

**Monday, November 28 – Read Luke 1:16-17.** What John the Baptist did for Israel, Advent can do for us. Don't let Christmas find you unprepared. I mean spiritually unprepared. Its joy and impact will be so much greater if you are ready! That you might be prepared... First meditate on the fact that we need a Savior. Christmas is an indictment before it becomes a delight. It will not have its intended effect until we feel desperately the need for a Savior. In these days leading up to Christmas, may the words of this study guide awaken in you a bittersweet sense of need for the Savior. Second, engage in sober self-examination. Advent is to Christmas what Lent is to Easter. "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be an wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" Let every heart prepare him room...by cleaning house. Third, build God centered anticipation and expectancy and excitement into your home – especially for the children. If you are excited about Christ, they will be too. If you can only make Christmas exciting with material things, how will the children get a thirst for God? Bend the efforts of your imagination to make the wonder of the King's arrival visible for the children.

**Tuesday, November 29 – Read Luke 1:46-55.** Mary sees clearly a most remarkable thing about God: He is about to change the course of all human history; the most important three decades in all of time are about to begin. And where is God? Occupying himself with two obscure humble women – one old and barren (Elizabeth), one young and virginal (Mary). And Mary is so moved by this vision of God, the lover of the lowly, that she breaks out in a song – a song that has come to be known as "the Magnificat." Mary and Elizabeth are wonderful heroines in Luke's account. He loves the faith of these women. The thing that impresses him most, it appears, and the thing he wants to impress on Theophilus, is the lowliness and cheerful humility of Elizabeth and Mary. **Read Luke 1:43 and 48.** The only people whose song can truly magnify the Lord are people like Elizabeth and Mary – people who acknowledge their lowly estate and are overwhelmed by the condescension of the magnificent God.

**Wednesday, November 30 – Read Luke 1:68-71.** Notice two remarkable things from these words of Zechariah. First, nine months earlier, Zechariah could not believe his wife would have a child. Now, filled with the Holy Spirit, he is so confident of God's redeeming work in the coming Messiah that he puts it in the past tense. For the mind of faith, a promised act of God is as good as done. Zechariah has learned to take God at his word and so has a remarkable assurance: "God has visited and redeemed!" Second, the coming of Jesus the Messiah is a visitation of God to our world: "The God of Israel has visited and redeemed." For centuries, the Jewish people had languished under the conviction that God had withdrawn: the spirit of prophecy had ceased, Israel had fallen into the hands of Rome. And all the godly in Israel were awaiting the visitation of God. Luke tells us in 2:25 that the devout Simeon was "looking for the consolation of Israel." In Luke 2:38, the prayerful Anna was "looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." These were days of great expectation. Now the long awaited visitation of God was about to happen – indeed, he was about to come in a way no one expected.

**Thursday, December 1 – Read Luke 2:1-5.** Have you ever thought what an amazing thing it is that God ordained beforehand that the Messiah be born in Bethlehem (as the prophecy in Micah 5 shows); and that he so ordained things that when the time came, the Messiah's mother and legal father were living in Nazareth; and that in order to fulfill his word and bring two little people to Bethlehem that first Christmas, God put it in the heart of Caesar Augustus that all the Roman world should be enrolled each in his own town? Have you ever felt little and insignificant in a world of 7 billion people, were all the news is of big political and economic and social movements and of outstanding people with lots of power and prestige? If you have, don't let that make you disheartened or unhappy. For it is implicit in Scripture that all the mammoth political forces and all the giant industrial complexes, without their even knowing it, are being guided by God, not for their own sake but for the sake of God's little people – the little Mary and the little Joseph who have to be go from Nazareth to Bethlehem. God wields an empire to bless his children. Do not think because you experience adversity, that the hand of the Lord is shortened. It is not our prosperity but our holiness that he seeks with all his heart. And to that end, he rules the whole world. **Read Proverbs 21:1.** He is a big God for little people, and we have great cause to rejoice that, unbeknownst to them, all the kings and presidents of the world follow the sovereign decrees of our Father in heaven, that we, the children, might be conformed to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ.

**Friday, December 2 – Read Luke 2:6-7.** Now you would think that if God so rules the world as to use an empire-wide census to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, he surely could have seen to it that a room was available in the inn. Yes, he could have. And Jesus could have been born into a wealthy family. He could have turned stone into bread in the wilderness. He could have called 10,000 angels to his aid in Gethsemane. He could have come down from the cross and saved himself. The question is not what God could do, but what he willed to do. God's will was that though Christ was rich, yet for your sake he became poor. The "No Vacancy" signs over all the motels in Bethlehem were for your sake. **Read 2 Corinthians 8:9.** God rules all things – even motel capacities – for the sake of his children. The Calvary road begins with a "No Vacancy" sign in Bethlehem and ends with the spitting and scoffing of the cross in Jerusalem. And we must not forget that he said, "He who would come after me must deny himself and take up his cross." We join him on the Calvary road. **Read John 15:20.** God could have seen to it that Jesus had a room at his birth. But that would have been a detour off the Calvary road.