

**Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus:
Experiencing the Peace and Promise of Christmas**

Nancy Guthrie, ed.

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A Brief Book Summary from TGC

By Jordan Atkinson

About the Author

Nancy Guthrie has a national and international Bible-teaching ministry and hosts The Gospel Coalition's podcast, *Help Me Teach the Bible*.

Overview

This book is a collection of devotional readings for Advent both from historically significant theologians and from leading modern preachers and teachers. Each reading reflects on one or more Bible verses that are relevant to the anticipation of Jesus' birth. This book is a collection of readings that aim to foster life-changing reflection on Christ's incarnation in their readers.

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Summary

Chapter 1 **Contemplating Christmas** **George Whitfield**

In becoming incarnate, Jesus Christ gave everything for his people; therefore, Christians should give him much of their time. Christians should spend time singing Jesus' praises both for being born and for living a life of sinless perfection and dying in their place on the cross to appease God's wrath. Christians should constantly think about Christ and consider how they may better obey his commands. Jesus gave up everything for his people; his people should respond by giving the rest of their lives to him.

Chapter 2 **Tabernacled Among Us** **Joseph "Skip" Ryan**

John 1:14 portrays Jesus' incarnation as him tabernacling among his people, just as God's presence filled the tabernacle during Israel's wilderness wanderings. Jesus' incarnation is significant because our salvation depends on his death, and in order to die, he needed a body. One implication of John 1:14 is that the Old Testament depends on the fulfillment of Jesus for its fullest meaning. As God incarnate, Jesus expresses God's glory even more fully than what was revealed in the Old Testament tabernacle. Jesus' glory is most evident in his sacrificial death on the cross. We worship him because he was born, so that he could die.

Chapter 3 **The Maiden Mary** **Martin Luther**

Mary is a model for Christians. Many Christians, like Mary, have humble backgrounds. She acknowledged her lowliness in her Magnificat by describing her "low estate." Mary may have even been going about her daily chores when Gabriel appeared to her. Mary must believe a great mystery when Gabriel announces that she will bear the Messiah. She had to believe against the evidence of how every other baby had been conceived that the child in her womb would be conceived by the Holy Spirit of God. Likewise, Christians must walk by faith rather than sight when considering Christ in the Bible. Mary models for Christians how to respond to Jesus' incarnation.

Chapter 4 **Conceived by the Holy Spirit** **John Piper**

Even in the act of Jesus' conception, the Holy Spirit exalts Christ rather than himself. In Luke 1:30–35, the focus is on Jesus, rather than the Holy Spirit. Jesus will be great, the Son of the Most High, the long-awaited Davidic King. The incarnate Jesus' status as Son of God depends on nothing short of the Holy Spirit's miraculous conception of him in the virgin Mary. Mary's

response to this miracle is instructive for Christians: we today must be willing to be used by the Holy Spirit whenever, wherever, doing whatever he would have us to do. Ultimately, Christians should strive to be full of the Holy Spirit by being full of Christ.

Chapter 5
The Gifts of Christmas
Tim Keller

God gives many gifts to his people through Jesus' incarnation. Jesus' incarnation first gives his followers the peace that enables them to be vulnerable in human relationships. Jesus frees his people from the need to win arguments and be right because their righteousness is in him, rather than in themselves. Jesus' incarnation also gives his people the strength needed to endure suffering. Jesus' endurance of suffering comforts us in our sufferings. His incarnation gives Christians an active passion for justice in this unjust world, for they know based on his resurrection that justice will triumph in the end. Finally, Jesus' incarnation gives Christians the ability to humble themselves to have compassion on people they formerly hated.

Chapter 6
The Great Fulfillment
Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Jesus' incarnation is the perfect proof that God keeps all his promises. God fulfills his promise to Abraham by coming to earth in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. The whole Old Testament anticipates the advent of the Messiah. The Old Testament sacrificial system was pointing forward to Jesus' final, perfect sacrifice, which required his incarnation in order to happen. The incarnation of Jesus Christ proves that God keeps his promises, and it gives Christians hope that Romans 8:28 and Hebrews 13:5 are true even when circumstances tempt them to doubt.

