



# ADVENT

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS AT HEBRON CHURCH





## Hebron Advent Guide

Christmas season is upon us! Each year during this time we pause our normal routines, slow down, and focus our attention on the birth of our Savior. Well, at least that's what we know we're supposed to do. Instead, what often happens is that we replace our normal routines with Christmas routines that leave us just as busy as we were before.

Enter Advent.

Advent is a Latin term that means arrival. Within Christianity, it's the season that anticipates the arrival of our Savior. During the season of Advent, we are reminded of what Old Testament saints must have felt as they waited on the first arrival of the Savior. We are also reminded that we are waiting in anticipation for our Savior to come again.

One of the beauties of Advent is that it meets us where we are. If we're being honest, then our season of life does not always meet the expectations of the Christmas season. We often can't find the happiness and myrrh that the songs of the season tell us we're supposed to feel. But this is the beauty of Advent. It reminds us that our season of life is a season of anticipation, because our Savior is returning. The same Savior who met the people of Israel in all of their hardships, sins, and suffering, is returning again for His people, to meet every need and wipe away every tear. In this way, Advent reminds us of the true reason for the season, the celebration of the Savior who came to save us and the anticipation of His return.

This devotional guide is designed for individuals and families to pause and reflect on our great Savior. Each week, we will look at passages in the Bible that point to the meaning of Christmas within the overall story of Scripture. We will see how each passage gives us hints of the kind of Savior that Jesus is for His people, and we will end each passage with a prayer. Along with these passages, we will also include a weekly activity for you or your family to do in order to join in the joy of Jesus over the Christmas season. If you're on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, we would love to see pictures of your participation in these activities! Use the hashtag #HebronADVENTures2022 so that we can see those activities.

## **Week 1**

### **Day 1 – God’s Joyful Creation**

Genesis 1:26-28

Have you ever known anyone who wanted to play Christmas music all year long? Or maybe you know someone who is ready to hang Christmas lights up outside in the middle of July? Most of us know people who want to spread Christmas tidings throughout the year. If I just described you, then no judgment here!

Similarly, did you know that the story of Christmas is spread across the entire Bible? In fact, you can’t make full sense of the birth of Jesus without understanding what came before His birth. As Danny Akin has said, “The Christmas story didn’t begin in Bethlehem, but in the Garden of Eden.” In Romans 5, the apostle Paul tells us that Jesus came as the new Adam, which means that He came to fulfill the role that Adam was called to fulfill at the very beginning of Scripture’s story.

What was that role? We get a glimpse of it in Genesis 1:26-28. God created humanity in His very image, and told them to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Another way of saying this is that God told the first humans to bear His glorious image across the whole world. In the same way that we extend our family’s last name when we have children or move to different places, God wanted His children to extend His radiance to all creation by obeying and loving Him as they worked, worshipped, got married, had families, and enjoyed the world that He gave them. His whole purpose for the world was that it be a joyful creation full of people who enjoyed Him and His gifts. Imagine for a second that the world was full of people who loved God and wanted nothing more than to enjoy Him and the world that He gave us. Sounds pretty amazing, right?

This is the very heart of God toward His creation. Other ancient religions taught that the gods created humans in order to have slave labor. The Bible teaches that God created humans to include them in His very joy. When we talk about the joy of Christmas, we should think of that joy first in terms of God's joy in creation that He invited humanity to spread to all the world. Then we will begin to understand the joy we have in Christ as His redeemed creation.

### **Hints of a Savior**

All the way back in Genesis 1, we get hints as to the kind of Savior that Jesus will be. We see through God's joyful creation that Jesus will be a Savior who is full of joy and will spread that joy to His people.

### **Prayer**

Father, we thank you that you are a God of joy, and that Jesus is our joyful king who came to earth to give us that joy. We thank you that you have never given up on us and that you still invite us to participate in your plan for creation by following Jesus. Help us this season to love Jesus more and follow Him with our lives. Amen.

