

The image features four lit red candles of varying heights, arranged in a cluster. The candles are set against a dark, almost black background. In the foreground, there are green pine branches with dark brown pine cones and patches of white snow. The text "And His Name Shall Be Called" is written in a white, serif font, positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image. The overall scene is warm and festive, typical of an Advent candle service.

And
His
Name
Shall Be
Called

2024 Advent Readings
December 1-25

With his usual insight, Dr. Case transports us back in time to the hopeful expectation for the Messiah. Great Old and New Testament passages come alive with fresh meaning in each day's devotional reading. As you read this Advent Devotional, may your faith in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, be increased as we celebrate His Incarnational visit and await with joy His promised return.

Pastor Jonathan

The Seed

December 1

Genesis 3:14-16

Genesis 3:15 is known as the *Protoevangelium* – the first gospel message. Did you notice the one who first heard this message? It was the serpent! The same crafty serpent that Satan used to tempt Eve. The first gospel message is first of all a word of judgment. God said, *I will put enmity between your seed and her (Eve) seed.* At the very least this may help to explain the ongoing hostility between man and snakes. But this text tells us more than why we don't particularly like snakes. God further adds a word of hope as He tells the serpent, *He (seed of Eve) shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.* The good news is that someday the seed of Eve will bruise, literally crush, the head of the serpent. This will be a death-blow to the serpent.

The antagonism between people and snakes is used to symbolize the outcome of the titanic struggle between God and the evil one, a struggle played out in the hearts and history of mankind. The offspring of the woman would eventually crush the serpent's head, a promise fulfilled in Christ's victory over Satan.

With the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Satan has been defeated. We yet anticipate his final doom. Paul wrote to the Church at Rome these words: *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet* (Romans 16:20). With the fulfillment of this promise, the ultimate doom of Satan will be realized.

And His name shall be called – The Seed!

Shiloh

December 2

Genesis 49:1-10

Today's text in its entirety (Genesis 49:2-27), is often called the *Blessing of Jacob*. Its various blessings were intended not only for Jacob's twelve sons but also for the tribes that descended from them. Jacob, being at the point of death, calls for his sons to appear before him.

Jacob summoned his sons with the purpose of telling them what *will befall them in the days to come* (Genesis 49:1). The firstborn son, Reuben, might have expected a special blessing, being the eldest. But Reuben's actions in Genesis 35:22 disqualified him for that special blessing. The next two, Simeon and Levi, were disqualified from a special blessing due to their actions recorded in Genesis 34:25-30.

The next son is Judah. He receives the special blessing which includes the praise from his brothers, victory over his enemies, and a place of future leadership. The promise is, *the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until...* Until Shiloh comes! While verse 10 is difficult to translate, the verse has been traditionally understood as Messianic. It was initially fulfilled in David, and ultimately in Christ. This verse is repeated almost verbatim in Ezekiel 21:7 in a section where Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, is told to *take off the crown* (Ezek. 21:26) from his head because dominion over Jerusalem will ultimately be given to the one *whose right it is*.

And His name shall be called – Shiloh

The Branch

December 3

Jeremiah 23:1-8

The man Jeremiah was the last prophet of God before the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. His task was not easy. He had to be the faithful witness of God's judgment on Israel and their ultimate captivity in Babylon. As Israel moved closer to 586, his message became more negative. He could only speak words of judgment and woe.

In today's reading, Jeremiah is particularly naming the spiritual leaders of Israel as being under God's judgment. He refers to them as *shepherds*, who had the responsibility to lead God's flock, Israel, in the paths of righteousness. Instead, these leaders destroyed and scattered the people (Jeremiah 23:1). God will punish the unfaithful leaders and He Himself will be a shepherd to Israel. God's activity is mentioned in verses 3 and 4. Notice the strong use of *I Myself* and *I will* as God intends to gather His remnant flock, to bring them back to their pasture, and to raise up true shepherds to lead His people.

But this does not complete what God will do. Ultimately, God will raise up the Branch. He will reign as King and act wisely. Justice and righteousness will be in the land. This text is one of the most important Messianic passages in Jeremiah. The Messiah, unlike any previous descendant of David, would be the ideal King. He would sum up in Himself all the finest qualities of the best rulers, and infinitely more.

