



An Advent Devotional

God's
Greatest
Gift

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We are living in one of the most chaotic years of our lives. None of us could have imagined the upheaval of the last several months. In the turmoil and potential anxiety of these pressure-packed days, it is reassuring to revisit the constancy of Advent.

Once again, Dr. Case leads us through these timeless days of truth and focuses our attention on God's engagement with His creation through Jesus the Christ. Let these daily readings bless your family and you this Advent season.

Pastor Jonathan

DECEMBER 1

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

Even a causal reading of the Old Testament informs the reader that our God is a *giving* God. Through various acts of kindness and extension of mercy, to all the people of the world in general but to His chosen people in particular, one discovers that God delights in giving good things to all humankind.

In the New Testament, this same characteristic of God appears. This time God gave His very best. He gave the greatest gift of all. God gave His only begotten Son. This gift was first given to the world through what we call the Incarnation. In the birth of Jesus Christ, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This gift, however, was a gift ultimately to the cross. God's great gift would die on Calvary as a sin offering for all humankind.

The writer to the Hebrews picked up on the theme of God's greatest gift. One writer has suggested that Hebrews could be called *the book of better things* since the two Greek words for *better* and *superior* occur fifteen times in the letter to the Hebrews. This Advent Season, we will be reminded that Jesus Christ is *better* than various Old Testament individuals, institutions, and symbols. Jesus Christ is God's greatest gift to all humankind.

DECEMBER 2

[Hebrews 1:1-2a](#)

Jesus Christ is the superior revelation. Francis Schaeffer wrote the book; He is There and He is Not Silent! The Bible correctly teaches that not only is there a GOD, but He speaks. God takes the initiative to communicate with His created beings. This very concept is the foundation of the Old Testament, *in the beginning God said...* The world owes its existence to the creative speech of God. The Old Testament is filled with instances of God speaking to humanity. The prime Old Testament illustration of God speaking is the prophetic word of the prophet. Prior to Christ's coming into our world, the prophetic voice was heard foretelling the coming of the Messiah. However, this prophetic word was fragmentary and occasional, lacking fullness and finality.

But now a new day has dawned! Rather it is the announcement that we are in *the last days* of God's revelation. God has spoken to us in His Son and this revelation is far superior to any Old Testament revelation. In these last days, God not only speaks but He demonstrates His Word through a life lived among us. This Word and Deed combine to be God's final revelation. It is a sacramental action Word and Deed that God has chosen to make clear His intention for all humanity. We are to believe in Christ through Word and Deed. Not only is the incarnation of Jesus a superior revelation but it is God's final Word to us. There can be no further revelation that can clarify God's plan and purpose for us.

DECEMBER 3

[Hebrews 1:2b-3](#)

The superiority of the Son's revelation is demonstrated by seven great descriptive statements about Him:

- The Son was **appointed heir of all things**. The incarnate Son, having performed the work of redemption, was gloriously exalted to the position of the firstborn heir of God, i.e., He received the inheritance of God's estate, *all things*.
- Through whom also **He made the world**.
- The Son is **the radiance of His glory**. As the brilliance of the sun is inseparable from the sun itself, so the Son's radiance is inseparable from deity, for He Himself is God, the second person of the Trinity.
- The Son is **the exact representation of His nature**. Jesus is not thereby an image or reflection of God. Because the Son Himself is God, He is the absolutely authentic representation of God's being.
- The Son **upholds all things**. Christ is not like Atlas, the mythical Greek god who held the world on his shoulders. The Son dynamically holds together all that has been created through Him.
- The Son **made purification of sins**. Through His redeeming death on the cross sins can be forgiven.
- The Son **sat down at the right hand** of the Majesty on high. Being seated at God's right hand indicates that the work of redemption is completed and that Christ is actively ruling with God as Lord over all.

DECEMBER 4

[Hebrews 1:4-14](#)

The Son is superior to angels!