## **Week 1**

### Day 2 – God’s Invitation

#### Genesis 12:1-3

Between Genesis 1 and Genesis 12, a lot changes, and I mean a lot! God created people to live in His joy and spread it to all the world as they had families, built houses, worked, and lived. However, instead of spreading God’s joy, they allowed sin to dominate their lives and lead them away from God.

This disobedience is demonstrated in the Tower of Babel. In Genesis 1, God told people to be fruitful and multiply, but in Genesis 11, the people decided that instead of following God’s plan and spreading His joy to the world, they would build a tower to the heavens. If I was God, then at this point, I might be tempted to throw my hands up and wipe away all of creation.

Thankfully, I’m not God! Instead of wiping away creation, God invited a guy named Abram to be His agent of change. In Genesis 12:1-3 God called Abram to move away from His family to a new land God would show Him, where God would bless Him, turn His family into a nation that God blessed, and through His family, bless the world. Think about this for a second. When the world was full of evil and sin, God’s plan for redemption was to use a person to start a movement that would change the world. Sound familiar? That’s because Abram points the way forward to Jesus, where again God used a person to start a movement that would change the world. Only, this time, that person was the Son of God incarnate.

Hebrews 11:10 adds a fascinating little note about Abram. It says that he left the place where he lived to follow God because he wanted to live in a city built by God. Biblical scholar, Desmond Alexander, has pointed out that Christians also look forward to the city built by God that we get a glimpse of in Revelation 21:1-2. As he writes, this heavenly city “is the fulfillment of what God initiated in Genesis 1.”



Genesis 12 shows us that God's plan for creation won't be thwarted by sin, evil, and rebellion. This is such good news for Christians today and should inspire confidence in us as we live for Jesus.

### **Hints of a Savior**

The story of Abram points the way forward to the story of Jesus that we find in the Gospels. One big difference, though, is that Abram wasn't able to follow God perfectly. He still sinned and messed up. On the other hand, Jesus never sinned. He was able to fulfill God's plan perfectly in His life. Because of this, He is the reason that Christians can have perfect confidence before God today.

### **Prayer**

Father, we praise you that you are not only the God of creation, but the God who keeps His plan for creation. Your plan to establish your glory across creation is being accomplished in Jesus and His followers. We thank you that we are part of this plan because of your unfathomable grace. Help us to daily remember this grace and live in light of its reality. Amen.

## **Week 1**

### Day 3 – God’s Treasure

Exodus 19:5-6

One Christmas morning when I was a young teenager, I walked into the living room and under the tree was one of the most amazing things I had ever seen: a shiny red electric guitar with my name on the tag. At that point I didn’t care about any of the other presents, or breakfast, or lunch, or Christmas movies, or snacks, or.... you get the idea. I only wanted to play that guitar. It instantly became my most treasured possession.

In Exodus 19:5-6, we get a glimpse into what God treasures. God told the people of Israel that as they followed Him, they would be His treasured people who would become a holy nation and kingdom of priests in the world. If you remember from the Genesis 12 devotional, this is the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abram that He would turn His family into a nation that He would bless and that He would use to bless the world. What better way to bless the world than to offer the light and joy of God to the world by following Him?

In order to live in God’s plan and bless the world, the nation was told to be holy by following God’s commands. If they followed God, they would become a kingdom of priests for the rest of the world. The role of the priest was to stand before God on behalf of the people and to stand before the people on behalf of God. If they lived for God, then they could show His love to the world and could intercede for the world to God. The only catch there was that to be a kingdom of priests they had to follow God’s commands. Easy enough, right? Well, not exactly. As we will see next week, the people of God couldn’t seem to follow God.

Of course, none of this actually hinders God's plan. He is on a mission in Scripture that won't be thwarted, and this mission will lead up to the very first Christmas Day. From God's creation in Genesis 1, to His election of the people of Israel in Genesis 12, to His deliverance of this same people in Exodus, the plan has always been the same: that God would glorify His name in all the earth through His people. As the famous carol emphasizes, this is truly a message of joy to the world.

