



# *The Jesse Tree*

CHILDREN'S BIBLE STORIES



MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

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# The Jesse Tree

## CHILDREN'S BIBLE STORIES

Prepare for Jesus' birth by creating your own Jesse Tree with your children! Each day, December 1-25, you can read the designated Bible story and then put the symbolic ornament on your Christmas tree or on a specially designated Jesse Tree—a mini-evergreen, a wire or metal tree, a garland on your staircase or fireplace mantel, etc.

As the days go by, encourage the children to find other ornaments on the Jesse Tree and review the stories associated with them. Each story gets us closer to the birth of Jesus!

Consider making the Jesse Tree part of your Christmas celebration as well. Intersperse gift opening with Bible story telling. For extra fun, tape a small treat to the back of each ornament. The children can eat the treat after they've told the story.

Go to [mlc-wels.edu/publications/the-jesse-tree](https://mlc-wels.edu/publications/the-jesse-tree) to download printable ornaments.

We hope you find the Bible stories and Advent ornaments a meaningful way to prepare for the coming of Jesus, the Branch from Jesse's tree, this Christmas!

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# DECEMBER 1

## The Tree of Jesse



Do you know your mom's name? Silly question, right? Most of us know who our mom is. Can you name one of your grandparents, or even a great-grandparent? All of those people are part of your family "tree."

Now, do you know who *Jesus'* mom was? That's right. It was Mary.

We know about other people in Jesus' family tree too. One of the biggest names is King David. King David was one of Jesus' great-great-great . . . grandpas, and David's father, Jesse, was a great-great-great-great . . . grandpa. (It's really too many "greats" to count!)

Because Jesus came from the family of Jesse, we sometimes call his family tree the "Jesse tree."

There are so many people in the Jesse tree! Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ruth and Rahab. We can go all the way back to Great-Great-Great . . . Grandpa Noah! And even further back—to Adam and Eve!

And many other people in the Bible had important jobs to do to keep God's family safe until Jesus could be born—people like Joseph and Moses and Nehemiah.

That's a lot of names, isn't it? The Bible tells us their stories, and we're going to learn all about them as we prepare for Jesus' birth at Christmas!

We've also given you a Christmas ornament to go with each story. You can put those ornaments on your "Jesse tree"—either your normal Christmas tree or another kind of branch or tree. We hope the pictures on the ornaments will remind you of all these special people of God.

What's the Jesse tree?  
It's all the people in Jesus' family.

**As I hang the STUMP on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**

The Bible tells us about many of Jesus' grandmas and grandpas—including Jesse.  
Through all these people, God kept his promise to send the Savior.

## DECEMBER 2

### *The First Promise of the Savior*



When God created Adam and Eve, he put them in the beautiful Garden of Eden, which was full of plants and animals. He told them: "You can eat the fruit from any tree, *except* the tree in the middle—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil."

One day, a snake started talking to Eve. It said, "Did God really tell you not to eat from any tree in the garden?" She answered, "We can eat from any tree except the one in the middle. We can't even touch that tree, or God said we will die."

That snake was really Satan! He wanted Eve to disobey God. He said, "You won't die. If you eat from the tree in the middle, you'll be just like God. You'll know all about good and evil." Eve thought the fruit looked tasty, so she took some and ate it. Then she gave some to Adam, and he ate it too. This was the first sin.

Later, Adam and Eve heard God walking in the garden. They were afraid, so they hid. God called out, "Where are you?" Then God asked, "Did you eat the fruit from the tree I told you not to eat from?" Adam said, "Yes, but that's because Eve gave it to me." Eve said, "Yes, but that's because the snake tricked me."

Now God had to discipline Adam and Eve. They had to leave the garden, which was their home, and from now on, they would always have pain and trouble in their lives. God also punished the snake. He told the snake, "You are cursed! From now on, you'll always crawl on your belly. And one day, one of Eve's great-great-great . . . grandchildren will crush you completely!"

Do you know who would one day crush Satan? Jesus!  
This is God's first promise of the Savior.

**As I hang the SERPENT on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:  
God promised Adam and Eve to send a Savior.  
That Savior is Jesus, and he crushed Satan!**

## DECEMBER 3

### God Saves Noah



Noah and his family loved God, but everyone else in the world hated God and lived very sinful lives.

So God told Noah, “I’m going to destroy the world with a great flood, but I’m going to save you. Now go build an ark, big enough for your family and for lots of animals. When the rains come, you’re going to go inside the ark and be safe.”

So Noah did! He sawed wood and nailed the pieces together to make a big boat with lots of rooms inside. When the ark was ready, God brought the animals to Noah. Some animals came in twos—a boy and a girl. And some came in groups of seven. There were dogs and kangaroos and giraffes, bluebirds and bats and snakes and dinosaurs—every kind of animal!

Then Noah and his family went into the ark too, and God *himself* closed the door.

Just then, the rain started. And the wind. And the thunder and lightning. And the earthquakes. For forty days it rained! The flood covered every farm and every city—even the mountains! All the people on earth died because they were very wicked. But God kept Noah and his family safe in the ark.

Many weeks later, when the earth was dry enough, God told Noah to leave the ark. Noah thanked God for saving him and built an altar to him. And God promised Noah he would never destroy the world with a flood again. To remind him of that promise he put a very special sign in the sky: a beautiful rainbow—just like we still see today.

Do you know how we are like Noah? God saves us too!  
God sent his Son Jesus to save us from our sins.

**As I hang NOAH’S ARK on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:  
God saved Noah from the flood.  
God also saves me from sin and death  
through my Savior, Jesus.**

## DECEMBER 4

### *God's Promise to Abraham*



Abraham loved God, and God gave him many blessings: a wife named Sarah, many servants, lots of land, sheep, and cattle, and great riches. He even had his own army!