Chapter 7
Joseph: Righteous and Kind
J. Ligon Duncan III

Joseph in Matthew 1:18–25 models righteousness and kindness. When it seemed that Mary was immorally pregnant, Joseph's righteousness led him to consider divorcing her. His kindness and compassion for Mary made him want to divorce her quietly and spare her public shame. Joseph's righteousness and kindness are based on his thoughtfulness toward God before acting. Ultimately, his belief of the angel's message confirms his righteousness and kindness. Even at the risk to his own reputation, he takes Mary as wife and names her Son Jesus, as the angel directed him. God intends his people to be righteous and kind, as Joseph was.

Chapter 8
To Be More Blessed Than Mary
Jonathan Edwards

More than anything else, people want to be happy, or blessed. As Jesus' mother, Mary was greatly blessed. God highly favored her and blessed her more than any woman before her, by

giving her the blessing of conceiving, giving birth to, and raising the long-awaited Messiah. As blessed as Mary was, though, they are more blessed who hear and keep God's word through Jesus (Luke 11:27–28). To hear God's word is to understand it spiritually, to believe its truthfulness, and then to obey it. Keeping God's word means following it in daily life even in the face of hard circumstances and observing it throughout life. Those who do so are more blessed than the virgin Mary.

Chapter 9
Have You Any Room?
Charles Spurgeon

People should have more room for Jesus in their hearts than the town of Bethlehem had for him. Jesus was not born in a palace. Politically powerful people did not welcome Jesus into this world, and few continue to do so. Popular culture, renowned philosophers, and religious leaders often reject him, also. Jesus comes to those humble in spirit, but one should not be too humble and use sinfulness as an excuse not to repent. Furthermore, one must make room for Jesus immediately and willingly let him in to your heart.

Chapter 10
The Word Was Made Flesh
Saint Augustine

Christians must believe the great mystery that the Word of God, Jesus, was made flesh (John 1:1–2, 14). The depth of this mystery is inexpressible. You must not follow worldly reasoning, or else you will not believe this truth. You should believe this truth, for it is such help and comfort that God himself took flesh so that now, Jesus is ascended to God's right hand and makes intercession for his people and in bodily form will return to judge the living and the dead.

Chapter 11
For Your Sakes He Became Poor
J. I. Packer

Christians should be generous, even as Jesus was generous. In the incarnation, Jesus became poor despite his great riches as the eternal Son of God (2 Cor 8:9). Though fully divine, Jesus took on humanity and took on all its weaknesses in order to die in the place of his people. Jesus gave all, so his people should be similarly generous. Christians who seek to show the Christmas spirit must not be selfish but rather selfless. Christians should seek to meet people's needs, whatever form they may take, in following their master, Christ.

Chapter 12
Unto Us a Child Is Born
John Calvin

Isaiah 9:6–7 is a prophecy of Jesus. Jesus is the promised child to be born. He is the Wonderful Counselor for his people. He redeems his people and makes them his friends. He is the Mighty God who overcomes death by his divine power. As Father, he is the author and preserver of the

church. He is the Prince of Peace, who reigns forever and restores all creation, and Christians should follow Christ in seeking to establish justice and righteousness in the world.

Chapter 13
Wrapped in Humility
Alistair Begg

Jesus did not relinquish his divine nature when he made himself nothing (Phil 2:5–7); rather, he added humanity to his divinity. In becoming incarnate, Jesus became at first a helpless human baby, though he was almighty God. Jesus made himself nothing throughout his life on earth by taking the form of a servant. He never ceased to be God, but his role as the God-Man was that of servant, which culminated in his death on behalf of his people, as was God’s plan all along.

Chapter 14
Shepherd Status
Randy Alcorn

God announced Jesus’ birth first to shepherds. In ancient cultures, shepherds were among the lowest strata of society. Both in Greco-Roman and Jewish culture, people looked down on shepherds for the menial jobs they did while tending sheep. God chose to reveal Jesus’ birth first to those who were lowly and weak in the world. People today should be encouraged that Jesus came to save lowly sinners, not self-righteous people..

Chapter 15
Glory Revealed
John MacArthur

God reveals his glory in Jesus’ incarnation. Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:9) is the fulfillment of God’s promise to reveal his glory (Isa 40:5). God reveals himself supremely in Jesus (Heb 1:1–3). Through faith in Jesus, Christians progress from one degree of glory to another as they behold him (2 Cor 3:18). Through Christ, God reveals his glory to us, for us, and in us.