And His name shall be called – the Branch

Immanuel

December 4
Isaiah 7:10-16

The role of the Old Testament prophet was primarily to faithfully proclaim the Word of God. There were however, other functions of the prophet. He could tell the future, he was a counsellor, a reformer, a tester of character, a watchman, and a guide. In today's text, Isaiah is a counsellor to King Ahaz.

Rezin, the king of Aram and Pekah, representing Israel had declared war on Jerusalem. Ahaz, king of Judah was terrified. God sent Isaiah to the king with words of assurance. Isaiah told Ahaz that the plans of the two kings would not come to pass and within 65 years those who are threatening him will no longer be around (Isaiah7:7-8).

Ahaz did not believe Isaiah! It may even be more correct to say, he would not believe (Isaiah 7:9). But God is faithful even when Ahaz would not believe. God instructs Isaiah to give Ahaz this sign: *a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (God is with us). And before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken* (Isaiah 7:14, 16). The name Immanuel, *God is with us*, was meant to convince Ahaz that God could rescue him from his enemies. Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy, for he was *God with us* in the fullest sense (Matthew 1:23).

And His name shall be called – Immanuel

Four Throne Names

December 5

Isaiah 9:1-7

The prophet Isaiah had to pronounce God's judgment on His faithless people (Isaiah 8:22). But God's judgment does not last forever. There will be a believing remnant of Israel. As Isaiah 9:2 reminds us, *the people who walk in darkness will see a great light*. A new day will dawn with a complete reversal of Israel's plight. Instead of darkness, there will be light. Lack will be replaced with abundance. Gladness will replace sorrow. God will break the yoke of their burden and the rod of their oppressor will be defeated. Military equipment will no longer be needed. How does Isaiah explain this complete reversal? A child will be born (Isaiah 9:6)!

But this will be no ordinary son. This son is a royal son, a son of David (Isaiah 9:7). Isaiah employs four throne names to identify this child. Each of the four throne names of the Messiah consist of two elements. Unlike Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), these titles were not like normal Old Testament personal names. Wonderful Counselor points to the Messiah as a king who determines upon and carries out a program of action. As Mighty God, His divine power as a warrior is stressed. The name Eternal Father indicates that He will be an enduring, compassionate provider and protector. The name Prince of Peace indicates that His rule will bring wholeness and well-being to individuals and to society.

**And His name shall be called -
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**

The Word

December 6

John 1:1-18

Today's reading is known as the prologue to John's gospel. These eighteen verses begin and end with a ringing affirmation of the deity of Jesus Christ.

John begins his story with this reference point, *in the beginning*. The beginning of what? The beginning of Genesis One is the beginning of the creative process that brought our cosmos into existence. The beginning mentioned in the first epistle of John (I John 1:1), refers to the beginning point of Jesus' earthly life. The beginning in John's prologue takes the reader back to eternity past. Go back as far as you can in your own thinking. From eternity, God existed and also the Word was in existence. The Word was not part of the creative process, He always was. The use of the term *Word* has a Jewish context. The Jewish people used *Word* as a way of referring to God.

This Word, from eternity past, was **with** God. The preposition could also mean *alongside of* God. Thus, John would have us understand that the Word is distinct from God. Both are from eternity past. Here we have the beginning of our understanding of the Trinity. John continues his description of the Word by stating the Word **was** God. Thus, while the Word is distinct from God, the Father, Jesus was God in the fullest sense. John concludes the prologue by stating *Jesus is the only begotten God* (John 1:18).

And His name shall be called – the Word

The Alpha and The Omega

December 7

Revelation 22:10-21

Today's reading is not only from the last book of our New Testament but this paragraph could very well be called *the final message* given to John by Christ.

From this final paragraph there are two items that are of particular interest. First, John is instructed to *not seal up the words of the prophecy*. The reason is this – *the time is near!* Of course, this book was written over two thousand years ago but the message is still the same. We need to always live with this expectancy that the time is near. Three times in this chapter Jesus stated these words, *I am coming quickly* (v.7, 12, 20).

The second item of interest is the name for Jesus. He identifies Himself as *the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end* (v.13). Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end. He sovereignly rules over all human history.

Humanity continues to live their lives either with God in mind or to their own desires (v. 11). Ultimately, He who rules over all things will have the last word. Christ will return quickly *to render to every man according to what he has done* (v. 12). We celebrate the First Advent of Jesus Christ while looking forward to His coming quickly at His Second Advent.

