

## WEEK 2: PEACE – THE NAMES OF JESUS

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was perhaps the greatest poet of his day in America, and among the greatest in Europe. He was born in Portland, Maine in 1807 and became a professor of English at Harvard College. Though he quickly achieved fame, his life was not without pain. In 1835 his first wife died after a miscarriage. He later remarried and lost his second wife in 1861, after her dress caught fire. In March of 1863, without his father's blessing or knowledge, his oldest son Charles joined the Union Army only to be severely wounded in November. Meanwhile, Longfellow endured the daily dirge of depressing news and echoes of war that poured into the Revolutionary War Headquarters of George Washington (Cambridge, MA) where he lived the remainder of his days.

It was out of this grief that on Christmas day, 1863, Longfellow penned the words to the poetic lament we now know as, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." Each verse returns to the angel's words from Luke 2:14, questioning whether peace will prevail, or the bells will be drowned out. However, on the final verse, Longfellow declares that God is not dead, wrong will fail and right prevail, and the bells of God's peace cannot be overpowered.

Though the chorus of grief and despair may be loud, may the peace of God ring out in and through you this season.

### **I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day**

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I heard the bells on Christmas Day,  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet, The words repeat  
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along, The unbroken song  
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!

## ADVENT READING PLAN 2021

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Till ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime, A chant sublime  
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth,  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound, The carols drowned  
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent,  
The hearth-stones of a continent,  
And made forlorn, The households born  
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong, And mocks the song  
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,  
With peace on Earth, good-will to men."

## Sunday, December 5, 2021

Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:22-23

### **NAMES OF JESUS: IMMANUEL, GOD IS WITH US**

Wally Marshall

Having a medical background and reading these central passages 36 years ago as a new follower of Jesus Christ was a challenge. A virgin birth is contrary to the course of nature. It is scientifically impossible unless the regular processes of nature were, in this particular case, being over-ruled or supplemented by something from beyond nature.

Nothing ever really seems extraordinary until you have discovered what is ordinary. Belief in miracles, far from depending on the natural laws, are only possible when those laws make sense to us. My faith in a trustworthy God began to be real when I noticed changes in my life and how I started to view God's touch on the world around me.

Prophecy coming to life before their eyes encouraged the early church to continue following God's promised Messiah. Believing a chosen woman like Mary to be a virgin and yet with child was, and is, supernatural, just like all creation.

Today, reflect on the miracle of the incarnation and the many ways God continues to be revealed to us today.

### Monday, December 6

Isaiah 9:6 & Colossians 1:15-16

### **NAMES OF JESUS: WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE**

Pete Sutton

Through the incarnation, the invisible God becomes visible. Every human being ever created was made "in the image of God," save one. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Therefore, Jesus can say, *"I and the Father are one,"* (John 10:30), or *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,"* (John 14:9). There is not a human being on the planet who does not bring glory to God by reflecting His nature, but there is only one human being who does so perfectly and completely – the eternal Son of God. As the eternal and incarnate Son of God, Jesus assumes the throne of his Heavenly Father so obediently and thoroughly that he too is called *"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:6)

His obedience to and glorification of the Father is so thorough that the Father grants Him full authority over all people, kingdoms, and creation (John 17:2). For this reason, Jesus is able to say, *"I Am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,"* (John 10:4). Therefore, we have peace with God the Father because we align with Jesus the Son. May the peace of God through the eternal reign of the Son of God guard and guide you this season of Advent.

Today, reflect on Jesus the Son and his perfect obedience to the Father through his life, ministry, death, resurrection, and eternal intercession on behalf of those within his Kingdom.

## Tuesday, December 7

Revelation 22:13 & John 8:58

### **NAMES OF JESUS: ALPHA & OMEGA**

Ryan Worsley

These days, it can be very difficult to go even a short period of time, without thinking about how the world is spinning out of control. With the instant and continuous flow of information at our fingertips, life can often appear very bleak. While we certainly experience darkness all around us, I often wonder if every previous generation has had the same thought – that things have never been worse, that all hope has been lost, and that evil has won.

Friend, can I encourage you today? Nothing we have experienced, currently experience, or will experience surprises God. His Word tells us that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He has always been and will always be. No matter what we face in this life, we can have confidence in Him!

