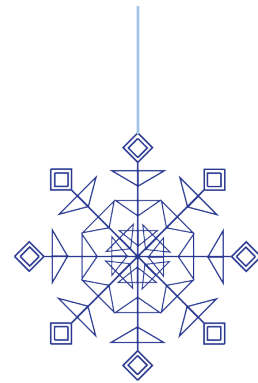
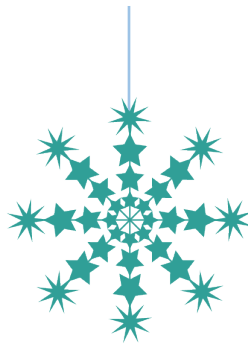
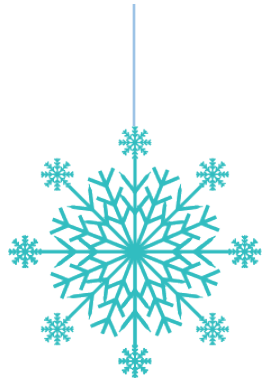
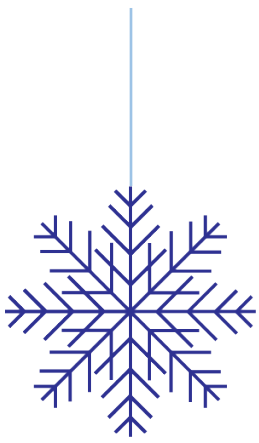
Does it seem like Jesus arrived on the scene only 2,000 years ago? Where was the Son of God before then? This verse tells us that Jesus was always there. Jesus was the name He had on earth and it's the Name we call Him now, but He and God are one. God created everything through Jesus: the stars, our planet, nebula turning in the universe, every clear cold stream running through a mountain, lambs, zinnias, and you. If God made it, then Jesus was there. Jesus is eternal and brought life into darkness. We exist because He wants us to.



## Day 13

**Matthew 1: 1&16** The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham...and Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

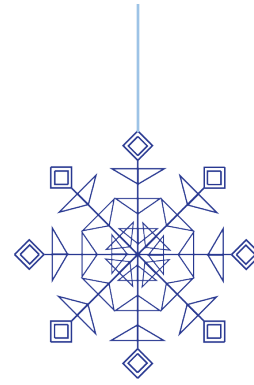
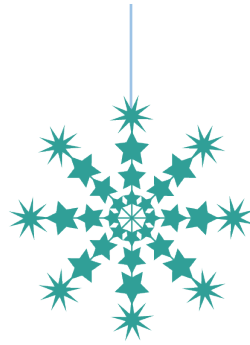
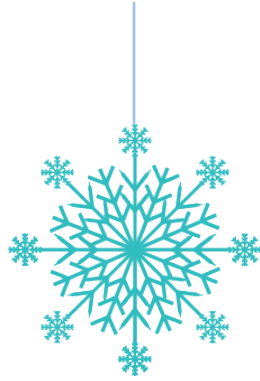
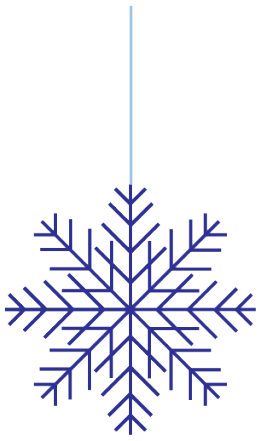
Joseph and Mary—the two most famous parents in history. The Bible tells us that both Mary and Joseph were directly descended from King David. Why is this important? God promised that the Righteous Branch—the Messiah—would be one of King David’s great-great-lots-of-greats-grandsons. Although Joseph was not Jesus’s physical father, he was Joseph’s legal son. The law of the Israelites recognized that Jesus was legally the descendant of King David. His parents and grandparents’ names were recorded in the temple for everyone to read to prove that Jesus really was from David’s family. Mary was also the great-something-granddaughter of the king. She was Jesus’s physical mom, so Jesus was also of the blood line of King David. In both a legal and a physical way, God kept His promise that King David would be the forefather of the Messiah.



