Fifth Street
BAPTIST CHURCH

BEFORE BETHLEHEM

THE PROMISE OF A COMING KING

The promise was spoken before the manger was seen.



PROMISE	COVENANT	KING	MESSIAH	LIGHT	BETHLEHEM
GENESIS 3:15	GENESIS 12:1-3	2 SAMUEL 7:8-16	PSALM 2	ISAIAH 9:1-7	MICAH 5:2-5

A SIX-WEEK OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

PREPARING THE WAY FOR ADVENT

FAITHFULNESS AND FRUITFULNESS

Rev. F. Todd Gray, Pastor

Before Bethlehem Student Guide

The Promise of a Coming King

A six-week Old Testament study preparing the way for Advent

Name _____

Fifth Street Baptist Church

Richmond, Virginia

Fall 2026

Promise • Covenant • King • Messiah • Light • Bethlehem

How to Use This Student Guide

This guide will help you follow one unfolding biblical promise from the garden of Genesis to the little town of Bethlehem. Bring a Bible, preferably the GNT used in the Luke series, and use the writing spaces to record observations, questions, and personal responses. The purpose is not simply to gather information about a coming King, but to recognize God's faithfulness and allow that faithfulness to produce fruit in us.

The Journey Toward Bethlehem

Week	Lesson	Text	Movement
1	The First Promise	Genesis 3:1–15	Promise
2	A Blessing for All Nations	Genesis 12:1–3	Covenant
3	The Promise of a King	2 Samuel 7:8–16	King
4	God’s Anointed King	Psalm 2	Messiah
5	A Light in the Darkness	Isaiah 8:21–9:7	Light
6	From Little Bethlehem	Micah 5:1–5a	Bethlehem

Our Series Question

What kind of King does a broken world need?and how does Jesus fulfill that hope?

Faithfulness and Fruitfulness

God?s faithfulness carries the promise through generations. Our fruitfulness is the faithful response of trusting, obeying, blessing, serving, hoping, and living under the reign of Christ.

Before We Begin

- Read the passage before each session if possible.
- Underline repeated words, contrasts, promises, and actions of God.
- Bring honest questions. Faithful study is not threatened by careful inquiry.
- Choose one response each week that can move from the page into your life.

WEEK 1 | The First Promise

Primary Text Genesis 3:1–15 • Read aloud from the GNT

Series Movement Promise

Big Idea

Before humanity knows how to return to God, God announces that evil will not have the final word.

Condition of Existence

We often hide when shame tells us that failure has become our identity.

First Observations

What words, images, actions, or contrasts stand out when you first read the passage?

1 The lie changes our picture of God

The serpent first distorts God's word and character. Once God is imagined as withholding good, disobedience begins to look like freedom.

What false idea about God makes temptation persuasive in this passage—and in life today?

2 Sin breaks more than a rule

The humans' choice produces shame, hiding, fear, blame, and fractured relationships. The act is personal, relational, and communal.

Which broken relationship in Genesis 3 most clearly shows what sin does? Why?

WEEK 1 CONTINUED

3 God begins the answer

God declares, “I will put enmity.” Even within judgment, God refuses to allow evil to own the future. The coming victory includes a wound, but the wound is not the conclusion.

Where do you need to remember that being wounded is not the same as being defeated?

Key Truth Flow

Trust is distorted → relationship is broken → God initiates resistance → evil will not have the final word

My Faithful Response

What truth will I carry, and what action will I take this week?

Prayer

God of holy truth and initiating grace, meet us where we hide. Break the lies that distort your character, strengthen us in the struggle against evil, and teach us to trust the victory you have begun and completed in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Signature Phrase

The wound is real, but it is not the end of the story.

WEEK 2 | A Blessing for All Nations

Primary Text Genesis 12:1–3 • Read aloud from the GNT

Series Movement Covenant

Big Idea

Election is not divine favoritism; God chooses a people so that God's blessing can move through them to others.

Condition of Existence

We are tempted to treat God's blessings as proof of our importance rather than resources for serving others.