To most Jews angels were exalted beings, especially revered because they were involved in giving the law at Sinai and to the Jews the law was God's supreme revelation. The Dead Sea Scrolls reflect the expectation that the archangel Michael would be the supreme figure in the Messianic kingdom. Whether the recipients of the Hebrews were tempted to assign angels a place above Christ is not known. The Son is much better than the angels as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. To Jews a name stood for the full character of a person in all he was and did. This name was *Son* – a name to which no angel could lay claim.

Christ's superiority to angels is documented by seven Old Testament quotations from the Book of Psalms. These quotes show that Christ is God's Son, that he is worshiped by angels and that, though He is God, He is distinguished from the Father. The conclusion of the evidence proving the superiority of Christ to angels is found at verses 1:13-14:

*¹³ And to which of the angels has he ever said,
"Sit at my right hand*

until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?

*¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for
the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*

Christ reigns; angels minister as those sent to serve!

DECEMBER 5

[Hebrews 3:1-6](#)

Jesus is superior to Moses!

This great man of God, Moses, was mightily used by God to do His work. The life of Moses is divided into three sections: First, the early forty years spent in Egypt. Secondly, the next forty years spent on the far side of the desert. Thirdly, the last forty years of his life, back in Egypt, leading his people to the Promise Land.

Moses was chosen by God to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt. Through him, God entered into a covenant with the Jewish people. Moses was the first prophet of God. Moses talked with God face to face. After his death these words are written concerning Moses: *So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. He was buried in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. Though Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated. The sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days.* [Deuteronomy 34:5-9a](#)

Though a great man, Christ is superior to Moses! The comparison of Christ and Moses, begins with the fact that both of them were sent by the Father to lead His people – one to lead them from bondage under Pharaoh to the promised land, the other to lead from bondage under the devil. The comparison continues with the mention that the builder of the house, Christ, is counted worthy of more glory than Moses who was simply a part of the household. Finally, Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house.

DECEMBER 6

[Hebrews 4:1-10](#)

Jesus is superior to Joshua!

Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, down to Mount Sinai, up to Kadesh Barnea, through forty years in the Wilderness, and eventually to the very edge of the entrance to the Promise Land. Moses, however, was not allowed to lead his people into that land. God did permit Moses to climb Mount Nebo, which is opposite Jericho to view the Promise Land. Moses died on that mountain and God buried him there.

The privilege of leading the Israelites into the Promise Land belonged to Joshua. He was known for his deep trust in God and as *a man in whom is the Spirit*, [Numbers 27:18](#). Joshua was allowed to accompany Moses up on the holy mountain where the tablets of the testimony were received, [Exodus 24:13-14](#). He was elected to represent his own tribe of Ephraim when the twelve spies were sent into Canaan to look over the land. Joshua proved to be not only a military strategist in the battles that followed, but also a statesman in the way he governed the tribes. Above all, he was God's chosen servant to bring Moses' work to completion and establish Israel in the Promise Land. Still, Christ is superior to Joshua!

As our text for the day explains, Joshua did provide a *rest* for a weary people as they finally arrived at their destination. As Hebrews 4:9 states, *there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God*. By referring to [Psalm 95:7-8](#), God's rest may still be entered by faith in God's Son. The believer ceases his efforts to gain salvation by his own works and rests in the finished work of Christ on the cross. According to some, however, the believer's final rest is in view as described in [Revelation 14:13](#): *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"*

DECEMBER 7

[Hebrews 5:1-10](#)

Christ is the perfect High Priest!

In the Old Testament the regulations governing the priesthood, the worship of the tabernacle, and later the temple, were an integral part of the Mosaic legislation. The law and the priesthood, in fact, were two aspects of the one system ([Hebrews 7:11](#)). Israel was a community of people who had no earthly king; rather they serve an unseen GOD. Since the members of that community were sinful men and women, who constantly failed to meet the demands of the Ten Commandments to love God with the totality of their being and their fellow man as themselves, provisions were made for the establishment of reconciliation between sinners and the God whose law they had violated.