### **Hints of a Savior**

Israel is called to live holy lives before God and be priests for the world. Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us that Jesus became our Great High Priest by living the righteous life that God demands. The role that Jesus fulfilled in His life is the role that God gave His people in Genesis and Exodus.

### **Prayer**

We thank you God for Jesus, the Savior who came at Christmas to live a life of righteousness on our behalf, and who is now our Great High Priest. Help us to live in the confidence of knowing that Jesus our Savior is also our Priest. Amen.

## **Week 1 Activity**

### Blessed to be a Blessing

In our devotionals this week, we learned that God created the world to bless people and invite them into His joy as they spread it to the world. Who is someone that you can spread God's joy to during Christmastime? Maybe there is a family member who needs a visit, a neighbor who could use a warm meal, or a friend whose spirits you could brighten with a present or a phone call. Take time this week to think of someone who you could bless in some way and go for it!

For each activity, remember to snap a picture and hashtag it #HebronADVENTures2022 on social media. We are not trying to broadcast our pictures for our own pride, but in order to stir up ideas for each other on social media this holiday season.

**Notes:**

## **Week 2**

### **Day 1**

#### **Judges 2:6-7, 11-12 – The Unfaithful People**

Last week, we looked at three stories in the Bible showing God's great plan to bless the world that He made. Do you remember what they were? Here's a hint: they involved Adam, Abram, and Moses. This week we're going to look at how the people of God messed up that plan by not living for God. All of these stories lead up to Christmas, when God's plan to bless the world comes in the form of a baby.

If you haven't already, read Judges 2:6-7, and then read verses 11-12. That took a quick turn, didn't it? The people of Israel arrived in the land God gave them, but within one generation they stopped following God and started worshipping the gods of the nations around them. Verse 12 puts it plainly for us, "They abandoned the Lord." The God who created His people, who loved His people, who gave His people a place to live, who promised to make them a light to the world, was abandoned by those same people. What a sad picture. But if we're being honest, we tend to be in the same boat. We also know that God created us, we know God's commands, and yet we also abandon His plan for our lives. What's really interesting is that the story of Adam basically repeated itself in the story of Israel. God created Adam/Israel, God gave Adam/Israel a beautiful place to live and promises of fruitfulness, God told Adam/Israel to follow His command(s), and Adam/Israel just couldn't do it. Another similarity we will see later this week is that God would remove Israel from the land just like He removed Adam from the Garden.

Over and over in the Bible we see the truth that if humans are required to shape up and make themselves pleasing to God, then they simply can't do it. The pull to sin, selfishness, arrogance, and isolation is too strong. Thankfully, the Christmas story provides us fresh hope that the change that we need has been given to us, not in a self-help program but in Immanuel, God with us. Let that sink into your heart. God is with you because He chose to come near. This is the beauty of Christmas.

### **Hints of a Savior**

The further Israel gets from God, the more they recognize they need a Savior to rescue them. The entire Old Testament points the way forward to the Messiah who is coming to rescue His people.

### **Prayer**

Father, we recognize our own tendency toward sin and like Paul in Romans, we cry out, "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" But like Paul, we can also answer, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" We praise you that you have saved us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Help us live our gratefulness to Jesus today and everyday. Amen.

## **Week 2**

### Day 2

Isaiah 43:25-28; 44:3-4 - The Holy God

Have you ever stood in front of a scene so majestic that it took your breath away? When I was a child, my family went on vacation to the Grand Canyon. Standing there in front of that massive canyon took my breath away because of the magnitude of it all. Times like that remind us of the grandeur in the world beyond our wildest comprehension.

In Isaiah 43:25-28, God reminded Israel of His own grandeur. We see here a glimpse of His goodness and His holiness. God reminded Israel that He is the one who blots out sins and removes transgressions. He also told them that because of their sin going all the way back to Adam, He would bring their cities to destruction.