God also gave Abraham a special promise. He said, "I'm going to make you into a great nation. And through your family, everyone on earth will be blessed."

This was the promise of the Savior! The Savior would be a blessing to everyone on earth, and he would come from Abraham's family!

There was only one problem. Abraham and Sarah didn't have any children. And they were getting very old.

One night, God wanted to reassure Abraham that the promise would come true. He appeared to Abraham in a vision! He took Abraham outside his tent and said, "Look up into the sky and count the stars—if you can." Abraham could not! There were too many stars in the sky for anyone to count!

Then God said, "That's how big your family will be—too many to count!" Abraham believed God's promise, and he kept waiting.

Another time, Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent, and three visitors came to talk to him. It was actually the Lord and two angels! The Lord told him that in one year, he and Sarah would have a son. Now, Sarah was hiding inside the tent so she could listen. When she heard this, she laughed to herself. "I'm too old to have a child!" she thought.

But the Lord knew she was there, and he knew she laughed. He said, "Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

What do you think happened? God's promise came true! One year later, when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old, Sarah had a baby boy. They named him Isaac, which means "laughter."

How did God keep his promise to Abraham?

He sent him a son named Isaac, and many years later, he sent the Savior, Jesus.

**As I hang the TENT on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**

**God promised Abraham that he would have a son,  
and that the Savior would come from his family.**

## DECEMBER 5

### *A Substitute for Isaac*



Isaac is the son of Abraham. Now, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, had waited a long time for Isaac. Sarah was 90 years old and Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was finally born! They were so very happy!

After several years, God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering to him. But how would killing Isaac accomplish anything good? And what about the promise of a Savior? How could a Savior come from his family if he didn't have any children?

Even so, Abraham trusted God, so he made plans to sacrifice Isaac.

Abraham gathered a knife and some wood, and they set out for Mount Moriah. On the way, Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" And Abraham gave an amazing answer: "God will provide the lamb." What great faith! Abraham trusted God's promises!

When they got to the mountain, Abraham built an altar and put wood on it. Then he tied Isaac to the altar. Then he raised his knife. He was ready to sacrifice Isaac, because that was what God had asked him to do.

But suddenly, he heard a voice! It was God, speaking from heaven: "Abraham! Stop! Don't kill him!" So Abraham put down the knife and untied Isaac. He was so relieved!

Just then he saw a ram caught in a nearby bush. God had put that ram there so they would find it. Abraham sacrificed the ram to God instead.

And God said, "Because you obeyed me, Abraham, I'm going to make your family as many as the stars in the sky, and through one of your great-great-great . . . grandchildren, all people on earth will be blessed."

Do you know who that great-great-great . . . grandchild was? Jesus!  
Jesus is our Savior. Jesus would one day be sacrificed on a cross to pay for our sins.

**As I hang the RAM on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**

**God promised Abraham and Isaac that he would send the Savior.  
That Savior is Jesus, who would be sacrificed, like the ram, for my sins!**

## DECEMBER 6

### *A Stairway in Jacob's Dream*



This is a story about Jacob, who was a trickster! One of Jacob's biggest tricks was fooling his twin brother, Esau, into trading the special family blessing for a bowl of soup! Later, when their father, Isaac, was dying, Jacob tricked him too—by pretending to be Esau!

Now that Jacob had the special family blessing, Esau was furious! He wanted to kill Jacob! So Jacob ran away from home and headed for his uncle's house. He traveled for many miles, scared and lonely. One night, when the sun went down, he stopped to rest. He found a stone and used it as a pillow, and he lay on the ground and fell fast asleep.

God knew that Jacob felt scared and lonely—and guilty too, because of his tricks. So as Jacob slept, God sent him a wonderful dream!

Jacob dreamed of a stairway that went from the ground all the way up to heaven. On that stairway, walking up and down, were angels! At the very top of the stairway was God himself. He said to Jacob, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandpa, Abraham, and your father, Isaac. Someday you will have a huge family, and all this land will belong to you! And there's more! I'm going to bless everyone on the whole earth through one of your great-great-great . . . grandchildren. Now remember, I'm always with you, and I'll watch over you wherever you go."

When Jacob woke up the next morning, he was so happy! He said, "The Lord is right here, in this place, and I didn't even know it! This place is awesome! It's the house of God, the gate of heaven!"

Jacob wanted to remember what God had said to him. So he took his stone pillow and turned it so that it stood up like a little pillar. Then he poured oil over it and gave that place a new name: Bethel, which means "house of God."

Do you know who Jacob's great-great-great . . . grandson would be,  
the one that would be a blessing to the whole earth? Jesus!  
God promised Jacob that the Savior would be born in Jacob's own family.

**As I hang the STAIRWAY on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**

**God promised Jacob that he would always be with him  
and that the Savior would be born from his family.  
That Savior is Jesus!**

## DECEMBER 7

### *Joseph's Beautiful Robe*



Now, Jacob had 12 sons—but his favorite was Joseph. Because Jacob loved Joseph so much, he gave him a beautiful robe with lots of colors and wonderful decorations on it. When Joseph's brothers saw that robe, they could tell that their father loved Joseph best. So they hated Joseph.

One day, Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers while they worked out in the fields with the sheep. As Joseph got closer, his brothers made an evil plan to hurt him. They yanked off his robe and threw him into an empty well. He couldn't get out! Then, when some merchants came by with their camels and wagons, the brothers sold Joseph to the merchants as a slave.

What would they tell their father? They had a plan for that too. They took Joseph's beautiful robe, dipped it in goat's blood, and then showed it to Jacob. "Oh, no!" they said. "Joseph was killed by a wild animal!"

The merchants took Joseph far away to Egypt. There he was forced to work as a slave. And then he was put into prison. It looked like everything was going wrong. But God had a plan. God brought Joseph out of prison and made him a special helper, an advisor, for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt!