## Day 14

**Luke 1:13-17** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. "It is he who will go [as a forerunner] before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, **TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN**, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

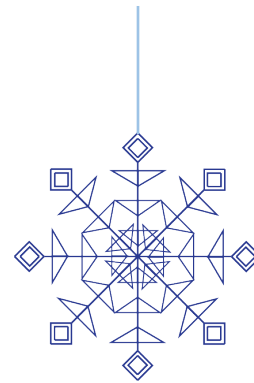
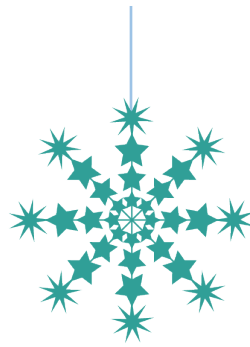
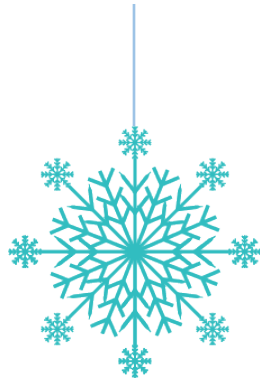
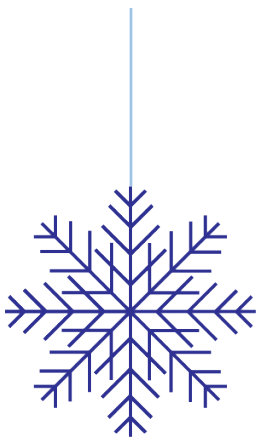
Zacharias? I thought we were learning about Jesus. As it turns out, Mary wasn't the only woman pregnant with a miracle. Her cousin Elizabeth was an elderly lady who was carrying another promised child. This little guy's birth was also the result of a prophecy. God said that the Messiah would have a great prophet to come before Him and prepare the people of Israel for the Messiah. John was the promised prophet. Jesus would later say that John was the most important man in history except for Jesus Himself. John's job was to lead the people's hearts to repentance so they could be ready for Jesus's message of faith in Christ.



## Day 15

**Luke 1:26-38** Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord [is] with you." But she was very perplexed at [this] statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. "And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. "For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

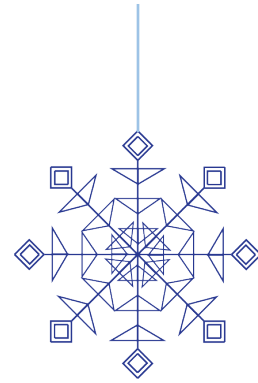
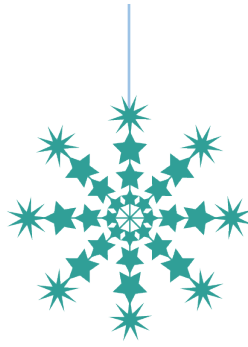
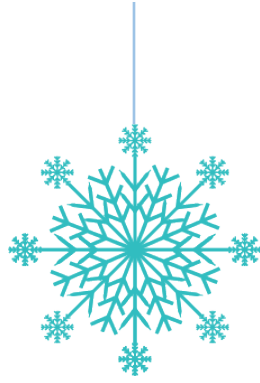
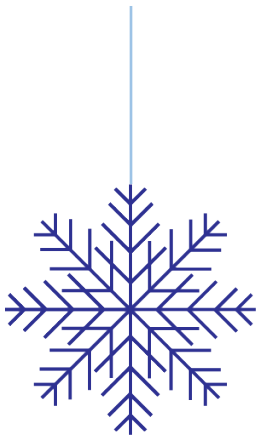
I don't think anyone can prepare themselves to receive an announcement like this. What reactions would we have? Fear. Awe. Confusion. Joy? Imagine a young woman kneading bread in a bowl, or repairing the hem on a tunic, or stirring a pot of stew when the sun walks into the room. The brightness of a heavenly messenger with a most unexpected announcement: she would be the mother of the promised Messiah! As a devout Jew, Mary must have learned about the prophecies of the Messiah. How He would be a king, born in Bethlehem from a virgin. Mary was one ordinary girl among millions in Israel, yet God saw something special in her. Through the angel Gabriel, He invited this young woman to participate in His divine plan. Mary's response gives us a clue about her faithful, courageous character: She didn't doubt God. She said yes. Many great men of faith balked at God's invitation to participate in His plans: Moses and Gideon were both leaders and saviors of the Hebrews, but they argued with God. How could I be the one you chose, Lord? I am weak, I am lowly. Why me? Mary could have taught these men a thing or two. When faced with God's outstretched invitation, she accepted that God could make the impossible into reality. She said yes, and became the mother of the King of kings.