However, even amidst the promise of destruction, there is hope for the future. In Isaiah 44:3-4, God promised the people that the land would bear fruit again, when God puts His Spirit on the descendants of the people. The God who punishes for sin is the same God who provides the promise of deliverance.

Back to the Grand Canyon. I actually didn't tell you the complete Grand Canyon story. One of the first things I did when we got there was go into a gift shop and buy a Grand Canyon poster. After purchasing, I stood on the edge of the canyon and unrolled my poster to admire it. My father said, "Son, why don't you put the poster down and look at the real thing?" When I did, I was overwhelmed by what I took in. In the same way, when we come to the God of Scripture, we see both His holiness and His goodness in a way that nothing else can compare.



In order to fully appreciate the Christmas story, we need to get a glimpse of our true God who both loves His people and demands holiness. The Christmas story is the story of the God who demands holiness providing a way to holiness out of His love for His people. Without recognizing both God's holiness and love, we won't understand the depths of Christmas.

### **Hints of a Savior**

Isaiah 43-44 points the way forward to the Savior who would reveal God to people. Jesus shows us God's holiness and His love for us. He never compromises God's holiness and He never stops loving people.

### **Prayer**

Father, as we prepare for Christmas, we pray that you will give us a fresh vision of Jesus, who shows us your holiness and love. Let us live in awe of the Savior who came for us, to redeem a people for your name. Amen.

## **Week 2**

### **Day 3**

#### **Jeremiah 33:14-18 – The Good Promise of God**

In the book of Isaiah, God told the people of Israel that He would remove them from the land because of their sin. Sure enough, that's exactly what happened. The book of Jeremiah was written for the people of Israel who are living in exile in the land of Babylon. Babylon and Jerusalem were around 900 miles apart, which is about the same distance as Dacula, GA, to Oklahoma City, OK, today. It would take months for a caravan to travel that distance in that time period. For the people of Israel, they must have felt completely stuck in a foreign land. However, they were not without hope.

Jeremiah 33:14-18 is a promise for Israel based on God's own righteousness. The basic promise is this: God will save Israel, but it actually gets way more specific in its details. God will save Israel through a branch from the family of King David. This ancestor of David will be king and also a priest for all eternity. Verse 18 tells us that in His priestly role He will make sacrifices forever before God. Just pause with this for a second. God promised in Jeremiah that a person would come who would be king and priest, and who would make all the sacrifices necessary for the people before God. This is written hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, and yet God was still in complete control of the promise that He had made to Abram way back in Genesis 12. Do you remember that promise? God would create a nation out of Abram's family, that He would bless that nation, and He would use that nation to bless the world. This will all come true through Jesus.

God will be faithful to His commitment to Abram through Jesus.

God will bring joy to the world through Jesus.

God will restore people through Jesus.

There will be times in each of our journeys where we will need to cling to the sovereignty of God over our lives in spite of what our circumstances or feelings might scream at us. Because God has an indestructible pattern of keeping His promise, we can trust that God is still keeping His promise of redemption and restoration today.

### **Hints of a Savior**

In Jeremiah 33, Jeremiah doesn't so much hint at a coming Savior as he screams it! Jesus makes complete sense of God's promise to Israel in this passage. We get a full picture here of the faithfulness of God in the person of Jesus.

### **Prayer**

Father, we thank you that you never give up on your promises. You are the faithful God, and your faithfulness is most clearly demonstrated in Jesus. We praise you that you never give up and never back away from your commitment to your creation, and we thank you for the yearly reminder of this commitment during Christmastime.

## **Week 2 Activity**

### The Holiness of God

This week, we thought through the holiness of God. The holiness of God is like a fire that is powerful, displays incredible radiance, and can burn away impurities (think sin and rebellion). If you have a fireplace or fire pit, take some time to light a fire (safely!) this week and think/talk with your family about the holiness of God. If you don't have access to a place for fire, then light a candle and use it to spur thoughts and words on God's holiness for yourself or your family.