As Pharaoh's advisor, Joseph saved his family's life. This is how: God had told Joseph that soon there would be a famine. In a famine, the rain stops falling, and the crops stop growing, and people starve to death. So Joseph made a plan, and Pharaoh agreed to it. The plan was to save some grain every year and store it in big warehouses. Then, when the famine came, the people of Egypt had food to eat!

You know who else received some of that food in Egypt? Joseph's brothers who hated him. Their families were hungry too, so they came to Egypt to get food. When they saw that Joseph had become a powerful ruler, they were shocked! Eventually, they said they were sorry they had been mean to him. Then they brought their father to Egypt too, and the whole family lived there for many years.

Do you know why it's important that through Joseph, Jacob's family was saved from starvation?  
Because Jesus the Savior would be born in Jacob's family.

**As I hang JOSEPH'S ROBE on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**

**God used Joseph to keep his father, Jacob, and his brothers safe.  
From that family, many years later, Jesus was born.**

## DECEMBER 8

### Moses and the Ten Commandments



Moses was the leader God chose for his people, the Israelites. Moses delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, and Moses received the Ten Commandments from God himself. Here's how it happened:

The Israelites were all the great-great-grandchildren of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They had gone to live in Egypt so they wouldn't starve, and then they stayed there—for more than 400 years! They were already a big family—about 70 people—but God blessed them and made them a huge family—about two million people!

They were happy in Egypt until a new ruler came to power and decided to make them his slaves. They worked outside in the hot sun, making bricks and building buildings. Their lives were so hard! They cried out to God to help them, so he sent Moses to deliver them! With Moses as their leader, they escaped from the Egyptians and started walking toward the Promised Land.

After they'd walked for three months, the Israelites camped in front of Mount Sinai. It was time for God to give them his law. God told them all to take a bath and wash their clothes, and then to gather around the mountain—but not to touch it! As they did, the mountain started shaking! They heard roaring thunder. They saw lightning flash across the sky. They heard the blast of trumpets! And they saw a thick dark cloud come down over the mountain. They were so scared!

Then God himself spoke to them from the mountain! He told them the Ten Commandments, including “worship only me” and “obey your parents” and “don't lie or steal.” A little later, Moses went up on the mountain to talk to God, and God wrote those commandments with his own finger on two tablets of stone.

God gave Moses many other laws for the Israelites too—rules about how to live together without hurting each other, how to worship, and how to stay separated from unbelievers. We often think of laws as bad things, rules that don't let us do what we want. But God's gift of the law made the Israelites special! It kept them safe. God did it so they would stay together and would always remember the promise of the Savior he had given them!

Before God gave any of these laws, though—before he told them what to do—he told them what he had done for them! He said, “I am the Lord your God, the God who loves you, the God who keeps his promises, the God who brought you out of slavery in Egypt. If you obey my law, then you are going to be my chosen people, a holy nation!”

Why did God give Israel his laws and make them his chosen people?  
God loved them and wanted them to be the family in which Jesus was born.

**As I hang the STONE TABLETS on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**

**God made Israel his special chosen people,  
the people that would be the family of Jesus.**

## DECEMBER 9

### Rahab's Life Is Spared



Rahab was a woman who lived in the city of Jericho. In fact, her house was part of the wall that surrounded Jericho.

Rahab was not one of God's special people, the Israelites, and she was living a very sinful life. But God used her to help the Israelites and brought her into the family tree. Here's how it happened:

One day two men came to stay at her house. She found out they were Israelite spies, come to check out the city and see how the Israelites could conquer it.

Rahab said, "I've heard about you. I heard how the Lord divided the Red Sea for you to go through. I know that the Lord your God is the true God and he's going to give you our land."

When the king of Jericho found out there were Israelite spies in his city, he sent his soldiers to Rahab's house to capture them. The soldiers said, "Rahab, bring out the spies!" But she had hidden the two spies up on her roof, under some large bundles of grain that were drying in the sun. She said to the soldiers, "Well, the spies *were* here, but they already left. I don't know which way they went, but if you hurry, you might catch up with them." So the soldiers went off to find them.

Then Rahab went back up to the spies and said to them, "I know your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. Please, promise to save my family and me when you take over the city. I've been kind to you. Please be kind to me!" The spies said, "If you don't tell anyone what we're doing, we'll save you. Tie this scarlet cord in your window. Then, when we destroy everyone in the city, we'll know that everyone in this house should be saved."

That night Rahab let the spies escape through her window, and they went to hide in the hills. She tied the scarlet cord in the same window, and when the Israelites conquered Jericho they saw the scarlet cord and saved Rahab and her family. Eventually, Rahab joined the Israelites and became a great-great-great . . . grandmother of Jesus!

How did Rahab help the children of Israel?  
Rahab hid the Israelite spies and then helped them escape.

**As I hang RAHAB'S SCARLET CORD on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:  
Rahab saved the spies, and God saved Rahab.  
She is one of the great-great-great . . . grandmothers of Jesus.**

# DECEMBER 10

## Ruth Joins the Family Tree



Ruth lived in the land of Moab. She was not one of God's people, but she married a man from Bethlehem who had moved to her country. Through him, she heard about the true God, and she believed in him.

When her husband died, Ruth decided to go back to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, Naomi. She could have stayed in Moab, but people there didn't believe in God. Ruth loved God and wanted to go live with God's people.

In Bethlehem, Ruth and Naomi were very poor. Ruth worked in the fields, picking up little bits of grain that were left behind after the harvest. That was how she and Naomi had food to eat.

One day, God led Ruth to pick up grain in the fields of a rich and God-fearing man named Boaz. Boaz saw her and said, "Who is that?" When he found out it was Ruth, who had come from Moab and was taking care of Naomi, he took good care of her. He told her to drink some of his water. He invited her to eat lunch with him and his workers. And he told his men to leave extra grain in the fields for her to pick up.