The tribe of Levi was set apart as the priestly tribe and, within that tribe, Aaron and his sons were designated to serve as high priests. Their duties included the daily service of the tabernacle and the offering of sacrifices in expiation of the sins of the people.

The Levitical system, however, was an interim system for it was incomplete to deal with human sinfulness in depth. The law could not meet the need for radical transformation because as law, it can justify only the person who completely fulfills what it commands: the law-breaker it can but condemn. That is why the sinner must look elsewhere for justification. The inability of the Aaronic priesthood to achieve what is required for forgiveness from sin demands a High Priest superior to Aaron!

DECEMBER 8

[Hebrews 5:1-10](#)

Christ, the Perfect High Priest!

Before we examine the Perfect High Priest, we must review the failure of the Aaronic priesthood. There are several considerations that should be examined:

- The imperfection of the Aaronic priesthood is evident in that there was a multiplicity of priests in this order. This was because these priests, and high priests, were **mortal** men who in their turn were carried away in death, so that there was a long succession of priests from one generation to another.
- As well as being mortal, the Levitical priests were **sinful** men. This fact in itself is sufficient to account for the inadequacy of their priesthood.
- Not only was there a multiplicity of priests, but there was also a multiplicity of sacrifices. Over and over again, day after day, year after year, sacrifices for sin were offered – a fact which gave eloquent witness to the inadequacy of the Levitical sacrifices.
- The principle in accordance with which these sacrifices operated was that of **substitution**. This is clearly seen in [Leviticus 16](#) with the instruction for the Day of Atonement. But the inability of this ceremony to achieve what it symbolized is apparent from the fact that it had to be repeated every year.

DECEMBER 9

[Hebrews 5:1-10](#)

The book of Hebrews maintains that Christ is superior to Aaron and the Aaronic priesthood. There are several reasons for this:

- Christ became a priest with a **divine oath**, but the Aaronites did not.
- Christ is **eternal** whereas the Aaronites died.
- Christ is **sinless** but the Aaronites are not.
- The priestly functions of Christ deal with **heavenly realities**, those of the Aaronites only earthly symbols.
- Christ offered himself voluntarily as a sacrifice that **will never need to be repeated**, whereas the repetition of animal offerings exposes their inability to take away sins.
- The Old Testament itself, written during the period of the Aaronic priesthood, predicted a **new covenant** that would make obsolete the old covenant under which the Aaronites had functioned ([Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)).

DECEMBER 10

[Hebrews 7:1-18](#)

The Old Testament does in fact mention an order of priesthood other than that of Aaron, for in [Psalm 110:4](#) we read: *The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind. You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.* This brief declaration is remarkable because it speaks of a priest who, unlike the Levitical priests, is a priest **forever**, and also because of its mention of Melchizedek.

What little we know about Melchizedek comes from [Genesis 14](#). This text describes how, when Abraham returned after defeating the eastern kings who had carried off his nephew, Lot, Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, met him and provided bread and wine for his refreshment. We are told, further, that Melchizedek blessed Abraham and that Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth part of the spoils he had taken ([Genesis 14:17-20](#)).

The name Melchizedek, meaning king of righteousness, and the office, king of Salem, which means king of peace, and simultaneously, priest of the Most High God, are all obviously appropriate. These kingly and priestly offices are perfectly combined in Christ, who is the Lord of righteousness ([Jeremiah 23:6](#)) and the Prince of peace ([Isaiah 9:6](#)).

The fact that Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham and blessed him designated Melchizedek as superior to Abraham. This suggests the superiority of Melchizedek not only to Abraham but also to Levi who, was in the loins of his ancestor. This indicates the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek to that of Aaron.