**And His name shall be called –
Alpha and Omega**

Advocate

December 8

1st John 2:1-6

When John Wesley left home, his mother, Susannah, is said to have written these words in the flyleaf of the Bible he was given: *Sin will keep you from this book, but this book will keep you from sin.* The apostle John knew the power of God's Word to defend his people from the attacks of the enemy and to inspire them to holy living. Every Christian needs to be able to say, *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you* (Psalm 119:11).

With terms of endearment, John writes to his *little children* with the clear statement *that you sin not.* This is God's standard for all believers, not just the mature Christian. However, John continues with the *if* possibility. *If anyone sins* presents a problem of what to do next. I understand the situation John is describing similar to the phrase in Galatians 6:1, *caught in a trespass.* Neither phrase is speaking to continual, habitual sin. John is not calling people who are willfully transgressing a known law of God as *little children.* But what is a believer to do *if* he does sin? John gives two helpful points. First, we have an Advocate with the Father. The word advocate refers to someone who speaks in court in behalf of a defendant. He is called alongside to help. We do not face this situation alone.

Secondly, this Advocate is righteous. Not just in character but He is the favor winning sacrifice for sin and His cross is the place where God's wrath is appeased (Romans 3:25).

And His name shall be called – Advocate

The Good Shepherd

December 9
John 10:1-18

Today's reading should be understood in light of the Old Testament concept of *shepherd*. In the Old Testament, this concept symbolized a royal caretaker of God's people. God Himself was called the *Shepherd of Israel* (Psalm 80:1; cf. Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:10-11; Ezekiel 34:11-16). God gave great responsibility to the leaders (shepherds) of Israel, which they failed to respect. God denounced the false shepherds (see the reading for December 3) and promised to provide the true Shepherd, the Messiah, to care for His sheep. Today's reading is the fulfillment of that promise.

In one of the powerful *I Am* sayings of Jesus, He declared that he was the Good Shepherd. Two special qualities of the Good Shepherd are mentioned. First, the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (v. 11). A shepherd might risk danger for his sheep (Genesis 31:39; 1 Samuel 17:34-37), but he expected to come through alive. Jesus said that the good shepherd will die for his sheep. That Christ would die for His people runs through this section of John's Gospel. Secondly, the Good Shepherd knows His own (v. 14). This kind of knowing is more than intellectual knowledge. Here is a deep mutual knowledge, like that of the Father and the Son. The Shepherd knows His sheep – His sheep know Him.

**And His name shall be called –
the Good Shepherd**

The Lamb of God

December 10

John 1:29-34

In the early chapters of the Fourth Gospel, we discover an interesting writing style of the Apostle John. He describes events in the movement of the gospel story between John the Baptist and Jesus in terms of a *day*. On a particular *day* he was asked, *Who are you* (v. 19)? The next *day* John saw Jesus (v. 29). Again, the next *day* John was with two of his disciples (v. 35). The next *day* Jesus found Philip (v. 43). Finally, on the third *day* there is a wedding (John 2:1). On two of these days (v.29, 36), John identified Jesus as the Lamb of God!

This expression could refer to the lamb offered at Passover or the lamb of Isaiah 53:7, Jeremiah 11:19 or of Genesis 22:8. The expression seems to be a general reference to sacrifice, not the name of a particular offering. John was saying that Jesus would be the sacrifice that would atone for the sin of the world.

The reference in Isaiah 53:7 speaks to His humble submission to the cross. Isaiah said: *like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so he did not open His mouth*. A reference in 1 Peter 1:19 speaks to the great cost of this sacrifice – *with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ*. In Revelation 5:6 we read of His victory over death – *a Lamb standing, as if slain...* Worthy is the Lamb!

And His name shall be called – The Lamb of God

The Rock

December 11

1st Corinthians 10:1-5

Today's reading provides the reader with yet another glimpse of Paul's understanding of the Jewish people. They **all** were under God's leadership and guidance and He successfully led them (Exodus 14:22-29).

As a people they submitted to Moses, God's appointed leader. They **all** ate the same spiritual food and drank from a spiritual rock. The manna and the water from the rock are used as figures representing the spiritual sustenance that God provides for His people (Exodus 16:2-36; Numbers 20:2-11).

The rock was Christ! The rock, from which the water came, and the manna were symbolic of supernatural sustenance through Christ, the bread of life and the water of life. (John 4:14; 6:30-35).