Later, he found out that he was related to Naomi, which meant it was his special job to watch out for Ruth and Naomi. So Boaz decided to marry Ruth!

Eventually, Ruth and Boaz had a baby named Obed. Obed became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of King David.

We might not expect to see Ruth in Jesse's tree. She was from a land where they didn't even believe in God. But God brought her to faith and took good care of her through Boaz. Now we remember her as the great-grandmother of King David and the great-great-great . . . grandmother of Jesus. She's an important person in the Jesse tree.

Why is it surprising that Ruth is part of the Jesse tree?  
Ruth was from Moab, where they didn't believe in God.

**As I hang the WHEAT on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**  
God brought Ruth into Jesus' family,  
even though she came from a land of unbelievers.  
Ruth is another great-great-great . . . grandmother of Jesus.

## DECEMBER 11

### David Is Anointed King



David was the youngest of eight sons of Jesse and not a man you might pick to be a king. But he was God's choice! Here's how it happened:

God told the prophet Samuel to go to Jesse's house in the town of Bethlehem and anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the next king. (To anoint someone is to pour oil on their head in a special ceremony, showing everyone that they've been chosen by God for a special job.)

When Samuel got to Bethlehem, he asked to see all Jesse's sons. First, the oldest walked in, and Samuel thought, "Look at him! He must be the future king!" But God said, "Don't look at how tall or handsome he is. I don't look at a person's appearance. I look at their heart."

The next son came, and again God said, "No." Seven sons walked past Samuel, and each time, God said, "No." Samuel asked Jesse, "Is this everyone? Do you have any more sons?" And Jesse said, "Well, I do have one more. He's the baby of the family. He's out watching the sheep."

Samuel said, "Go get him. We're not going to sit down and eat until I've seen him." So they sent someone to run out to the fields and fetch David. When David walked in, God said to Samuel, "That's him. That's the one I want you to anoint as the next king." So, while Jesse and the other sons watched, Samuel lifted the horn and poured some of the cool, thick oil on David's head.

As the oil dripped down his hair, the Holy Spirit came on David! It would be several years before David became king, but during those years, the Holy Spirit helped David love and trust God even more, and made him strong and wise so that he would be a good king.

God prepared David in other ways too. A little while after he was anointed, David was called to King Saul's palace to play the harp for him when he was sad and troubled. David wrote his own songs to the Lord, so maybe he played and sang some of those to King Saul! Saul liked David so much that he made him his assistant to carry his armor and weapons at battles. Through those experiences—and many others—David slowly learned how to be king.

David became one of the greatest kings of Israel!

What other "King" was born in the family of David and in Bethlehem, the city of David?

Jesus was born in David's family—and David's city—to be our Savior and King.

He is even called Christ and Messiah, which mean "Anointed One."

**As I hang the HORN OF OIL on the JESSE TREE,**

**Here is an Advent promise for me:**

**God anointed David, son of Jesse, the king of Israel.**

**The greater King—Jesus!—would come from David's family.**

## DECEMBER 12

# A House for God and a House for David



King David was an amazing man of God! He had been a lowly shepherd, and God had lifted him up to be the king of Israel! He was an excellent soldier who defeated many enemies. He was a musician who sang and played the harp and other musical instruments. He was a writer who wrote songs for God that we can find in the book of the Bible called the Psalms.

King David was also an architect! He designed a beautiful temple for God! This is how it happened:

One day, David said to himself, "Here I am, living in this beautiful palace made of cedar wood, but God's house is a tent!" He was right—the "church" of the Israelites was a tent called a tabernacle. God had commanded that they use a tent back when they were traveling through the wilderness with Moses as their leader. A tent made sense, because they could put it up and take it down as they moved from place to place.

But now they were settled in the Promised Land and all their enemies had been defeated. David thought it was time to build God a beautiful house of his own—a temple. With God's help, David drew a plan. Pages and pages of plans for a temple with many rooms, with porches and pillars and huge doors, with an altar and table and lampstands—and everything made with the most expensive materials: gold and silver, bronze and cedar.

Do you know what God said then? He said no. "No, David, you will not build this temple."

But God quickly added a yes. "Your son Solomon will use these plans to build the temple."

And then God added another yes. He said, "David, your house, your family, your kingdom is going to last forever." What God meant is that David's family would be the family of the greatest King, the eternal King—Jesus!

David was so happy! He said, "Who am I, Lord? And what is my family that you would give us this blessing! Here, I wanted to build a house for you, and instead you said you would build a house for me! Thank you for your promise that the house of David—this family, this kingdom—will never end!"

David was so thankful that he wrote more psalms for the people to sing when they would go to that temple one day. And we still sing these psalms because we're so thankful for all the blessings God has given us through Jesus!

In what way would David's house—his family, his kingdom—last forever?  
Jesus, our Savior and King, would be born from the house of David.

**As I hang the HARP on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**

**King David was a brilliant musician, soldier, architect, and king.  
From King David's house came our Savior and King, Jesus!**

## DECEMBER 13

# Elijah and the Prophets of Baal



Elijah was God's prophet in Israel when many of God's people worshiped a false god called Baal. God wanted to remind his people that he was the true God—the God who would one day send a Savior.

He told Elijah to challenge the prophets of Baal to a contest. All the Israelites gathered at Mount Carmel to watch!

Elijah said to the people, "It's time to decide! If the LORD is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, follow him!" The people just stood there and said nothing.

So Elijah said, "Listen. Baal has 450 prophets, and the true God has one prophet: me. So let's have a contest. We'll each kill a bull and lay it on some firewood on an altar. Then we'll pray for fire. You ask Baal, and I'll ask the LORD. Whichever god answers by sending down fire—he is the true God."