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**Notes:**

## **Week 3**

### **Day 1**

#### **Matthew 1:17 – The Story Fulfilled**

The beginning of Matthew's gospel might strike us as odd. We expect it to begin with the birth of Jesus, but it actually begins with a genealogy—a History of Jesus' family going all the way back to Abraham. Why start this way and not jump straight into Mary, the angels, the shepherds, and the manger? Well, it's actually way more important than we tend to think.

Look back at Matthew 1:1. Matthew tells us about two important relatives of Jesus: Abraham and David. Why tell us about these two guys? As we saw in week 1, Abraham was the guy that God promised to turn into a nation. David was later the greatest king in the History of Israel. So here Matthew is telling His readers that Jesus is following in the footsteps of the founder of the nation and the greatest king of the nation. This will be important later in Matthew's gospel, because he will show His readers how Jesus lives the life of holiness that God called Israel to live.

Let's think back to Abraham for a second. God told Abraham in Genesis 12 that He would turn Abraham's family into a nation that He would bless and He would use to bless the world. Only, we saw last week that Israel got stuck in sin and became darkness for the world instead of light. How would God fulfill this promise? Matthew 1 lays it out. Matthew is telling us from the very beginning that God would use Jesus to complete this mission that started way back in Genesis 1: to fill the world with people who love God and live for Him.

At the very end of Matthew's gospel, we see how it will happen. Before going back to the Father's right hand, Jesus told the disciples to go to all the world, making disciples and baptizing them. There it is! God's plan at work through Jesus and the people who love Him. The mission never stopped because God never gave up.

## **Hints of a Savior**

Israel waited for a Savior and now He was here! Hundreds of years of anticipation all leading up to this moment, when the baby arrived to become the man who would save the people.

## **Prayer**

Father, we praise you that you never gave up on your plan. Jesus is the Savior that we need in order to live out your mission. We pray that we will live your mission to live in your joy and make disciples of all nations. Amen.

## **Week 3**

### **Day 2**

#### **John 1:1-5 – The Promise is Here**

John 1 begins its Christmas story in a unique way. In Matthew and Luke, we get records of Jesus' ancestors and then a story of His birth. In John 1, we are taken all the way back to a time before Isaiah, David, Ruth, Moses, and Abraham. As Patrick Schreiner writes, "John takes a quantum leap back to time before time." Did you notice it there at the very beginning of verse 1? The first three words are "In the beginning..." For an ancient Jewish reader, their mind would have immediately gone back to Genesis 1:1, the very first sentence in the Bible. However, John has a twist coming!

He tells His readers there was a Word with God as He created the world. The Word was the life of creation and a personal being. And not only that, this Word was the light that shined into the darkness of creation and then came into creation. What an incredible picture of Jesus! Not only was He the eternal Word with God, He was the light through whom creation was made, and He was the light that came into the darkness of creation to redeem it.

We saw last week that Israel's story pointed the way forward to Jesus. In John 1, we see that not only does Israel's story point to Jesus, but the creation of the world also points to Jesus. Whenever you are admiring something in creation, you are admiring a creation of Jesus. Whenever you recognize the vastness of space, or the intricacies of the human cell, or the rings of an old tree, or the waves of the ocean, you are recognizing Jesus' handiwork. As James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift comes from above." This Christmas, as you give and receive gifts, recognize Jesus' gift of creation, life, and salvation to you.



## **Hints of a Savior**

John 1 hints at the kind of Savior Jesus will be. He will come to be a light to creation. Think of everything you need a light for: to help you see where you're going, to make reality visible, to make sure you don't trip and fall, and on and on. Jesus is our spiritual light in all these ways, and He's also the light that lights up the whole world.

## **Prayer**

Father, we thank you for Jesus our light. Help us to recognize the handiwork of Jesus in creation. Help us to praise Jesus for all of His good gifts in the world and in our lives. Most of all, remind us daily of the redemption we have because Jesus came into the world. Amen.