DECEMBER 11

[Psalm 110](#)

Taking his cue from the statement in [Psalm 110:4](#) that the messianic king would be a priest after the pattern of Melchizedek, the author of Hebrews draws several parallels between Christ and that shadowy Old Testament figure, to whom Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils of battle after rescuing Lot ([Genesis 14:1-24](#)). The parallels include:

- Melchizedek was a **priest of God**, so also is Christ.
- The name Melchizedek means king of righteousness; the man by that name was also king of Salem, which means peace. Righteousness and peace are characteristics and results of Christ's priestly ministry.
- The absence in the Old Testament of a recorded genealogy for Melchizedek and of accounts of his birth and death typifies the eternity of Christ as God's Son, in contrast with the dying of all Aaronic priests.
- The superiority of Christ over Aaron is further symbolized by Melchizedek receiving a tenth of the spoils of battle from Abraham, whose descendant Aaron was. The same superiority appears again in Melchizedek's blessing Abraham rather than vice versa, for the greater person blesses the lesser.

These middle chapters of Hebrews clearly point to the fact that the priesthood of Christ is superior to the office of the High Priest of the Old Testament.

DECEMBER 12

[Hebrews 8:1-6](#)

The argument of this section, which extends through [Hebrews 10:39](#), grows out of an exposition of [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) and demonstrates that Christ is the mediator of a better covenant. Christ, our great High Priest, has taken his seat at the right hand of God in heaven. Earthly priests were never allowed to sit down, as their work was never finished. Jesus Christ, by his one perfect sacrifice of Himself for the sins of all humankind, is seated. His work is completed! Christ is seated in the true tabernacle which God made, not man.

The earthly tabernacle is a mere copy of the true tabernacle in heaven. God warned Moses *to make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain*. The tabernacle as erected by Moses, was an imperfect and impermanent copy of the heavenly one. The heavenly sanctuary built by God corresponds to only one part of the earthly tabernacle, the most holy place. This was the innermost sanctuary in Moses' tabernacle, into which the high priest briefly entered with the blood of the atonement once a year. In the most holy place was where man could meet God. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, man could come near to God ([Leviticus 16](#)). In the heavenly sanctuary, our great high priest dwells eternally as our intercessor.

Jesus Christ has obtained a more excellent ministry because he is the mediator of a better covenant which has been enacted on better promises.

DECEMBER 13

[Hebrews 8:7-13](#)

Why do we need a new covenant?

This paragraph continues the argument from [Hebrews 7:11](#). The Old Covenant came from God through Moses on Mt. Sinai ([Exodus 19:5-6](#)). The Old Covenant was framed in an *if/then* proposition. Verse 5 begins the *if* portion of the covenant: ***If you will indeed obey My voice and Keep My covenant then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine.*** Verse six continues with the promise *you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*

Hebrews 8:7 makes the point *if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.* Notice, the fault with the first covenant was not with God. That covenant came from a holy God and the promises contained in it were good and perfect. No, the problem was with **them** ([vs. 8:8](#))! The Israelites were a hard-hearted group of people. They were apt to grumble and complain. They had sinful hearts. They would not *obey*, nor would they *keep* the covenant. That is why a new covenant was needed, enacted on better promises.

Later Old Testament prophets would talk about another covenant that would someday come and replace the Old Covenant. It was especially the prophet Jeremiah who proclaimed, *Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will affect a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah* (Jeremiah 31:31).

DECEMBER 14

[Hebrews 8:7-13](#)

A better covenant enacted on better promises!

It is *better promises* that will make this New Covenant *better*. These promises will deal directly with humankind's basic problem. Our basic problem is sin – sin in the heart of all humanity. In the New Covenant, God will provide a means to deal with the inner heart of sinful man. [Hebrews 8:10-12](#) reviews the basics of the New Covenant. It is built on the *I will* statements of God.

- I will put My laws into their minds
- I will write them on their hearts
- I will be their God
- I will be merciful to them
- I will remember their sins no more.