Early in the morning it began. The prophets of Baal went first. They began begging Baal to send fire. They prayed all day. They danced around the altar and shouted as loudly as they could. Elijah said, "Shout louder! Maybe Baal is busy, or sleeping." They cut themselves and made themselves bleed, hoping to get Baal's attention. But, of course, nothing happened. Baal didn't send fire, because Baal isn't real. There is only one true God.

When evening came, it was Elijah's turn. He built an altar of 12 stones and put some wood on it. Then he put the pieces of the bull on the wood. Then he did something to make it even harder for a fire to start: he poured gallons and gallons of water on the altar, drenching everything! He even dug a ditch around the altar and filled that with water too!

Then he prayed: "Answer me, LORD, so that these people will know you are the true God." He didn't even say, "Send fire." He just said, "Show them that you're the true God!" And what do you think happened? Fire came down from heaven and burned up everything! It burned up the bull and the wood. It burned up the stones of the altar! It even burned up the soil and all the water in the ditch!

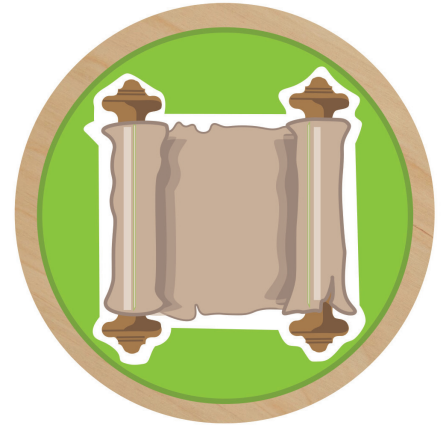
When the people saw what had happened, they knew! They said, "The LORD—he is God!" and they bowed down and worshiped him.

How did God remind his people that he was the true God?  
God answered Elijah's prayer and sent fire from heaven.

**As I hang the ALTAR on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**  
God brought his people back to him through Elijah.  
Through these people, he would send the Savior, Jesus.

## DECEMBER 14

### Good King Josiah



Josiah was a very good king.

Now, not all the kings of God's people were good. Most of them were wicked. Josiah's own father and grandfather were wicked! When they were king, the people did not read God's Word or teach it to their children. They forgot how much God loved them. They forgot how he had rescued their people from Egypt through Moses. And they forgot that he was going to send a Savior one day! They did not pray to God, and they did not obey his laws. Instead, they worshiped idols—statues that they thought were actually gods.

But good King Josiah changed things. He became king when he was only 8 years old! He believed in the true God, and when he was older, he said, "I want the Lord's temple to be repaired. Buy some timber and some big stones, and start fixing it up!" So all the workers started making the temple beautiful again.

One day, King Josiah's secretary came to him to report on the temple. He said, "Sir, the workers are doing a good job fixing up the temple. Also, they found something I think you'll want to see. . . . It's a book." And he showed Josiah a scroll. A scroll is a little like a roll of paper towel—or two rolls connected to each other. That's what books looked like back then.

Then the secretary started reading from the book. It was God's Law, which had been lost for years! When Josiah heard it, he got very upset. He said, "Oh, no! We've been sinning against the Lord! We have to repent!" He was so upset, he grabbed the neck of his robe, and he tore it off!

Then King Josiah ordered all God's people to come to the temple, and he read the scroll to them too. When they heard it, they were sorry! They all promised to obey God and worship only him!

King Josiah destroyed all the idols. He burned down their altars and special worship buildings, and he got rid of all the leaders of this wickedness.

Because of good King Josiah's changes, God's Word—and the promise of the Savior—was not forgotten!

How did King Josiah remind people of God's law and God's promise of the Savior?  
King Josiah read God's Word to the people, and everyone promised to worship and obey God.

**As I hang the SCROLL on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:  
King Josiah made sure God's Word—and the promise  
of the Savior—were not forgotten.**

# DECEMBER 15

## Jonah and the Big Fish



Jonah *knew* he shouldn't have tried to out-smart God.

God had told Jonah to go to the big city of Nineveh and preach to them: "Repent of your sins! Believe in God!" But Jonah didn't want to do it! Nineveh was very wicked, and they had done horrible things to God's people. He didn't want to go preach to them!

Instead, he boarded a ship that was going in the opposite direction. But before the ship got very far, God sent a huge storm! The wind howled, the ship rocked up and down, and the waves broke over the sides. It was so horrible that the sailors thought the boat would break into pieces and sink!

Jonah knew the storm was his fault. The men knew it too. They asked Jonah, "What should we do to you to make the storm stop?"

Jonah said, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea, and it will become calm."

The men weren't sure they should do that. But the storm kept getting worse and worse. So, even though they believed in other gods, they prayed to Jonah's God: "Lord, please don't blame us if we throw him overboard and he dies."

Then they grabbed Jonah by the arms and legs and heaved him into the great big waves. And immediately, the wind stopped and the sea was perfectly calm.

Did Jonah drown? No! God sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah in one big gulp!

Jonah was inside that fish for three days and three nights. He did a lot of praying in there. He said, "Lord, you hurled me into the depths of the sea. The water swirled around me, and the seaweed wrapped around my head. But I trust in you, Lord. I know that salvation comes from you!"

God heard Jonah's prayer and commanded the fish to cough up Jonah onto the dry land.

Now God gave Jonah the exact same command: "Go preach in Nineveh." This time Jonah got right to work! And all the people of Nineveh—even the king!—repented of their sins and believed in God.

How did God save Jonah? Through a big fish.

How did God save the people of Nineveh? Through Jonah's preaching of God's Word.

How does God save you? Through the work of Jesus our Savior.