## Day 16

**Matthew 1:18-25** Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took [Mary] as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Joseph is the unsung hero in Jesus's story. Almost everything we know about Joseph comes from the birth story of Jesus and the few years afterward. After Jesus is around 12 years old, the gospels don't mention Joseph anymore. Yet God gave him an amazing role of weighty responsibility in the Lord's great plan of salvation. Joseph's job was to love, protect, nourish, house, train and teach a child who wasn't his natural son. We can see a glimpse of Joseph's godly character in this passage above. See, Joseph had a fiancé named Mary and he found out she was pregnant. He knew the baby wasn't his. In Israel, husbands had all the power and wives had none. A woman couldn't divorce her husband for any reason, but a man could cast away his wife for a minor infraction like burning his dinner. A woman caught in adultery could be executed. Even though Joseph believed he had been betrayed by his future wife, he decided not to take vengeance on her. Instead, he would quietly separate from Mary so she wouldn't be publicly ridiculed. This was a man of compassion—thoughtful, and slow to anger. But before Joseph ended his engagement to Mary, an angel intervened and revealed God's miracle: Mary had not betrayed Joseph—she was carrying the promised Messiah. Joseph responded just as Mary did. He didn't throw objections to his new role in history, or balk at the load he was asked to bear. Like Mary, Joseph said yes to God.

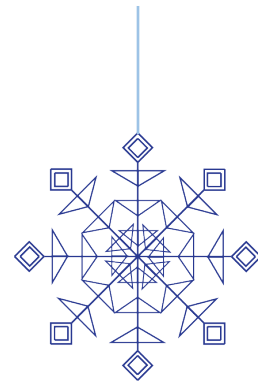
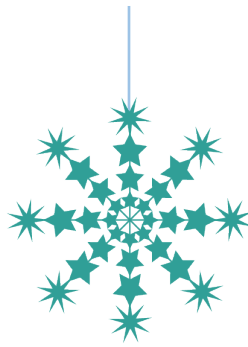
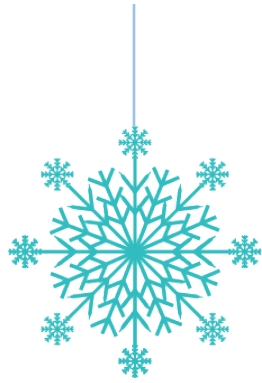
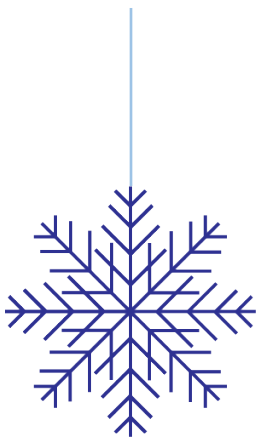


## Day 17

**Luke 2:1-7** Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Jesus was supposed to be born in Bethlehem, but Joseph and Mary were from Nazareth. As often happens as prophecy unfolds, the most unlikely people become involved in God's story. Caesar Augustus, Israel's foreign ruler, ordered everyone in all of his dominion to be counted, probably for tax purposes. No matter where people lived, they had to return to their place of birth to be registered. So Joseph, who was born in Bethlehem, brought Mary back to the little town. God's timing is perfect and Mary went into labor and gave birth. But isn't a king supposed to be born in a palace? Or at least a house? If not there, then under the meager protection of a rented room? Jesus, King of kings, was born one step up from the street. A shelter for animals covered the Lord of all the earth. Jesus was born in a low place so that the lowest of humanity would know they could take refuge in Him. Here was a king for all people.

