

# Countdown to Christmas 2024



2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>



## Countdown to Christmas

Once again we enter the season of Advent, and begin in earnest the preparations for Christmas.

Each year as we approach Christmas it seems that we get busier and busier. Too much needs doing and sorting, and I guess that there is no escaping that. Yet as well as all the things we 'need to do' we also should be preparing spiritually.

So once again I have prepared a series of bible readings and reflections, one for each week day of Lent.

I encourage you to read the passage pause to allow the words to sink in then read the reflection and allow it to lead you into prayer.

Then, since we are all following the same readings, I also invite you to share your thoughts with someone else that we can encourage each other too.

Once again I hope you will enjoy this experience as we 'prepare for Christmas together.

Rev Rick

*(The readings this year are based on material from RBC Ministries)*

## Monday 02

### WHERE'S THE BABY?

#### Read:

Isaiah 7:10-14

The virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

— Isaiah 7:14

Two women, dressed in their finest, were having lunch together in an exclusive restaurant. A friend saw them and came over to their table to greet them. "What's the special occasion?" she asked. One of the women said, "We're having a birthday party for the baby in our family. He's 2 years old today." "But, where is the baby?" the friend asked. The child's mother answered, "Oh, I dropped him off at my mother's house. She's taking care of him until the party's over. It wouldn't have been any fun with him along." How ridiculous—a birthday celebration for a child who wasn't welcome at his

own party! Yet, when you stop to think about it, that's no more foolish than going through the Christmas season, with all of its festivities, without remembering the One whose birth we are supposed to be honouring.

And that's the way many people celebrate Christmas. In all the busyness—the party-going, gift-shopping, and family gatherings—the One whose birthday they are commemorating is almost completely forgotten.

During this holiday season, in all of your good times with family and friends, make sure you don't leave out the Lord Jesus. Give Him the honour He deserves.

*As part of your family Christmas activities, plan a birthday party for Jesus. Bake a cake, sing "Happy Birthday," and encourage family members to give a special gift to the Saviour.*

**Beware of keeping Christmas but losing Christ.**

**Tuesday 03**

## **GOD WITH US**

**Read:**

Isaiah 8:3-10

Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us." —Matthew 1:23

Since that first Christmas day 2,000 years ago, the assurance that God is with His people has taken on new meaning. Before Jesus was born, the Israelites were assured that even in judgment they could have hope because God was with them (Isaiah 8:8,10). Yet they didn't know God as fully as we can today.

We have a great advantage because through reading the New Testament we can see the glory of God "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). And we can sense His presence in all situations of life because He is made real to us by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:10-16).

When we need to be reassured that God is with us, think about Jesus as He is revealed in the New Testament. Recall how He took little children in His arms and blessed them (Matthew 19:13-15). Then think of His crucifixion, which reminds us of all He endured to be our Saviour (27:27-54). Finally, reflect on His promise, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (28:20).

The birth of Jesus gave new significance to the name Immanuel, which means "God with us" (1:23). Because He lived among us, died for us, and sent His Spirit to indwell us, we can rejoice!

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail the incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel. —Wesley*

**God came to live with us so we could live with Him.**

**Wednesday 04**

**A SEASON OF  
RENEWAL**

**Read:**

Isaiah 40:28-41:4

Those who wait on the  
LORD shall renew their  
strength.

—Isaiah 40:31

An American survey showed that 84 percent of people polled want a less materialistic holiday season. I suspect the same is true of people all across the world. But when all roads seem to lead to the shopping centres, what is the pathway toward a more spiritual and meaningful celebration of Christ's birth?

Some church leaders are suggesting that we put more attention on the observance of Advent, the 4-week period before Christmas. Instead of filling those days with activity and ending up physically and spiritually depleted, we need to recall that "those

who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). Even with a busy calendar of school and church programs, and family obligations, we can still carve out time to "wait on the LORD" and to concentrate on the true meaning of this season. We can determine to make the most of our times of daily Bible reading and prayer, and to give people priority over things.

As we take time to focus on Christ's birth and strengthen our relationship with Him, this time of year can become a season of renewal instead of exhaustion

*Take time this Christmastide to go  
A little way apart,  
And with the hands of prayer prepare  
The house that is your heart. —Anon.*

**A Christless Christmas is like a counterfeit banknote.**

**Thursday 05**

**THE GIFT OF LOVE**

**Read:**

Ephesians 1:3-14

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

—John 3:16

Nathan, age 8, was working hard (with a little help from his grand-father) to build a birdhouse for his mother for Christmas. He referred to it as his "secret project." He gave it careful thought and poured all his energy into it. Most important, he was motivated by love.

Before Nathan started, he calculated the number of hours he thought it would take to make it (7½), and he decided what colours it should be painted (yellow with a blue roof). On Christmas morning he insisted that it be the first gift opened, and he beamed when Mom said she really liked it.

Nathan's gift was given in the true spirit of the Gift whose birth we celebrate on Christmas. God the Father, moved by His great love, "gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16-17).

Think of the love of the Father that led to the priceless gift of His Son, which was part of His eternal plan (Ephesians 1:4-5; 3:11). God's gift of love should fill us with deep gratitude and joy. Let's together proclaim, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15)

*Before the glimmering dawn of creation,  
And with thoughts too wondrous for me,  
The Lord designed the plan of salvation  
To send the Saviour to set sinners free.*

**The best gift anyone could receive is Jesus.**

**Friday 06**

## **THE VALUE OF PROPHECY**

**Read:**

Psalm 22:11-19

Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God.

—Deuteronomy 8:11

Some people believe that the Bible is merely a haphazard collection of ancient writings. But we have good reason to believe it is God's inspired Word. For example, the Bible contains prophecies that have been fulfilled. Centuries before specific events took place, the writers of Scripture predicted their occurrence, and in the course of time those events came to pass. No matter how farsighted we may be, we cannot foretell the future with any precision. Indeed, our best guesses often turn out to be wrong. Here are some examples:

"Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value." Who said that? A renowned professor of military strategy. "Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau." This pronouncement was made by a distinguished economist just before the financial crash of 1929.

The Bible, however, is filled with dramatic examples of fulfilled prophecy. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and Psalm 22:1-18 record details about the crucifixion of Christ hundreds of years before this cruel form of execution was ever practiced.

When we pick up the Bible, we are holding in our hands the one authoritative divine revelation of truth—a claim verified by fulfilled prophecy.

*When we look beyond the manger  
To the cross of Calvary,  
We will know the reason Christmas  
Brings such joy to you and me..*

**God always keeps His word.**