**As I hang the BIG FISH on the JESSE TREE,**

**Here is an Advent promise for me:**

**God saved Jonah by letting a big fish swallow him.**

**God saves me through my Savior, Jesus.**

# DECEMBER 16

## *The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace*



Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were three men who loved and worshiped God—even though they lived far away from home and worked for a king who did not love God.

His name was King Nebuchadnezzar, and he was about to learn who the true God was! Here's how it happened:

King Nebuchadnezzar ordered that a huge golden statue be made and that all his government workers bow down to worship it. Here was his command: "When you hear the trumpets and bagpipes and all the instruments play, you must fall down and worship the golden statue—or else you will be thrown into a burning fiery furnace!"

But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew who their God was, and they knew not to worship anything else. When the trumpet sounded, they did not fall down and worship.

King Nebuchadnezzar was furious! He called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to his court and asked, "Is it true that you will not worship the golden statue? I will give you one more chance. When you hear the music, you must bow down and worship. If you do not, I'll throw you into the fiery furnace! And then what god will save you?"

The three men stood bravely before the king and said: "If you want to throw us into the fiery furnace, we will accept that. We know our God can rescue us. But even if he doesn't rescue us, that's okay. We still worship only him, and we will not bow down to your statue!"

King Nebuchadnezzar was so angry! He ordered that the furnace be made seven times hotter than normal. And then the guards tied up the three men and threw them in!

The king could see them in the furnace. And as he watched, he was astonished. They were not burning up. They weren't tied up anymore either. They were walking around, completely untouched by the flames. And there was a fourth man in the furnace with them! It was an angel!

King Nebuchadnezzar called the three men out of the furnace, and everyone saw that they were not burned at all. Not one hair on their head was singed, and their clothes didn't even smell like smoke. The king said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! No other god could do something like this!"

How did God show Nebuchadnezzar that he was the true God?  
God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace.

**As I hang the FIRE on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**

**God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace.  
He saves me from my sins through Jesus my Savior.**

## DECEMBER 17

### *Daniel in the Lions' Den*



Daniel was one of God's people who lived in Babylon. Even though Babylon was not a God-fearing country, Daniel loved and worshiped God. Three times a day, he opened his window and kneeled to pray.

In Babylon, Daniel worked for King Darius. Daniel was so wise and so hardworking that King Darius planned to make him ruler over the whole kingdom. That made the king's other advisors very jealous, so they made a plan to get Daniel in trouble.

They knew that three times a day, Daniel opened his window and prayed to God. But King Darius didn't know that. So they convinced the king to pass a law saying, "For the next 30 days, you can't pray to anyone but King Darius himself. If you pray to anyone else, we'll throw you into the lions' den!"

When Daniel heard about the new law, what do you think he did? Did he stop praying because he was afraid? Did he pray in his closet so that no one could see him? No. He went right to his open window and prayed as he always had.

When the advisors saw him, they went straight to King Darius. "Didn't you say that anyone who prayed to someone other than you should be thrown into the lions' den? Well, we just saw Daniel praying to his God!"

Oh, no! King Darius didn't want Daniel to be killed! He tried all day to undo the law and rescue Daniel. But the law was the law. Daniel had to be thrown to the lions.

Just before the den was sealed shut, the king called out, "Daniel, I hope your God delivers you!" All that night, the king couldn't eat or sleep because he was so worried about Daniel.

The next morning, he rushed to the lions' den and called out, "Daniel, has your God rescued you?" And Daniel answered, "Yes! My God closed the mouths of the lions! I'm safe!"

Daniel was immediately taken out of the den, and King Darius praised the God of Daniel! And what do you think happened to those men who had accused Daniel? The king threw *them* in the den, and the lions ate them up.

How did God bless Daniel?  
He saved Daniel from the lions.

**As I hang the LION on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:  
Just as God saved Daniel from the lions,  
he saves me from my sins through Jesus.**

## DECEMBER 18

### Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall



Nehemiah was one of God's people living and working in Persia for King Artaxerxes. One day, he heard that the Jewish people living back home in Jerusalem were in trouble. They had no protection from their enemies because the city walls were broken down and the city gates had been burned. And worse—no one was making the repairs!

This made Nehemiah very sad, and he sat down and cried and cried—and prayed and prayed!—for many days.

King Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah, "Why is your face so sad?" Nehemiah said, "I've just heard that Jerusalem—my hometown—is a mess. The city walls have crumbled and the city gates have been burned."

The king said, "That's terrible. I give you permission to go back to Jerusalem and build the wall! I'll even help you get the wood you need for the gates." So Nehemiah went to Jerusalem.

To keep his idea a secret, Nehemiah inspected the wall late at night. He tiptoed all around it to see how bad it was. Then he told the Jewish officials, "We can do this. Let's rebuild this wall!"

So they started sawing wood and hammering together new gates. They stacked new stones for the walls. But some of their enemies made fun of them: "What do you think you're doing? The king is going to be really mad about this!" But Nehemiah and the Jews ignored them and kept building!

The new walls got higher and higher. When they were halfway done, their enemies said to themselves, "We have to stop this! Let's attack the Jews!" Then the workers on the wall had two jobs: to keep building the wall and to fight off their enemies. Some of them did the building, and some of them stood guard with shields and swords. And some of them held a hammer in one hand and a sword in the other!

God blessed their work though, and they finished rebuilding the wall in 52 days! The Jewish people were so happy. God had protected them so they could rebuild the wall, and now God protected them *inside* that wall. These people were members of Jesus' family, and that same wall was still there 400 years later when Jesus lived!

How did God protect his people inside the city of Jerusalem?

God allowed Nehemiah and all his people to rebuild the city wall so they would be safe.

**As I hang the WALL OF JERUSALEM on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:**

**God kept Nehemiah and all his people safe inside the Jerusalem wall.  
God keeps me safe through Jesus my Savior.**

## DECEMBER 19

### *Zechariah's Prayer*



Zechariah was one of God's priests, and he loved God very much. He and his wife, Elizabeth, were very old. They had no children, even though they had prayed and prayed that God would send one to them.