First Observations

What words, images, actions, or contrasts stand out when you first read the passage?

1 Faith leaves before it sees the whole map

Abram is called to leave country, kindred, and household. God gives enough direction for the next step, not every detail of the journey.

What security would be hardest for you to release if obedience required movement?

2 God gives what people try to seize

At Babel, people try to make their own name. God promises Abram a name that is received as grace and used for God’s purpose.

How does receiving identity from God free us from having to make a name for ourselves?

WEEK 2 CONTINUED

3 Blessing reaches its purpose when it moves

God chooses one family so that all families may be blessed. Election is responsibility and vocation, not private privilege.

What blessing has God placed in your life that needs to reach someone else?

Key Truth Flow

God calls → Abram trusts → God promises → the blessed become a blessing

My Faithful Response

What truth will I carry, and what action will I take this week?

Prayer

God who calls and keeps covenant, free us from building our own names. Make us people who receive your blessing humbly and release it generously, until families and nations encounter your grace through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Signature Phrase

God's blessing is never meant to stop with us.

WEEK 3 | The Promise of a King

Primary Text 2 Samuel 7:8–16 • Read aloud from the GNT

Series Movement King

Big Idea

The future of God's people rests finally on what God promises to establish, not on what even devoted leaders propose to accomplish for God.

Condition of Existence

Even faithful people can become so focused on what they want to do for God that they miss what God is doing.

First Observations

What words, images, actions, or contrasts stand out when you first read the passage?

1 Remember who began the story

God reminds David, "I took you" and "I have been with you." Leadership and achievement begin in grace, not self-creation.

If you retold your story beginning with "God took me" and "God has been with me," what would you say?

2 God may redirect a good intention

David wants to build God a house, but God reverses the plan and promises to build David a house—a lasting dynasty.

Can you remember a good plan that God redirected? What did the redirection reveal?

WEEK 3 CONTINUED

3 Promise includes responsibility

God's steadfast love remains, but kings are still accountable. Enduring promise is not permission for unfaithful leadership.

How should God's faithfulness make leaders both secure and accountable?

Key Truth Flow

God calls → God remains present → God redirects → God establishes a lasting promise

My Faithful Response

What truth will I carry, and what action will I take this week?

Prayer

Faithful God, remind us that you called us, carried us, and established every good thing in our lives. Correct our plans when necessary, keep our leadership accountable, and center our hope in Jesus, the everlasting Son of David. Amen.

Signature Phrase

Our best future rests on what God establishes, not merely on what we construct.

WEEK 4 | God’s Anointed King

Primary Text Psalm 2 • Read aloud from the GNT

Series Movement Messiah

Big Idea

God’s rule is not threatened by human defiance, and the King’s final purpose is to bring the world under God’s just and sheltering reign.

Condition of Existence

We can fear human power too much, imitate it too easily, or confuse it with the reign of God.

First Observations

What words, images, actions, or contrasts stand out when you first read the passage?

1 Resistance cannot unsettle God

The nations rage and rulers organize, but their rebellion cannot destabilize God’s purpose. Divine laughter exposes the limits of arrogant power.

What power or circumstance are you tempted to treat as greater than God’s purpose?

2 The King receives authority from God

The anointed ruler is installed by God, called God's son, and given a mission. His authority is received, representative, and accountable.

How is God-given authority different from self-protective domination?

WEEK 4 CONTINUED

3 Judgment still opens toward refuge

The psalm warns rulers, but it closes with blessing for all who take refuge in God. The final invitation is not panic but wise trust.

What would taking refuge in God look like in one area of public or personal anxiety?

Key Truth Flow

The nations resist → God remains sovereign → the King is established → refuge is offered

My Faithful Response

What truth will I carry, and what action will I take this week?

Prayer

Sovereign God, quiet our fear and correct our pride. Teach us to recognize the reign of your Anointed One, to resist every counterfeit power, and to find our safety in the crucified and risen King. Amen.