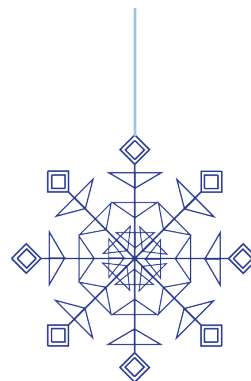
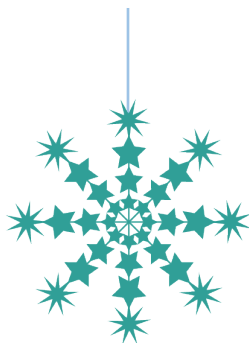
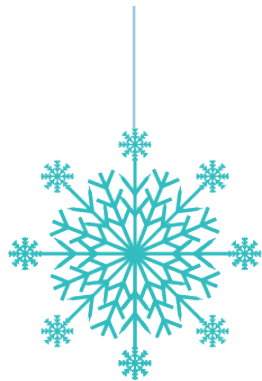
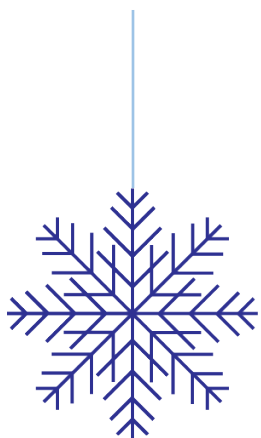




## Day 18

**Luke 2:8-20** In the same region there were [some] shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. "This [will be] a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds [began] saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

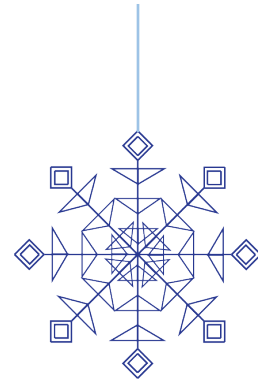
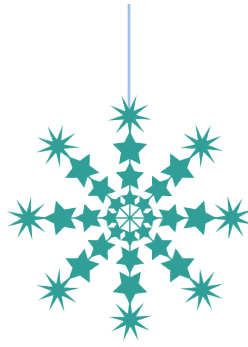
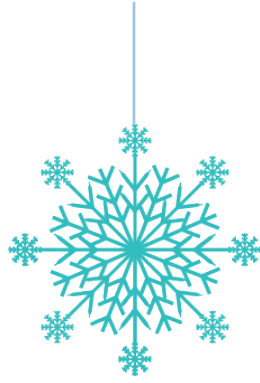
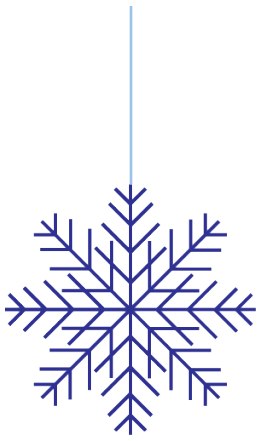
News too wonderful not to share: Jesus has been born! The long-awaited Messiah was here. The very heart of God in human flesh. When our cousin or friend has a baby, she announces it to everyone she knows: she shares the wonderful news on Facebook, she calls her grandmother, she sends out post-cards with the newborn's squished and puffy face gracing the front. Jesus's birth, too, was proclaimed with an announcement by an angel. An angelic announcement is just right for a king, but it's interesting to see who received the first birth proclamation: shepherds in a field! Shepherds not related to Jesus, Joseph, or Mary. Total strangers. This is the fourth appearance by an angel leading up to Jesus's birth. First, an angel appeared to Zacharias to tell him about the birth of the prophet John. Then Gabriel went to Mary and later to Joseph to tell them they were about to become the Messiah's parents. Those angelic appearances make sense. But why would the fourth appearance light up the sky for a bunch of men looking after sheep? Shepherds had the lowliest job in Israel, yet the King's birth was announced to them. This Jesus, this Savior, is Lord even of the lowliest. For what man lowly esteems, God honors. The prophecies about the Messiah said that He would shepherd His people Israel. When Jesus grew up and began His ministry, He would call Himself the Good Shepherd. Jesus came to lead us to safety and abundant life in Christ, as a shepherd leads His sheep. Humble shepherds rejoiced that night, as we rejoice in Jesus's birth during this Christmas season.