A more appropriate translation of God's promises would be: ***I surely will!*** It is the strong *I will* of what God will do someday in Jeremiah's future that will make the New Covenant better. The superior benefits of this New Covenant are:

- God's laws will become inner principles that enable His people to delight in doing His will.
- God and His people will have intimate fellowship.
- Sinful ignorance of God will be removed forever.
- Forgiveness of sins will be an everlasting reality.

The announcement of the New Covenant clearly proved the impermanence of the one already in existence. To return to the old system would be to return to what is no longer valid or effective.

DECEMBER 15

[Hebrews 9:1-10](#)

The writer to the Hebrews continues his contrast between *the old and the new*. Special reference is made to the earthly tabernacle and its function in the life of the Israelites. First, the structure of this earthly tabernacle is mentioned: Two special areas of the tabernacle are mentioned: the holy place, where the priests are continually entering to perform the divine worship ([v.6](#)). Next, the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest enters once a year to offer sacrifices on The Day of Atonement ([v.7](#)).

What exactly does this mean? The Holy Spirit is telling us something of great importance. As long as the Mosaic system with its imperfect priesthood and sacrifice remain in effect ([8:7-13](#)), the way into the Holy of Holies remains closed. The people of God remain at a distance from God Himself.

However, by the time of the writing of this letter to the Hebrews, something has changed. There is a new order. Now is the time of reformation ([v.10](#)). The new covenant, with its new priesthood, new sanctuary and new sacrifice, has all been introduced by Christ. And as one cannot put new wine in old wineskins, neither can one put emphasis on an old, outdated system of worship. The old way related only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body ([v.19](#)). Christ has torn down the veil between the holy place and the Holy of Holies and made possible access to God.

DECEMBER 16

[Hebrews 9:11-22](#)

Since Jesus Christ is the superior One, He is also the source of *the good things that have come* (v.11). These *good things* are the result of worship at the tabernacle. The old covenant, with its imperfections and need of continuous sacrifices, made use of the blood of goats and calves to sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh. Jesus Christ entered the holy place once for all, to obtain eternal redemption. Christ offered a superior offering. If the blood of goats and calves can purify the flesh, **how much more** will the blood of Christ remove sin's defilement from the very core of our beings.

This is the reason that Christ is the mediator of a new covenant. By shedding His blood, Jesus Christ paid the necessary price to set people free from the sins committed under the first covenant. On the basis of Christ's atoning death, all who believe in Him receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

The writer to the Hebrews now asks the reader to think in terms of a last will and testament. Beneficiaries have no claim on the benefits assigned to them in a will until the testator dies. Since Christ's death has been duly attested, *the promise of the eternal inheritance* is available to His beneficiaries.

DECEMBER 17

[Hebrews 9:23-28](#)

This closing paragraph of chapter nine begins with the word *therefore*, which forms the conclusion of the author's argument regarding the superiority of the heavenly sanctuary and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Just as the earthly tabernacle had to be cleansed with the blood of animals prior to the sacrifices for sin to be offered, it was necessary for the heavenly tabernacle to be purified with the better sacrifice of Christ Himself. The coming of Jesus Christ into our world resulted in the consummation of the ages. His incarnation brought about the Messianic era, toward which all history has moved.

As in the natural order man dies once ([v.27](#)), as a consequence of sin. So, Christ died once as the perfect sacrifice for sin ([v.28](#)). And, as after death, man faces judgment, so Christ, after His death, will appear again, bring salvation from sin and its judgment.

The second coming of Christ will be for salvation – representing the consummation, in all its fullness, of the salvation purchased for us on the cross. And as the Israelites waited for the high priest, while he was in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, so believers are to wait with eager anticipation for His second coming.

DECEMBER 18

[Hebrews 10:1-10](#)

The one sacrifice of Christ is the superior sacrifice.