One day, it was Zechariah's turn to burn incense in the temple. Suddenly, the angel Gabriel appeared to him! Zechariah was terrified!

But Gabriel said, "Don't be afraid. God has heard your prayer. You will have a son, and you'll name him John." The angel also explained how John would be a special man who would help people get ready for Jesus.

Zechariah didn't believe the angel. He and Elizabeth were too old to have children! Then Gabriel said, "Because you don't believe the words I'm speaking, Zechariah, you will not be able to speak until the baby is born."

Zechariah had been in the temple a long time, and the people worshiping outside wondered what had happened to him. Finally, he came out, but he couldn't talk! He just made signs with his hands to try to explain what happened, and then he went home.

Of course, Gabriel's words came true, and Elizabeth gave birth to a son.

About a week later, all their family and friends gathered for a party. They were excited to hear what the baby boy's name would be. They thought that maybe he would be named Zechariah, like his father. But Zechariah remembered Gabriel's words and wrote down a message: "His name is John."

And instantly, Zechariah could speak again! He praised God and then told all the people that soon the Savior would come into the world.

What did Zechariah learn when God answered his prayer?

Zechariah learned that he could trust all God's promises, including his promise to send a Savior.

**As I hang the PRAYING HANDS on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent promise for me:  
God answers all our prayers and keeps all his promises,  
including the promise of the Savior, Jesus!**

## DECEMBER 20

### *Gabriel Tells Mary She Will Be Jesus' Mother*



Mary was a young woman who lived in the town of Nazareth. She was planning to marry a man named Joseph.

One day, God sent the angel Gabriel to visit Mary. "Greetings!" he said. "You are highly favored. The Lord is with you." Mary was scared! She'd never seen an angel before, and she didn't know what he meant with a greeting like that!

Gabriel told her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. You are special to God. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God."

Mary asked Gabriel, "How can this happen since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit and the power of God will come upon you. So your baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God! Remember, with God, all things are possible. In fact, your relative Elizabeth is going to have a baby too—even in her old age."

Mary said, "I will serve the Lord! I will do what he has chosen me to do." Then Gabriel left her.

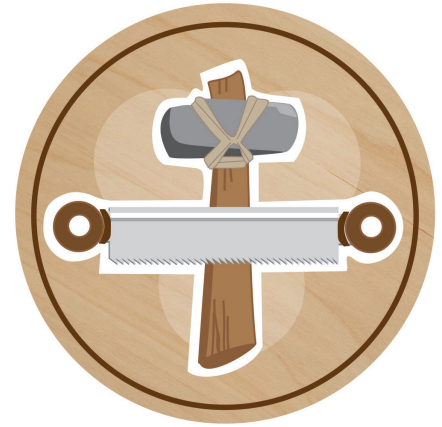
Mary decided to go visit Elizabeth right away. When she got there, she said "Hello, Elizabeth!" and the baby inside Elizabeth—the baby who would be named John—jumped for joy in her belly! Elizabeth said, "You and your child are blessed!" And Mary sang praises to God.

Why did Gabriel visit the virgin Mary?  
Gabriel visited the virgin Mary to tell her she would be Jesus' mother.

**As I hang the ANGEL GABRIEL on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent reminder for me:  
Gabriel told the virgin Mary that she would  
be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God!**

# DECEMBER 21

## *Joseph Serves as Jesus' Father*



Joseph was a hardworking man who loved God and obeyed God's laws. He lived in a town called Nazareth and was a carpenter; his job was to use tools like saws and hammers and nails to build things from wood.

Joseph was engaged to Mary, but before they got married, Joseph found out that Mary was having a baby. How could that be? They weren't married yet! He thought that maybe he shouldn't get married to her anymore.

But then the angel Gabriel came to Joseph in a dream. He said, "Joseph, don't be afraid to make Mary your wife! The baby inside her is from God! Mary will give birth to God's Son, and you will name him Jesus because he will save people from their sins."

When Joseph woke up from the dream, he did what Gabriel told him. He made Mary his wife. And when he and Mary needed to travel to Bethlehem, Joseph made sure that Mary was comfortable on the trip. When they got to Bethlehem and all the rooms were full, he found a place for them to stay in a stable. That night, when the time came for Jesus to be born, Joseph took care of Mary and helped her.

Later, when the little family was in danger, an angel again came to Joseph in a dream and told him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt for a while. So Joseph woke up Mary and Jesus, and they left for Egypt in the middle of the night! After a little while, Joseph brought Mary and Jesus back from Egypt, and they lived in Nazareth.

As Jesus grew up, Joseph taught him how to be a carpenter, and he took him to Jerusalem for the Passover when he was 12 years old. We don't know much more about Joseph, but we know that he loved God, and he loved and cared for Mary and Jesus. He was a wonderful earthly father for Jesus!

What did Joseph do for Jesus?

Joseph was a good earthly father for Jesus, protecting him, teaching him, and loving him.

**As I hang the SAW AND HAMMER on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent reminder for me:**

**Joseph was Jesus' earthly father.  
God used Joseph to take good care of Jesus.**

## DECEMBER 22

### *John Points Out Jesus as the Savior*



You remember John. Before he was even born, when he was still in Elizabeth's belly and Jesus was still in Mary's belly, John heard the virgin Mary's voice, and he jumped for joy! And God had told his father, Zechariah, that John would be special and would help people get ready for Jesus.

When John grew up, he did just that! He spent his days preaching in the desert, urging people to repent—to turn away from their sin—and to be baptized.

People called him John the Baptist. He lived very simply, wearing a coat made of camel's hair and eating grasshoppers and honey. He wasn't concerned about nice clothes or food. He was only concerned about telling people they needed a Savior and that soon they would meet him.