Chapter 16
Good News of Great Joy
Raymond C. Ortlund Jr.

Luke 2:8–14 outline many reasons why Christians should rejoice at Christmas. Christians should rejoice in Jesus’ birth because God therein appears in glory. They should rejoice because God is good, and he spreads his goodness to others. People should also rejoice because God offers to meet their greatest need in Christ Jesus. Christians should rejoice because Christmas assures them that God will get glory for himself. Finally, people should rejoice at Christmas because Jesus’ incarnation shows that God is for us, not against us.

Chapter 17
Seeing Jesus with the Shepherds
Francis Schaeffer

People should seek to respond to Jesus the way the shepherds did. We should believe that the Son of God became incarnate because he loves the world. We should repent of our sins and fight the sin in our lives, as doubtless the shepherds did following their worshipful encounter with Jesus. We should share the gospel with others without being silenced by their rejection of it. We should not satisfy ourselves with material goods but rather find true satisfaction in Christ.

Chapter 18
The Lessons of the Wise Men
J. C. Ryle

Matthew's account of the wise men visiting Jesus (Matt 2:1–12) can teach Christians many lessons. First, it teaches Christians that God can extend salvation even to the most unlikely people. The church and world may not be aware of some people who are following Christ even now. Second, these verses show that religious people may dishonor Christ. Sometimes, those who would be expected to reverence Jesus are quickest to disregard him. Similarly, this passage shows that one can know Scripture without loving its Author, God. Such were the priests and elders whom Herod consulted for ascertaining the birthplace of the Messiah. It also teaches how to be spiritually diligent after the manner of the wise men. They went to great pains to seek Jesus; even so should we in our pursuit of following Christ. Finally, it teaches that faith is trusting Jesus even without overwhelming physical evidence.

Chapter 19
Gifts of Faith
James Montgomery Boice

Matthew highlights the gifts of the wise men by giving more details about the gifts than about the wise men themselves. Scripture numbers the gifts but not the wise men. The gifts are specific; the wise men are unnamed. Matthew emphasizes that Gentiles rather than Jews are among the first people to reverence the long-awaited Messiah. Therefore, people should offer Jesus gold, frankincense, and myrrh just as the wise men did. Give him myrrh by admitting your sinfulness and asking for salvation through him. Offer him frankincense by asking him to remove evil from your heart. Offer him gold by committing to following his direction throughout the rest of your life.

Chapter 20
Embarking on a Course of Redemption
R. C. Sproul

Jesus embarked on his mission of redemption even at his circumcision when eight days old (Luke 2:21). Jesus' circumcision began his long life of obedience to God's law and pointed forward to the cross, when he would be circumcised—cut off—from the living for the sake of his people. At his circumcision, Jesus was given his name, which points to his virgin conception by the power of the Holy Spirit. This was a new act of creation *ex nihilo*. Jesus' name is also significant because it means “God saves” and points to Jesus' mission in coming to earth.

Chapter 21
Those to Whom Christ Comes
R. Kent Hughes

People should respond to Jesus the way Simeon and Anna did in Luke 2:22–38. Simeon and Anna are especially instructive examples today because their actions—longing and waiting on the Lord—are currently unpopular. Simeon and Anna expected God to fulfill his word, and they relied on God as their only source of grace and hope. Simeon in particular models faith in Jesus as the only source of salvation, even though for us to rise because of him, we must first fall before him in humility.

Chapter 22
A Christmas Longing
Joni Eareckson Tada

Christmas was the longing of all the faithful Old Testament saints. Abraham believed God's promise for a coming Savior (Romans 4:3). Many of his descendants failed to believe God's promises to send a Messiah, but others believed. They waited with eager anticipation and fervent longing for the coming Savior, especially Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist.

Christmas likewise invites us to celebrate in eager anticipation the second coming of Jesus. He will fulfill our deepest longings (1 Cor 6:13). In his first coming, he accomplished our salvation. In his second coming, he will bring that salvation to its appointed, perfect end. At Christmas, people should not only look back at Christ's birth but also look forward to his imminent return.