## Day 19

**Matthew 2:1-12** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard [this,] he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: '**AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.**'" Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found [Him,] report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him." After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over [the place] where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned [by God] in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

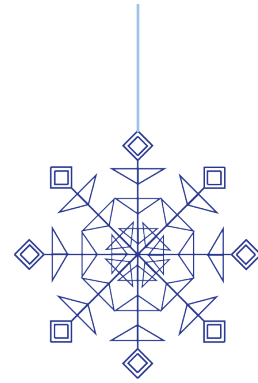
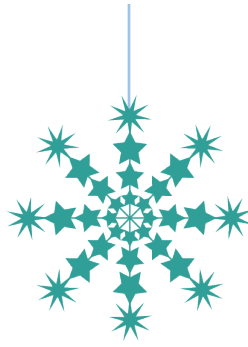
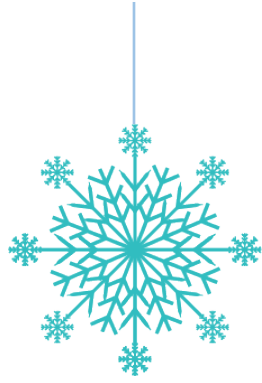
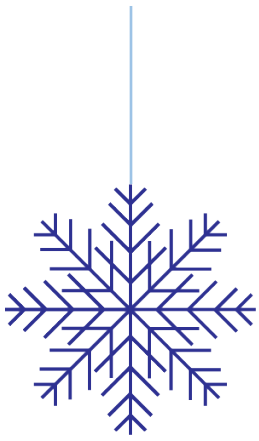
Jesus's birth was a time of celebration for those who knew about it, but not everyone was happy. King Herod, appointed ruler of Israel by their Roman conquerors, was so afraid of losing his royal position that he couldn't rejoice that he had lived to see the Messiah born into the world. But others had come a long way to meet the Savior. The magi were educated in astronomy and apparently knew the prophecies about the Messiah. When they saw the signs, they pursued the Savior. The astronomy records show that an unusual star appeared in the time when Jesus was believed to be born. This was a special birth, an exceptional event. Human history was about to be turned on its head. The magi pursued the Savior, found the baby, and worshipped Him. They also presented Him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh—gifts for a king. How do we receive Jesus? As someone who threatens our own preeminence in our lives? Or as the king of our lives? This Christmas, let's ask ourselves: have we given the king our hearts? Have we made him ruler over our lives? God made all things and everything belongs to Him. Let us give back to Him a small portion of the grace He has poured on us.



## Day 20

**Matthew 2:13-15** Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod. [This was] to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."