In spite of the remarkable privileges given to Israel (vv. 1-4), they failed to obey God, thus incurring His displeasure. Of the adults who came out of Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua were allowed to enter Canaan (Joshua 1:1-2).

And His name shall be called - The Rock

The Deliverer

December 12

Romans 11: 25-36

In today's reading Paul makes reference to a *mystery*. The so-called mystery religions of Paul's day used the word mystery in the sense of something that was to be revealed only to the initiated. Paul himself, however, used it to refer to something formerly hidden or obscure but now revealed by God for all to know and understand. What was the mystery?

In this context, the mystery was God's plan by which both Jew and Gentile, after a period of disobedience by both, will by His mercy be included in His kingdom. How will this be accomplished?

Paul's answer is from a quote of Isaiah 59:20 – *the Deliverer* will come. This quote will find its ultimate fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah for all people.

The coming of the Deliverer will have a distinct purpose. He will remove ungodliness! With the removal of ungodliness, a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) will be established. Just as salvation for Gentiles involves forgiveness of sins, so the Jews, when they are saved, are forgiven by the mercy of God. This is based only on their repentance and faith.

And His name shall be called – The Deliverer

Sunrise

December 13

Luke 1:67-79

Today's reading is Zacharias' prophecy also known as the *Benedictus*. In this prophecy Zacharias not only makes a statement concerning his son, who will be known as John the Baptist, and calls him *the prophet of the Most High*, but also makes a prophecy concerning the Coming of the Messiah.

Zacharias saw in the birth of his son the beginning of the fulfillment of Scriptures like Malachi 4:2 that speak of a day coming when *the sun of righteousness* will rise with healing in its wings. The world waited for over four hundred years for this prophetic word to be realized in the person of Jesus Christ.

Zacharias realized that with the birth of his own son, God's mercy toward His people was being manifested – the Sunrise from on high will visit us! Mercy is now being shown rather than the silence of four hundred years. Not only is Malachi 4:2 being fulfilled but prophetic words like Isaiah 9:1-2 are also coming to pass. Truly, a new day is dawning!

With the coming of the Messiah, the Sunrise, light will replace darkness, life rather than death, guidance instead of our own stumbling, and peace rather than hostility. No wonder the prophet Malachi predicted there would be a day coming when people would *skip about like calves from the stall* (Malachi 4:2).

And His name shall be called – Sunrise

Son of David

December 14

Matthew 1:1-17

The expectation of a Davidic Messiah had its beginnings during the Period of the Exile, for central to the notion of such a Messiah is the re-establishment of the throne of David and the deliverance of Israel from its foreign oppressors. Prophets of old spoke of the Davidic *righteous Branch* who would soon appear.

The Jewish expectation at the time of the birth of Jesus was the *Son of David* would violently cast out the foreign nations occupying Jerusalem, judge all the nations of the earth, and reign over Israel in wisdom and righteousness.

Matthew used the title *Son of David* ten times in his Gospel. Jesus functions as Son of David because he is of the lineage of David (v.1-17). But Jesus is not simply **a** son of David, Jesus is **the** Son of David. As Son of David, Jesus is the Messiah-king in the line of David who has been sent by God.

Three times persons in need of healing cry out to Jesus *have mercy on me [us] Son of David* (Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 20:31). These passages demonstrate that Jesus fulfills the messianic expectation that the Son of David would bring wholeness to the oppressed. But, as has been said, only the *no-accounts* of Jewish society appeal to Jesus as Son of David. Matthew uses the title *Son of David* to point to Israel's rejection of its Messiah and to highlight the blindness and guilt that attended this rejection.

And His name shall be called – Son of David

The Author and Perfecter of Faith

December 15
Hebrew 12:1-3

We have already considered Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega (December 7). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses a similar image – the Author and the Perfecter of Faith.

The word translated *author* occurs only four times in the New Testament: Hebrews 2:10; 12:2; Acts 3:15; and 5:31. In the Book of Acts, the word *author* is translated *Prince*, while in Hebrews, the word can also mean *leader*.

Our faith, which has its beginning in Him, is also completed in Him. He is both the start and the end of the spiritual race. He is also the supreme witness who has already run His race and overcome.

The imagery suggests an athletic contest. The witnesses are the heroes of the past who have just been mentioned (Hebrews 11). They are not spectators but inspiring examples. The Christian life is pictured as a long-distance race rather than a short sprint.

Jesus suffered infinitely more than any of his disciples is asked to suffer and thus serves as a great encouragement for us when we are weary and tempted to become discouraged.