## **Week 3**

### **Day 3**

#### **Philippians 2:5-11 – The Savior Unveiled**

Imagine for a second that you are a king or a queen in a palace. You have access to all of the perks of royalty. What perk would you be most excited about? The royal chef to whip up a meal at your command? The fleet of cars that can be summoned with a snap of your fingers? Maybe even that royal bank account? Being royal definitely has its advantages, which makes these words in Philippians 2 all the more incredible.

In Philippians 2, Paul tells us that Jesus removed Himself from the royalty of heaven, including His heavenly rights to worship and adoration. That's what Paul means when he says Jesus "emptied Himself" in verse 7. Think of it as a king who covers His royal robes with a servant's cloak.

Not only did He leave the royalty of heaven, He also took upon Himself the form of a servant. The story that C.S. Lewis calls "the central event in all of human History" isn't just a story of a royal baby dwelling among us. It's the story of a royal baby dwelling among us as a servant to show us the love of God. As we saw last week, the people of Israel were waiting for a Messiah to dwell among them. What many of them didn't know was that the Messiah was going to come in order to show them the great love of God through His humility and service. As Paul tells us in these verses, Jesus' humility and service took Him all the way to the cross.

But of course, that's not the end of the story. After Jesus' resurrection, God the Father exalted Him to His rightful position as the king of all creation (v. 9-11), and He now receives rightful praise from all His people. One day He will receive rightful praise from all of creation. All because He came to dwell among us as a servant. What an incredible Savior!

## **Hints of a Savior**

Philippians 2 shows us the kind of Savior that Jesus is for us. Not one who reigns on high and simply tells us what to do, but one who joined with us and shows us how to live.

## **Prayer**

Father, we praise you for Jesus our Savior. We thank you that He came to be a servant, teach us how to live, die on the cross for our sins, and rise from the grave in victory on our behalf. We give Jesus all the praise that he deserves. Amen.

### **Week 3 Activity**

#### Jesus is the Light

John 1 tells us that Jesus is the light of the world. Take some time this week to hop in your car, with friends or family, and go look at Christmas lights. Talk with those in your car about the ways that Jesus is the light of the world.

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**Notes:**

## **Week 4**

### Day 1

#### 1 Corinthians 15:22-24 – Living in Anticipation

We saw last week that Jesus came as a servant in order to fulfill God's mission to fill the earth with people who would love, worship, and live for God. This plan is in effect today and will be in effect until Christ comes again. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul reminds us of the hope that we have in looking forward to that day.

Notice in 1 Corinthians 15:22 that Paul connects Jesus with Adam. In Adam, humanity chose sin and death, but in Christ we are made alive. Of course, that starts at the moment we make Christ our Savior, but it won't be complete until the day He returns. In verse 24, he calls Christ the first fruits of what will happen for all of His followers. When Christ rose from the grave, His body was ... different. It was still a body that could be seen and touched, but it didn't have the same human limitations. There were times people didn't recognize Him right away. Other times He appeared seemingly from out of nowhere. He had what we call a "glorified body." And Paul tells us that all of His believers will have that same glorified body one day. A body that won't experience pain, decay, and death. No longer will we be under the curse because Christ our King has defeated death and given us the reward of His victory.

When we celebrate Christmas, we don't simply celebrate a Historical event in the past. We anticipate the day that is coming, when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord, and we will be made like Him forevermore.

## **Hints of a Savior**

Once again, we see the kind of Savior that Jesus is in these verses. He is a Savior who invites us into His victory over death. Nothing in this world should compare to the anticipation that we have in Christ for the day of new creation.

## **Prayer**

Father, you have given us an incredible promise that we will be made alive in Christ. We know we can trust you because you've already done it once before in Christ's resurrection. Help us to live this anticipation by living for you today. Amen.

## **Week 4**

Day 2

Hebrews 12:1-3 – In the Meantime

Over the last few weeks, we have seen this incredible mission of God that comes alive in the birth of Jesus. Last time, we saw the great promise we have from God that we will one day be made like Jesus in our bodies to live with Him forever. The question today is, what do we do in the meantime? Hebrews 12:1-3 has the answer. We run!