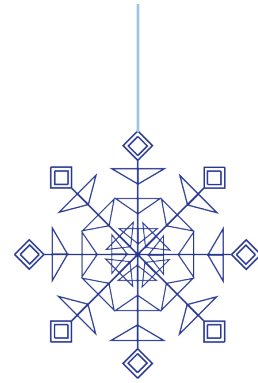
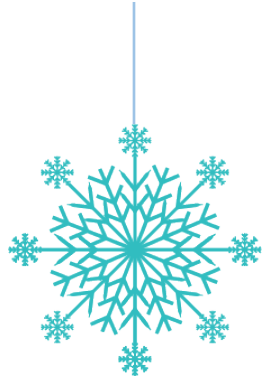
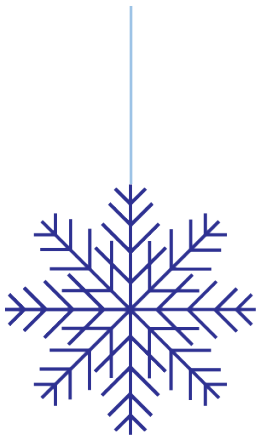
The King of kings is running for His life! Herod soon learned that the magi who found Jesus had no intention of betraying the Lord to the evil king. Full of wrath, Herod set out to find the baby. Herod believed he had all of the power. Herod was king, and the promised Messiah was an infant who couldn't put one foot in front of the other. But who can fight God's plan? When Herod scoured Bethlehem to kill Jesus, he only fulfilled prophecy: Jesus was driven off to hide in Egypt until Herod died. The Bible prophesied that the Messiah would be called out of Egypt. Why would a Jewish Savior come from pagan Egypt? God in His sovereignty planned ahead to protect the baby Messiah. God doesn't allow the foolish pride of people—even a king—to stop His plan to save the world.



## Day 21

**Matthew 2:16-18** Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE."

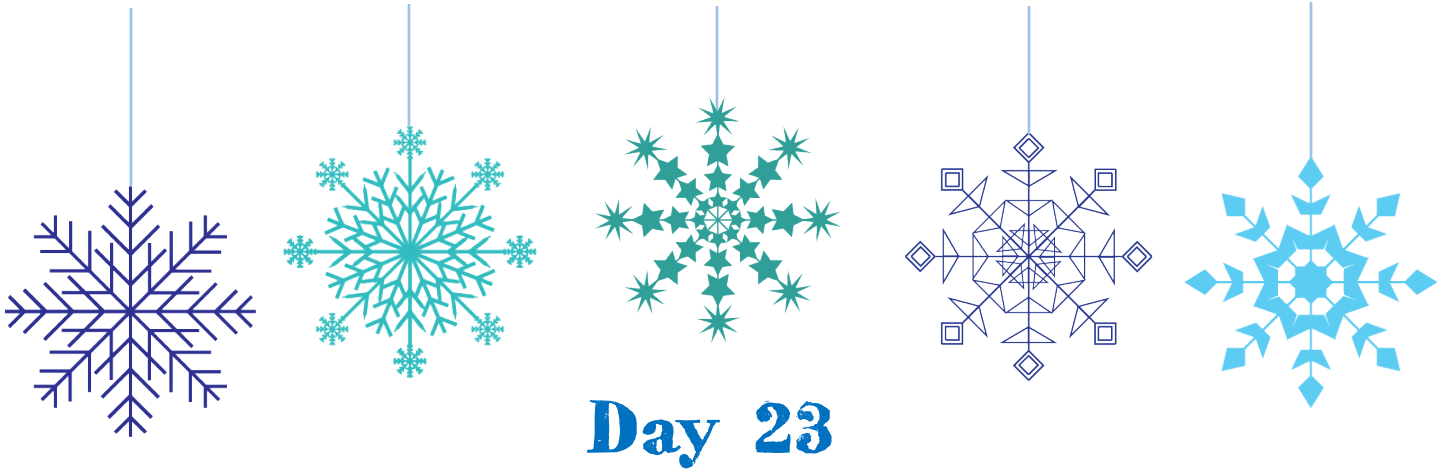
Christmas is supposed to be joyful, right? As we've seen so far, the events surrounding Jesus's birth were sometimes wonderful, but more often they were confusing, challenging, or frightening. The powers of evil fought back. God's plan to save the world through Jesus wasn't going to be easy. Suffering, courage, faith and endurance would be required of this story's heroes. Even the innocent mothers and families of Bethlehem would suffer as Herod tried desperately to keep his throne by killing the King. Sometimes God's plans don't make sense to us. Sometimes the cost is overwhelming. Sometimes evil steps in and tries to block God's righteous work in our lives. But no evil can overcome His goodness, just as no amount of darkness can smother the light.



