

*Day 1*  
*December 2*



*Pray | Praise God for all he has done*

Benedictus

Zechariah's song in the book of Luke is known as the Benedictus, from the Latin translation of the first words in Luke 1:68. It's a song of praise, remembrance, and prophecy, spoken by Zechariah through the work of the Holy Spirit. The words echo those of the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Malachi, promising a savior from the line of David who would come to rescue the Jewish people from their enemies. The Benedictus is the first prophecy spoken to God's people since the final words of Malachi 400 years earlier. God was about to fulfill his promise; he was finally coming to save his people.



*Read | [Luke 1:67-75](#); [Genesis 12:1-3](#); [2 Sam 7:12-16](#)*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Zechariah recalls the promises God made to Abraham in Genesis 12, including his promise to bless all people on earth through Abraham. How would the coming birth of Jesus fulfill this promise?

In 2 Samuel chapter 7, God speaks to King David through the prophet Nathan. What is God's promise to David and how does it relate to Zechariah's song in Luke 1?

God's plan of salvation through Jesus' death on the cross is consistently foreshadowed and prophesied in the Old Testament; we've seen only a glimpse of it in today's Bible readings. Take a few moments to let it sink in that God had a plan from the beginning of creation to lavish his grace on you and invite you into eternity with him. He is worthy of all our praise!

## *Day 2*

*December 3*



*Pray | Praise God for ensuring our salvation from our enemies*

Salvation from our enemies

To his audience at the time, Zechariah's prophecy of 'salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us' was probably interpreted as freedom from enemy nations and the defeat of the Roman Empire. However, current readers have the advantage of knowing the rest of the story. God did not send a savior to destroy the Romans or any other nation or ethnic group that persecuted the Jewish people; he also didn't honor Zechariah's use of the terms 'our' and 'us' – meaning the Jewish people. God's plan vastly surpassed these expectations by ensuring freedom for all people from enemies more powerful than even the great Roman Empire.



*Read | [Luke 1:68-75](#); [Ephesians 6:11-12](#)*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Take some time to think about who or what may be your enemy: physical or spiritual. How does Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection ensure your salvation from these enemies, as we are promised in Luke 1:71?

For most of us, our worst enemy is our own flesh – our addictions, time wasters, bad choices, and selfish thoughts. Jesus came to give us victory over all of it – over all of our sin. What is one specific step you can take today to help you start living in victory?

The 'horn of salvation' in Luke 1:69 is alluding to an animal's horns which it would use to defeat another animal in battle. It's a description of Jesus' strength and power. In what way do you need Jesus' power today? Take a moment to pray for his powerful intervention in your day.

## Day 3

December 4



*Pray | Ask God to prepare you for his coming*

Prepare the way

Like he had done for Abraham and Sarah, God blessed Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age with a son. They had undoubtedly spent many years praying for a child and finally received God's answer to their prayer long after they had given up hope. In fact, even after the angel Gabriel appears in person to inform Zechariah that he will be a father, Zechariah has doubts – and as a result, is made mute until the baby's birth. So it is a particularly joyous occasion when their son, John, is born and Zechariah can finally speak. His spirit-filled speech in front of friends and neighbors, however, contains only a brief section dedicated to his newborn son; the rest is devoted to God. Yet that brief section reveals an incredible honor given by God: their son will be a prophet who will prepare the way for the coming Messiah.



*Read | [Luke 1:13-17, 76-77](#)*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

The angel, Gabriel, reveals that Zechariah's son, John the Baptist, will "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." What do you think this means? In what ways does Luke 1:77 add to your response? Spend a few moments in prayer asking God to guide you in ways that you can prepare the way for others to come to know Jesus.

The advent season is sometimes described as a time to prepare our hearts or to make ourselves ready for the coming celebration of Jesus' birth. How will you use this time of advent to prepare? Are there ways you can do this in community with other believers or even unbelievers?

Advent is derived from the Latin for 'to come'. It denotes both the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago and his second coming – which could happen at any moment. Have you prepared the way for Jesus to come again and claim you as his own? Is there anything you've left undone?

## Day 4 December 5



*Pray | To reflect the light of God's presence*

The rising sun

God's special blessing to early-risers is a glorious sunrise. Artists often attempt to depict the astonishing beauty of it and poets understand it as a metaphor for hope. There is a comfort and assurance in knowing that the sun will rise again tomorrow and that God's mercies are new every morning (Lam 3:22-23). When we pull all these descriptions together we see a picture of Jesus: glory, beauty, hope, comfort, assurance, and mercy - the rising sun as a person, shining the light of his love into a dark world. Some will remain hidden in the shadows, comfortable in the darkness. Others will step hesitantly into the light, blinking against its brightness, eyes gradually adjusting to see the narrow path ahead and ears catching the whisper of his voice beckoning us home.



*Read | [Luke 1:78-79](#); [Ephesians 5:8-14](#)*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

There is a part of all of us that is drawn to the darkness and shadow of sin; it's part of our fallen nature. What are the specific sins that you are drawn to the most? What are some ways you can turn away from these sins? Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you.

As Jesus shines his light into our lives, we are meant to reflect his light into the lives of others. We do this through serving others in love and sharing the gospel with them. How have you reflected his light today? Make a plan for serving and sharing in some way each day for the next week and stick to it!

There are countless numbers of people living in darkness and the shadow of death without even knowing it. Maybe they've heard of Jesus but they don't understand why his death and resurrection is so important. Does this describe you? If so, take the time today to ask a Christian friend or pastor to explain how you can accept Jesus as your personal savior.

## Day 5

December 6



*Pray | To experience Christ's peace*

### Pax Romana

For over 200 years, the Roman Empire experienced a time of relative calm, prosperity, and stability, known as the Pax Romana, or Roman Peace. It began with the reign of Augustus in 27 BC, who was granted almost unlimited powers by the Roman Senate and used these powers to retain tight control over the army, the treasury, and every province of the Empire. This security and stability was maintained by Augustus' successors until about 180 AD. It was during the Pax Romana that Zechariah prophesied of the coming Messiah, whom he said would 'guide our feet into the path of peace' (Luke 1:79).



*Read | [Luke 1:78-79](#); [John 14:27](#); [John 16:33](#)*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Augustus established peace by gaining full political control of the Empire and establishing a large army. Jesus brought his peace to the world by living humbly, serving others, and sacrificing his life for us. Which example will you follow? How will your actions demonstrate it?

Our world is in constant strife; any peace we might find here is only temporary. However, Jesus promises us a deep and lasting peace if we abide in him. Are you experiencing his peace? If not, consider seeking God's help in this through his Word and earnest prayer.

In John 16:33, Jesus acknowledges that we'll experience suffering and hardships. Yet he assures us that we can still be at peace. How does it change your perspective about the troubles you face to know that Jesus has 'overcome the world'?

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