This paragraph begins with the contrast between the Law and the Levitical priesthood. Both are a shadow of the *good things* God has promised for his people. The sacrifices under the Levitical priesthood cannot make an individual perfect or else they would have ceased to be offered. A continually offered sacrifice will never achieve God's intended purpose for humanity. A perfect sacrifice would cleanse that consciousness of sin. It is, however, impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away the sin consciousness.

[Psalm 40:6-8](#) states *sacrifices and offerings* was not what God desires. In the fullness of time the *good things to come* are about to be realized. God has prepared a *body* for the second member of the Trinity. An animal cannot possibly be a completely adequate substitute for a human being who is made in God's image. This clarifies Jesus Christ, as He lived on earth for thirty-some years. He experienced everything common to mankind, except sin. He came to do God's will, which included a death on a cross as the ultimate sacrifice for sin. The Old Testament sacrifices were only preparatory and temporary, looking forward to the one perfect and final offering – that of the incarnate Son of God. His perfect sacrifice, offered in complete submission, supersedes and therefore replaces all previous sacrifices.

DECEMBER 19

[Hebrews 10:11-18](#)

The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ *gave Himself* for our sins. He is both the priest performing the sacrifice and the sacrifice itself. This paragraph continues the contrast between the Levitical priesthood and the priestly function of Christ. Again, we will see that the priesthood of Christ is superior to that of the Levitical priests.

This paragraph provides the reader with the contrast between *standing* and *sitting*. The Levitical priest always stood, because his work was never finished. How could his work ever be finished? The sacrifices he offered could not remove sin, and thus had to be offered again and again.

In contrast to the work of the Levitical priests, which was never completed, Christ's work was completed. His one sacrifice atoned for the sins of all time, making any further sacrifice unnecessary. John the Apostle wrote: *when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said **It is finished!** And He lowered His head and gave up His spirit* (John 19:30).

Jesus Christ has ascended to heaven to be seated at the right hand of God. He is seated in the heavenly Holy of Holies! Christ's death has instituted the New Covenant which guarantees forgiveness, with the result that no additional sacrifice for sins is needed.

DECEMBER 20

[Hebrews 10:19-25](#)

Christ is superior because He provides a new and living way.

This paragraph contains yet another conclusion, introduced by *therefore*. This conclusion is built on a *since – call to action* understanding. To appreciate this argument, one must revisit the Old Testament tabernacle. The book of Exodus provides the reader with the necessary background.

Basically, the tabernacle was a large frame tent. It contained two sections. The first measured thirty feet by fifteen feet and was called the Holy Place. In it was the lampstand, the table for bread, and the incense altar. A curtain was at the rear of the Holy Place which separated it from a fifteen by fifteen-foot compartment called the Holy of Holies. Priests continually offered sacrifices in the Holy Place. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices.

Since, at Christ's death, the temple veil was torn ([Matthew 27:51](#)), it is now possible for believers to go directly into God's presence.

Therefore:

- Let us draw near with a sincere heart.
- Let us hold fast the confession of our hope.
- Let us consider how to stimulate one another.
- Let us not forsake assembling together.
- Let us encourage one another.

DECEMBER 21

When we began this study on December 1, we noted that the word *better* or *superior* could be applied to the letter to the Hebrews. Jesus Christ was *better than* anything the Old Covenant could ever promise. Recall the various ways Christ is better:

- Christ is a better revelation.
- Christ is better than angels.
- Christ is better than Moses.
- Christ is better than Joshua.
- Christ is better than the Aaronite priesthood.
- Christ is the mediator of a better covenant.
- Christ offered His sacrifice in a better sanctuary.

Many commentators would suggest that one of the purposes for the book of Hebrews is that the author was concerned that certain people of his day were wavering in their commitment of faith. These individuals were former Jews who had been converted to the Christian faith. Either due to persecution or a teaching that the Old Covenant was the better way, they were considering turning their back on the Christian faith and reverting back to their Jewish practices. The point of this letter would be to convince these people that (1) there is nothing to turn back to. The old way had become obsolete. And, (2) Jesus Christ is far better and superior to anything the old system could ever hope to provide. He had made possible a new and living way into the very presence of God.