## Day 22

**Matthew 2:19-23** But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned [by God] in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee, and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. [This was] to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

God's timing is perfect. After living as refugees in Egypt, Joseph, Mary and Jesus are safe and allowed to return home. This passage suggests that Joseph may have tried to return to Bethlehem or somewhere nearby in Judea, but the ruler in that region may have been a threat to little Jesus. Joseph was a good father and moved his small family back to Nazareth. What might have seemed random to Joseph was all part of God's plan: The Messiah would grow up in Nazareth. The Messiah had to fulfill so many prophecies and only Jesus fulfilled them all. A young child has no choice where he lives—mom and dad decide where home will be. But God placed His Son exactly where He was supposed to be. We don't always know if events in our lives are random or if God's plans for us are coming together at just the right time. Even when we're puzzled, we can trust that God sees us and knows exactly where we are.

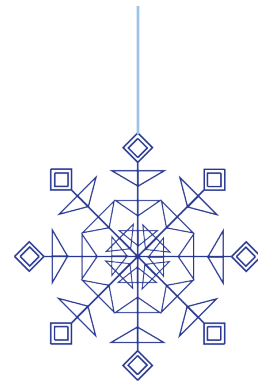
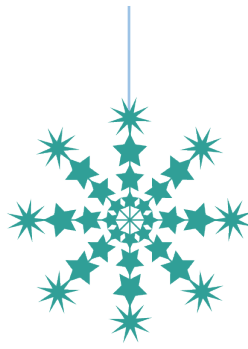
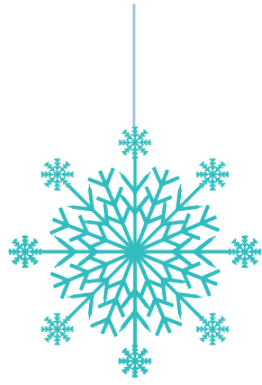
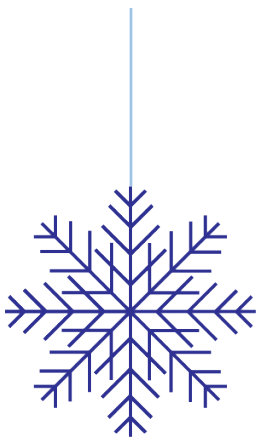


**Matthew 27:50-53 & Matthew 29:5-6** And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many... The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.

The Messiah prophecies. Angelic announcements. Faith-filled men and women. A wrinkled infant sleeping among livestock. Worship, wrath, and running. Protection and praise. All of these lead to one seminal event. If we want to know the meaning of Christmas, we have to look forward. The purpose of Christmas was the cross. And the rejoicing of Christmas is in the risen Christ.

At the moment Jesus gave up His precious life, the veil of the temple was torn in half. The veil was the symbolic separation of a holy God from sinful humanity. Jesus had probably been to the temple in Jerusalem many times and looked on this very veil, knowing that soon He would take it away forever. It wasn't needed anymore. Jesus's sacrificial death took away all that limits our personal access to God. Now, the Bible says, we can go boldly before His throne. Christmas has no meaning without Easter. Just as God's prophecies said, the Messiah would be condemned and executed like a criminal, even though He had done no wrong. Just as God planned, the Messiah bore our sins on the cross. Just as God planned, Jesus rose from the dead and defeated death. Because He was born, we can be born again. Because He died, we can die to sin. Because He rose again, we can live forever with Him.

Christ is Christmas.



## Day 24

**John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

Christmas came because God loved us. Love came at a great cost to God Himself because He didn't cast the price of salvation on us, but He bore the price Himself. Love is the embodiment of Christmas. Love is what we can give back to God and share with each other. Christ's abundant love, freely offered, should be freely shared. What can we say but this? Thank you for Christmas, Lord. Thank you for the cross. Thank you for the empty tomb.  
Thank you for the joy of Christmas.