**And His name shall be called –
the Author and Perfecter**

Prophet

December 16

Acts 3:17-26

Today's reading is taken from Peter's second sermon after Pentecost. The actual sermon begins at verse eleven. The part of the sermon we are most interested in is when Peter begins to speak of the prophet that was to come. Three Old Testament individuals are mentioned in reference to this prophet: Moses, Samuel and Abraham.

The link to Moses is found in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses is giving instruction on how Israel is to gain knowledge upon entering the Promise Land. Since he will not be entering with them, Moses gives this instruction, *the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me...listen to him* (Deuteronomy 18:15). This is a collective reference to the prophets who will follow. It is the basis for Messianic expectation and receives a unique fulfillment in Jesus.

Samuel anointed David to be king and spoke of the establishment of his kingdom (1 Samuel 16:13). Nathan's prophecy was ultimately Messianic (2 Samuel 7:13; Acts 13:22-23).

The prophetic word to Abraham was *and in your seed...all will be blessed* (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:16). The word is singular, ultimately signifying Christ.

And His name shall be called – Prophet

Chief Shepherd

December 17

1 Peter 5:1-5

With today's reading, we return to a theme that we have seen previously (December 3 and 9). The theme is that of a shepherd. Peter who identified himself as an apostle at the beginning of his letter (1 Peter 1:1), chose now to identify himself with the elders of the churches. This would be heartening to them in light of their great responsibilities and the difficult situation faced by the churches. The churches for which these elders were responsible were scattered across much of Asia Minor.

Peter's instruction to the elders is to *shepherd the flock of God* (v. 2). This is a metaphor that Jesus had employed and that must have been etched on Peter's mind (John 21:15-17).

Peter is fulfilling Christ's command to feed His sheep as he writes this letter. What he writes to the elders is reminiscent of Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28). The term *shepherd* is an Old Testament metaphor where the Lord holds the leaders of Israel responsible for failing to care for the flock.

But the elders/shepherds do not serve by themselves. As shepherds, they are under and answer to the *Chief Shepherd*. This is, of course, a reference to Jesus Christ. When He returns (v. 4), He will reward those who have served as shepherds under Him.

**And His name will be called –
the Chief Shepherd**

The Apostle and High Priest

December 18

Hebrews 3:1-11

In several ways the book of Hebrews is a contrast between the earthly and the heavenly. This chapter of Hebrews begins a contrast between Moses and the priesthood under Aaron and the mission of Jesus Christ. It is introduced by the use of *therefore* (v. 1; 4:14).

The first contrast is between Moses and Jesus under the title of *apostle*. This word means *one who is sent*. Jesus repeatedly spoke of Himself as having been sent into the world by the Father (Matthew 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48 John.4:34). Jesus is the supreme Apostle, the one from whom all other apostleship flows.

Both Moses and Jesus were sent by the Father to lead His people – the one to lead them from bondage under Pharaoh to the Promised Land, the other to lead them from bondage under the devil to the Sabbath-rest promised to all who believe.

The author of Hebrews shifts to an extended discussion of the superior priesthood of Christ (Hebrews 4:14). As the Aaronic high priest on the Day of Atonement passed from the sight of the people into the most high place, so Jesus passed from the sight of his watching disciples, ascending through the heavens into the heavenly sanctuary, His work of atonement finished.

**And His name shall be called –
the Apostle and High Priest**

The Bright Morning Star

December 19

Revelation 22:10-21

Previously (December 7), we considered this text under the title *Alpha and Omega*. Today we look at *the bright morning star* name found in verse sixteen.

The historical context is found in the book of Numbers, chapters 22-24. Balak, king of Moab, is greatly alarmed at the sight of Israel coming into his land. He concludes there is no military way to withstand Israel. His decision is to call a pagan prophet by the name of Balaam to speak words of evil on Israel and perhaps Moab will be able to fight against the vast numbers of Israel (Numbers 22:5). Although reluctant to go with Balak, the prophet finally agreed on this stipulation: *only the word which God gives him will he speak* (Numbers 22:20).

In Numbers chapters 22-24, there are four major prophecies given by Balaam. After the first three (Numbers 23:10; 23:25-27; 24:10), Balak is furious saying, *I told you to curse my enemies, but you have actually blessed them!* It is the fourth prophecy we are most interested in.