DECEMBER 22

[Luke 1:30-33](#)

While the book of Hebrews develops the *better* theme concerning Jesus, other New Testament books also speak of the superiority of Jesus Christ. Today's text is one such early statement concerning His superiority.

As the angel Gabriel makes known to Mary the implications of her pregnancy and ultimate birth of her son, he makes the following factors clear:

- His name will be Jesus. This name is the Greek form of Joshua, which means *the Lord saves*.
- He will be great. The Greek word means strong, great, greatest.
- He will be called the Son of the Most High. This title has two senses: (1) the divine Son of God and (2) the Messiah born in time. His Messiahship is clearly referred to in the following context.
- God will give Him the throne of His father David. The throne was promised to the Messiah descended from David ([2 Samuel 7:13-16](#)). Since both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David, Jesus could rightly be called a *son* of David.
- Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end. Although Christ's role as mediator will one day be finished ([1 Corinthians 15:24-28](#)), the kingdom of the Father and Son, as one, will never end.

DECEMBER 23

[Acts 2:22-36](#)

This text reports Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. By using various translations of this text, one can gain significant insights into its meaning. The New American Standard Bible is such a tool that can be used with profit.

The sermon begins at verse twenty-two with this statement: Jesus Christ was a small "m" man. He was a human being that lived thirty-some years long ago in Palestine. This man performed miracles, wonders, and signs that proved this man was sent by God and that his coming into the world meant that the Messiah had indeed come. Everyone living in Jerusalem knew that to be true.

This "man" however, was more than just another human being. Verse twenty-three states: this capital "M" "Man" was crucified, died and rose again from his grave. This was all according to God's plan and purpose. Jesus Christ was a "man" but he was more than a man. He was the God-Man. From eternity past, He had a divine nature and for his time on earth, he assumed a human nature as well. This is called the mystery of the Incarnation. Jesus Christ was the *greatest* man who ever walked on this earth because he was more than a man. He was God incarnate.

Peter quotes the Old Testament character David beginning at verse thirty-four. David is quoted as saying: *the Lord (God) said to my Lord (the Son of David, the Messiah)* from [Psalm 110](#). According to Peter, David addressed his descendant with uncommon respect because he, through the inspiration of the Spirit, recognized how **great** and **divine** He would be. Not only was He to be resurrected but He was to be exalted to God's right hand.

DECEMBER 24

Revelation 1:12-18

Peter ends his sermon on the Day of Pentecost with reference to the God-Man, exalted by God into heaven and seated at God's right hand. John, on the island called Patmos, saw this exalted One and wrote about Him.

I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.'

While here on earth, people saw the man, Jesus of Nazareth. But now, having been resurrected from the dead, ascended to heaven, and seated at the right-hand of the Father, John, and we through his vision, see the God-Man. He is God's greatest gift to all mankind.

DECEMBER 25

[Philippians 2:5-11](#)

The poetic, even lyrical, character of verses six through eleven is apparent. Many view them as an early Christian hymn taken over and perhaps modified by Paul. The passage treats Christ's **humiliation** and **exaltation**.

From eternity past, the second member of the Trinity, the Man Christ Jesus, existed in the form of God. Christ had the sum of those qualities that make God specifically God. But, the status and privileges that inevitably follow from being in very nature God, Christ did not consider that high position to be something He could not give up. He emptied Himself, not of His deity but by laying aside His glory ([John 17:5](#)), He willingly came to live with mankind.

He appeared as a man. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. To what extent did His humiliation extend? Crucifixion was the most degrading kind of execution that could be inflicted on a person.

God highly exalted Him by: (1) by giving Him the name which is above every name, (2) by insisting that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and, (3) by insisting that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

*Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.*