Before you tie up your shoes and take off, we should ask what he means by running? He means to actively live the life that God has called us to as we focus on the finish line. Don't give up, don't look to the left or right, but keep on running!

Have you ever seen one of those cold weather football games in Chicago or Green Bay or somewhere like that, where the snow is coming down and it's about 12 degrees? Everyone in the crowd is freezing in heavy coats, but not the players on the field. Why is that? It's because they're moving around, generating heat. However, when they go to the sidelines to sit, that's when the big coats come out, because they're sitting still and not moving around. Faith works in the same way. If you aren't in the game, but on the sidelines, then your faith will grow cold. To put it another way, if you are not actively participating in the life of faith, then your faith will grow cold. If you aren't steadily leaning on Jesus, your faith will grow cold. If you don't recognize daily that you desperately need Jesus, your faith will grow cold. If you don't recognize Jesus as the source, power, and authority of life, your faith will grow cold.



There are signs of a cold faith. A cold faith doesn't pursue Jesus. A cold faith turns to other remedies for life's problems without thinking about Jesus. A cold faith has its eyes on things other than the finish line. The author of Hebrews tells us to focus on the race that God has called us to run. This might be exactly what you need to hear this Christmas season. Don't give up! Keep running the life of faith!

### **Hints of a Savior**

The writer of Hebrews tells us in these verses that we run the race by looking to Jesus because we know that He came to earth and ran the race to perfection. Our Savior was perfect on our behalf.

### **Prayer**

Father, help us focus on Jesus and run the race that you have called us to run, to live in your joy and make disciples of all nations. We pray that our family and our church focus on you and we run the race together with endurance, knowing that everything you tell us to do is worth it. Amen.

## **Week 4**

### Day 3

#### Revelation 21:1-4 – City of Joy

We began our devotional at the beginning of Genesis, so it's only appropriate that we end at the end of Revelation. In Revelation, John had a vision of the future, and in this vision, we see God's ultimate plan for His creation. It all culminates in Revelation 21, where we see God say that He will dwell with humanity forever in His new city. What an incredible picture of the future! The redeemed of Christ forever with the Lord in His new creation.

Everything in the Bible has been pointing the way forward to this moment. Genesis 1 began a plan that finds its conclusion in Revelation 21. Because of Jesus, God's plan to bring His glory to all creation reaches its fulfillment here in these words. This is the world that all of us ache for, and as Christians, we anticipate it every time we see brokenness within us and around us. This is the world that all of our deepest desires point toward. As C.S. Lewis once wrote, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

Christmas is a time where we celebrate the birth of Christ and enjoy the events of the season. But it is also a season of anticipation. We anticipate Christ's return and God's new city.

Where God's river of healing will flow to all of His creation.

Where God's people will live in the midst of His glory.

Where Jesus will be praised as King every day for all eternity.

Where our deepest struggles will be gone and our deepest desires fulfilled in Jesus.

Where we will be with God forever.

Are you ready?

### **Hints of a Savior**

In Revelation 21, we get a hint to what new creation with our Savior will look like. Although it would be impossible to fully understand the glory of new creation, we get hints and whispers to its great joy, as the glory of God fills creation, and our Savior is exalted forever.

### **Prayer**

Father, as we arrive at Christmas Day, let us not forget that Jesus is seated at your right hand, and that He will come again to fulfill your mission on earth. Let us live in light of this truth, and let it bring us great joy this Christmas season. Amen.

## **Week 4 Activity**

### Living in Anticipation

As Christians, we live in anticipation of the day that Jesus returns. In order to think about anticipation, bake some cookies (or buy some from the store) that you will save until Christmas Day. As you look at them in anticipation, think of the anticipation that we have in Christ.

For each activity, remember to snap a picture and hashtag it #HebronADVENTures2022 on social media. We are not trying to broadcast our pictures for our own pride, but in order to stir up ideas for each other on social media this holiday season.

**Notes:**







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