Jesus, we so often lose sight of you and focus instead on our circumstances. This Christmas, please help us remember your promises and rest in the gift of your peace. Amen.

## Wednesday, December 8

2 Samuel 22:51 & John 1:41

### **NAMES OF JESUS: MESSIAH**

Kim Huffman

When I read about the woman who found a 4-carat diamond in-the-raw at a state park in Arkansas, I wanted to go there immediately and hunt for diamonds! I wanted to search for and find valuable treasure.

The Jewish people had been searching for the Messiah for hundreds of years - a Savior who was promised to show *hesed* or merciful, loving kindness to his people. So, when John the Baptist introduced Andrew to the "Lamb of God" (John 1:35-37), the One who would take away the sins of the world, Andrew immediately went and got his brother, Simon Peter, and told him he had found the Messiah. This was the BEST news either of them would ever hear, after a lifetime of searching.

Have you been searching for the Messiah? Perhaps you've met Jesus, but you haven't surrendered your life to Him? Perhaps you know Jesus, but you've not been depending on Him and His merciful, loving kindness? Perhaps it's time to stop everything, surrender, and follow.

Today, reflect on your response to finding Jesus. Ask God how you might still respond today to the Good News of Jesus the Messiah.

## Thursday, December 9

2 Samuel 22:2-4 & Luke 2:11

### **NAME OF JESUS: SAVIOR**

Paul Giersz

Some say Jesus is a fictitious character, others say He was a good man and others say He was a good teacher. Still others say He was one of many religious leaders. Some think Jesus is like a Genie in a bottle or a get out of jail free card.

According to God, Jesus is a:

Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, Shield, Stronghold, Refuge, Savior and Lord.

According to God, Jesus alone is worthy of praise.

Who do you say Jesus is?

Does your life reflect your answer?

### Friday, December 10

Psalm 2:7-9 & Mark 1:10-11

### **NAMES OF JESUS: SON OF GOD**

Diane Beers

Visualize in your mind Jesus coming out of the water, heaven opening up, the Spirit descending on Him like a dove (Mark 1:10) and then a voice, my ears hear a powerful voice; the roar of many waters and a sound that is so soothing it brings me peace. The voice from heaven proclaimed the Father's approval of Jesus; *"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* (Mark 1:11).

God speaks to His Son; *"you are my Son, today, I have become your father." "I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession,"* (Psalm 2:7). There isn't anyone else on this earth who can promise what God has promised His Son.

There is another reminder for us; *"You will break them with a rod of iron, you will dash them to pieces like pottery."* (Psalm 2:9) Similarly, there isn't anyone on this earth who can destroy the things of this world with a command like God can. This statement reveals that the anointed King, the Messiah, will smash the rebellious nations with an iron rod. This same Son of God will be called King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Who or what do you put your trust in? Government? Money? Relationships? Possessions? Don't let the constant chaos or unrest of this world, Satan and his demonic attacks infringe on your peace, your shalom, this Christmas. Instead, remember the King of the universe is on the throne and His is the victory!



### Saturday, December 11

Ezekiel 37:11-14 & John 11:25

## **NAMES OF JESUS: THE RESURRECTION & THE LIFE**

Gerald Aloran

The aftermath of war is death and destruction. Israel's history is similar to her neighboring nations since it has also been plagued by war and strife. The devastating loss of life is unbearable. Yet God promised His people Israel that He will restore them. The image Ezekiel uses is powerful. The dry bones on the battlefield of men who died fighting will begin to regenerate. Tendons will attach to bone, then muscle will cover the bones, then skin, then finally breath! This is the restoration of Israel.

The war-torn exiles had no hope, but God made a promise. He promised to restore them through the Messiah. The earthly kingdoms brought death, but God's kingdom brings life. This kingdom, which now includes those from outside the DNA of Israel, will have citizens that will never die! All citizens of this life-giving kingdom follow its King - King Jesus.

Advent is a preparation for the coming of our King. The first step to prepare for the King is to believe in the King. Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came into the world, was crucified, was buried, and raised from the dead? Second, will you follow this King, the giver of new life?