In Balaam's fourth prophecy we find these words: *I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel and shall crush Moab* (Numbers 24:17). Perhaps this prophecy was initially fulfilled by David, but ultimately in the coming Messianic ruler. Israel's future Deliverer will be like a star.

**And His name shall be called –
Bright Morning Star**

Messiah The Prince

December 20

Daniel 9:24-27

Today's reading is from Daniel's Prophecy of Seventy Weeks. According to verse two of this chapter, Daniel realized that the appointed time for Israel's exile of 70 years was coming to an end. What was God's next plan for Israel? The answer is found in the Scripture for today.

This prophecy is connected with the term *weeks*. In fact, seventy weeks cover the entire prophecy. A week is understood as seven years (Leviticus 25:8). The prophetic word to Daniel covers 490 years of history. It is divided into three sections: seven weeks equals 49 years, sixty-two weeks equals 434 years and one week equals 7 years. The first two divisions of the prophecy of 483 years run consequently. The counting of years begins with *the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem* and this will take us to the time of *Messiah the Prince* (v. 25).

The time of Israel's exile is soon to end. Israel will have a future; Jerusalem will have a future. This future for both a people and a city revolves around One individual – the Messiah the Prince.

**And His name shall be called –
Messiah the Prince**

Bridegroom

December 21

Revelation 21:9-27

Today, the identification of the Messiah is associated with the word *bridegroom*. This reference to the Messiah has a rich history in the New Testament. Specifically, we are interested in how John the Baptist understood this term, how Paul used this term, and finally, how it is used in our reading from Revelation, chapter 21.

John used this term (John 3:29) to refer to Jesus as the bridegroom and John as the *friend* of the bridegroom. He was aware that in the Old Testament Israel is regarded as the bride of God (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 2:2) and this term became for John a means of testifying “*that God was in Christ betrothing his bride to himself afresh.*”

The apostle Paul used the imagery of husband/wife and Christ/church (Ephesians 5:25) to show that the church was the bride of Christ and Jesus Christ was the bridegroom. The Bridegroom’s intention is to *present to Himself the church in all her glory* (v. 27).

In today’s text, *the bride, the wife of the Lamb* (v. 9), is *the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God* (v. 10). The description of the city of God (vv. 11-27), is given in a deliberate contrast to the antichristian city described in Revelation 17. The book of Revelation reaches its climax as the story of the harlot and the bride. It is in truth a tale of two cities!

And His name shall be called - Bridegroom

Son of God

December 22

Mark 15:33-39

During Advent 2016, we have been interested in the various names for Jesus. In today's reading we have yet another familiar name, Son of God. The gospel writer, Mark, began his writing by identifying Jesus as *The Son of God* (Mark 1:1). But in Mark, the identity of Jesus became an issue because many didn't seem to *know* who Jesus actually was (Mark 4:41; 6: 6:2, 3). Even Jesus Himself asked Peter at a crucial moment in the gospel account (Mark 8:27) the question, *who do people say that I am?*

Some writers have even gone so far as to suggest the real identity of Jesus was not known until the early church age. And yet the earliest gospel begins its account of the life of Jesus by acknowledging Him as the Son of God.

According to Mark, there was a progression of understanding concerning Jesus' identity. The first name for Jesus was **teacher** (Mark 1:21). Elsewhere, others approach Jesus and call Him teacher. This was to acknowledge His wisdom and authority that was apparent when He taught. Jesus went back home (Mark 6:1-5). His hometown people didn't know what to make of His ministry and Jesus Himself used the term **prophet** (Mark 6:4) in reference to Himself. Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46) knew Jesus as **Son of David** in recognition of Him coming from the lineage of King David. Ultimately, it was His death that declared His name as **Son of God** and that was by the Roman centurion (v. 39). As Mark records the account, *when he saw the way He breathed His last, he said truly this man was the Son of God!*

And His name shall be called – Son of God

Man

December 23

1 Timothy 2:1-7

In these few verses Paul shares his concern for *all men* (v. 1, 4). In traditional Jewish thought, God was the high and lofty One. Every day the basic belief of Judaism (the *Shema* –Deuteronomy 6:4) would be prayed.

But there is a great distance between this transcendent God and mere mortal men. How could this vast gulf be closed so that God and men could experience fellowship? According to God's mercy and providence, there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (v. 5).