Signature Phrase

No rebellion can cancel the reign of God.

WEEK 5 | A Light in the Darkness

Primary Text Isaiah 8:21–9:7 • Read aloud from the GNT

Series Movement Light

Big Idea

God does not merely help people adjust to darkness; God announces a reign that breaks oppression and creates a future of justice and peace.

Condition of Existence

Long exposure to darkness can train us to expect survival rather than transformation.

First Observations

What words, images, actions, or contrasts stand out when you first read the passage?

1 God speaks a nevertheless

Isaiah names distress and thick darkness honestly. Then hope begins with a divine contradiction: the present darkness is real, but it is not sovereign.

What darkness must you name honestly without allowing it to define the future?

2 Light breaks burdens

The promised salvation breaks the yoke, bar, rod, boots, and bloodied garments. God does more than comfort people inside oppression.

Where is God calling the church to help break a burden rather than merely soothe its effects?

WEEK 5 CONTINUED

3 The coming ruler establishes peace through justice

The child's reign is marked by wisdom, care, peace, justice, and righteousness. Biblical peace is right relationship and flourishing.

Which mark of the promised ruler is most urgently needed in leadership today? Why?

Key Truth Flow

Darkness is named → light appears → oppression is broken → justice establishes peace

My Faithful Response

What truth will I carry, and what action will I take this week?

Prayer

God of the great light, enter every place where fear and oppression have taught people to expect only darkness. Break the yoke, establish justice, and make us witnesses to the peace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Signature Phrase

Darkness describes the night; it does not decide the morning.

WEEK 6 | From Little Bethlehem

Primary Text Micah 5:1–5a • Read aloud from the GNT

Series Movement Bethlehem

Big Idea

God brings decisive hope from places power overlooks and gives a Shepherd-King whose presence becomes the people's peace.

Condition of Existence

We often look toward recognized centers of influence and overlook the people and places God chooses.

First Observations

What words, images, actions, or contrasts stand out when you first read the passage?

1 Visible power has failed

Micah begins with siege and a humiliated ruler. The existing order cannot protect the people or preserve itself.

What signs show that leadership has failed the people it was meant to serve?

2 God chooses little Bethlehem

Bethlehem is small in status but rich in covenant memory. God?s choice reveals that insignificance in human eyes does not mean absence from divine purpose.

What overlooked person, place, or gift might God be using around you?

WEEK 6 CONTINUED

3 The ruler shepherds and becomes peace

The coming ruler stands in God's strength, shepherds the people, makes them secure, and does not merely bring peace—he is peace.

How does shepherding challenge common ideas about strength and leadership?

Key Truth Flow

Human power fails → God chooses the overlooked → the Shepherd stands → the people live securely

My Faithful Response

What truth will I carry, and what action will I take this week?

Prayer

God of Bethlehem, correct our fascination with visible greatness. Give us the Shepherd who stands in your strength, makes your people secure, and is our peace. Prepare us to receive Jesus with humble and expectant hearts. Amen.

Signature Phrase

Never call little what God has chosen for a great purpose.

The Promise Has Brought Us to Bethlehem

We began with humanity hiding in a garden and ended with hope rising from a small town. Along the way, God promised victory over evil, called a family to bless the nations, established a royal covenant, announced an Anointed King, shone light into darkness, and promised a Shepherd who would be peace.

Jesus enters this long story as the promised King. He defeats evil through suffering love, extends Abraham's blessing to the nations, fulfills David's hope, embodies God's reign, brings light to the overlooked, shepherds the vulnerable, and gives a peace the world cannot manufacture.

My Series Reflection

What have I learned about the faithfulness of God?

Which picture of the coming King has affected me most deeply?

My Series Reflection | Continued

What fruit should this study produce in my life, relationships, and service?

How will I enter Advent differently because of this journey?

Final Affirmation

The promise was spoken in the garden, carried through covenant, focused on a King, announced as light, and born in Bethlehem. The coming King is Jesus Christ, and his reign is our hope.

Study Notes

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