Finally, one day, John saw him! Jesus was coming toward him! John wanted everyone to know that Jesus was the promised Savior, so he called out, "Look! That man is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

A little later, Jesus came to John again. This time he wanted John to baptize him. John said, "No! I should be baptized by you! Why do you come to me?"

But then he did what Jesus asked. And as soon as he finished baptizing Jesus, an amazing thing happened. The Holy Spirit came down, looking just like a dove, and rested on Jesus. And that's not all! A loud voice thundered out of heaven. It was God the Father! He said, "This is my Son, whom I love. I am pleased with him!"

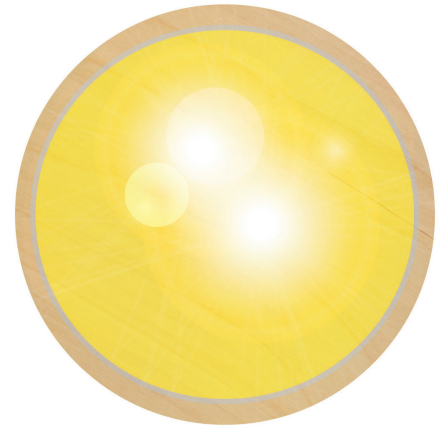
John the Baptist was the last prophet before Jesus came.  
He prepared people for Jesus' coming.

What happened when John baptized Jesus?  
The Holy Spirit came down, looking like a dove,  
and God said loudly that Jesus was his Son.

**As I hang the DOVE on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent reminder for me:**  
**John the Baptist baptized Jesus, and the Holy Spirit  
came down on Jesus like a dove.**

## DECEMBER 23

### *Simeon Sees God's Light*



Simeon was an older man who loved God and did what was right in God's eyes. He trusted all God's promises, and he often visited the temple in Jerusalem to worship there.

When Simeon was younger, God had made him an extraordinary promise. God promised that before Simeon died, he would get to see the Savior of the world. That's an amazing promise!

One day, the Holy Spirit urged Simeon to go to the temple. As he was walking in the temple courts, he suddenly saw a man and a woman and a baby. It was Mary and Joseph and Jesus! They were there for Jesus' dedication!

Even though Simeon had never met them, he knew who the baby was! He was the Savior! This was the moment Simeon had been waiting for! He gently took Jesus from their arms and held him in his own arms.

As Joseph and Mary looked at him in surprise, he said, "I can now die in peace, Lord, for you kept your promise. I've seen the Savior! This baby will be a *light* not only for the Jewish people, but for Gentiles too. This baby will be the Savior of everyone in the whole world!"

We call Simeon's words the "Song of Simeon," and we sing it sometimes at church. We're just as happy as Simeon was that Jesus came to be the Savior of the world.

What did Simeon know when he saw the baby Jesus?  
He knew that Jesus was the "light," the Savior of the whole world.

**As I hang the LIGHT on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent reminder for me:  
Jesus is the Light of the whole world, just as Simeon said.  
He came to save all nations—including me!**

## DECEMBER 24

### Shepherds Hear the Good News



Some shepherds were living in the fields around Bethlehem, keeping watch over their sheep. With their staffs in their hands, they guided the sheep and protected them from wolves and other wild animals. On one seemingly ordinary night, an angel suddenly appeared to them! The shepherds were scared of the angel's power and the glory of God that shone all around them!

But the angel reassured them, saying, "Do not be afraid! I bring you good news! Today, a Savior has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord! This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly the whole sky was full of angels, and they all praised God for sending Jesus as the Savior!

Then the angels left, and the sky turned dark again. The shepherds were so excited! They ran into the city to look for the baby. And they found him! They found the stable where Mary and Joseph were staying, and they saw the baby lying in a manger.

Now Baby Jesus didn't look that spectacular. He looked just like an ordinary baby. But the shepherds knew he was God's Son, the Savior. So they told everyone in the town what they had seen and heard. And everyone who heard this message was amazed!

What was the good news the shepherds heard? And what did they do with that news?

The good news was that Jesus, the Savior, was born!

The shepherds praised God and told everyone they saw about Jesus!

**As I hang the SHEPHERD STAFF on the JESSE TREE,**

**Here is an Advent reminder for me:**

The shepherds heard the good news that the Savior was born.  
They went to find him, praised God for him, and then told everyone  
they met about him.

# DECEMBER 25

## *Angels Proclaim that Jesus Is Born*



Angels—heavenly messengers of God—appear many times in the Bible. In the days leading up to Jesus' birth, angels often delivered a special message from God. An angel spoke to Zechariah in the temple, telling him that he would have a son named John who would prepare people for the coming of Jesus. An angel spoke to Mary and told her she would be Jesus' mother. An angel appeared to Joseph in his dream and told him to become Mary's husband.

And of course, the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds!

What a sight it must have been when the angels appeared to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born! How amazing to see just one angel! And then the one angel became a host, a company, a multitude of angels! They lit up the whole sky, and they filled the night with praise: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

God will probably not send any angels to tell us that Jesus is born. But that's because he tells us this good news in another way. He gives us his Word, the Bible! In the Bible God tells us that he loves us and that's why he sent his Son, Jesus, to be born for us.

At Christmas time, we think of Jesus in the manger, just where the angels said he would be. But we also want to think of Jesus all grown up, living a perfect life, dying for us on the cross, and then rising back to life! He did all this because he wants us to live forever in heaven—with him and with all the angels too!

What was the message of the angels?  
Jesus, the Savior, is born!

**As I hang the MANGER on the JESSE TREE,  
Here is an Advent reminder for me:**

*Jesus is my Savior.  
He was born, and died, and he rose again because  
he wants me to live with him forever.  
I learn all of this in his Word.*