With the reference to *the man* we have one of the great mysteries as well a cardinal truth of the Bible. The God-Man has come to lead men to God. We call this the doctrine of the Incarnation. The appearance of Jesus into our world *makes known* to men exactly who God is and what God intends to do about the human condition.

Elsewhere Paul makes clear the plan of the Incarnation (Philippians 2:6-8). In the Philippian letter Paul writes: *Although Christ Jesus existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* John the Apostle spoke in theological terms when he wrote *the Word became flesh and dwelled among us* (John. 1:14). The purpose of this *man* Christ Jesus was to give Himself as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6). God came down to us, to bring us back to Him.

And His name shall be called – the Man

Man of Sorrows

December 24

Isaiah 53:1-3

I wonder what made Jesus sad? The prophet used terms like despised, forsaken, acquainted with grief, we did not esteem Him (v. 3). And thus He was a man of sorrows. The Hebrew for *sorrows* is used for both physical and mental pain. Again, I wonder what made Jesus sad?

The writer John (John 1:11) said *He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him*. What happened? It was not that the multitude gave Jesus a fair hearing and decided not to follow Him. Rather, they didn't even consider Him worthy of a fair hearing. There was nothing in His personal appearance that would demand an audience and thus the multitude *did not esteem Him* or even count Him worthy of a hearing.

At the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Luke 21:28-44), as Jesus approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it (Luke 21:41). As He wept, He said, *If you had known...but you did not recognize* (Luke 21:42; 44). The prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled – the Jews of Jesus' day did not recognize the time of their visitation. Jesus was despised and forsaken. He was the man of sorrows!

And His name shall be – Man of Sorrows

Jesus

December 25

Matthew 1:18-25

Today we acknowledge the birth of our Savior. While Mary was the key human in this story she was not the only one. There is also Joseph and he has a crucial part to play in this birth narrative. Today's reading provides the reader with a picture into his character and sensitivity to the things of God.

When Mary was found to be with child, Joseph was faced with a very difficult decision regarding Mary. The text states that Joseph was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace Mary. He was intending to put her away secretly. It was through divine intervention that Joseph was told that the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. Being a righteous man, Joseph had faith to believe this divine word.

Joseph would also be responsible to name this child. Thus, the angel of the Lord continues with this word: *you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.* The name Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means *the Lord saves*. The Lord God chose Joshua to replace Moses and he would lead Israel across the Jordan and take possession of the Promised Land. Through this action, Joshua will *save* his people by giving them rest from their wanderings in the wilderness. However, Hebrews chapter four reminds the reader that Jesus, the New Testament Joshua, is better than the first Joshua. Jesus provides a rest that is spiritual and eternal.

And His name shall be called – Jesus

Christmas Activities Schedule

Columbus Symphony Orchestra Christmas Concert Fri, December 13, 7:00 pm

Tickets should be purchased online, through the church office or at the door.

Faith Kids Christmas Program Sun, December 15, 10:30 am

A dramatic presentation of Christmas by our preschool through 6th grade students.

Lancaster Community Band Holiday Concert Sun, December 22, 2:00 pm

Faith is pleased to annually host the Lancaster Community Band in their instrumental celebration of Christmas.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Sat, December 24, 6:00 pm

This family service is filled with traditional carols and hymns and the Biblical message of Christmas. Individual candle lighting takes place at the end of the service and is a beautiful way to start your family's celebration.

Teens End of Year Blast Mon, December 30, 8:00 pm-12:00 am

We will join other churches from the denomination at Scene 75, Dublin. Voted the top family entertainment center in the world with indoor go karts, laser tag, blacklight mini-golf, arcade, and more! Contact Pastor Aaron Green for details, 740.415.7053.

Worship and Discipleship Schedule

Sundays

- 9:30 am Study groups for all ages
10:30 am Morning Worship
Faith Kids Worship
6:30 pm Young Adults

Tuesdays

- 9:45 am Ladies Prayer Group

Wednesdays

- 6:00 pm Faith Family Dinner – every first Weds of the month
Bring your family and enjoy a meal before groups.
7:00 pm Study groups for adults
Music Ministries Rehearsal
Faith Kids
Blitz Youth Worship

Saturdays

- 8:00 am Men's Prayer Group

Our Pastors and Ministry Leaders

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Mike Kotora, Worship & Music	740.503.5896
David Case, Adult Education	740.477.7737
Aaron Green, Teens of Faith	740.415.7053
Jarod Massie, Faith Kids	740.418.7846
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