



THE STORY *continues...*

Chapter 22 The Birth of the King

Join us each week as God weaves

Listen to *The Story*

Read **Chapter 22** of *The Story*

Four hundred years go by. During this time the Jews briefly regain their independence—until yet another empire arrives on the scene: Rome. Then the story picks up in a small Jewish village called Nazareth. An angel shows up announcing the next big step in God's plan to liberate His people from sin and oppression. God in the flesh is coming to planet Earth—as a baby ...”~ *The Story Teen Edition*

Read also Micah 5:2, 4; Matthew 1:20-21; Matthew 2:11-12 and Matthew 27:27-31, 35-37

Learn *The Story*

Look for ways in which God's story and your story connect this week.

Christmas in March?! Most definitely! Christmas comes every day to our world if we would welcome it just like Mary welcomed God that first Christmas. Jesus is our Emmanuel—God with Us!

Look for “God-sightings” this week ... how is Jesus with you at home? At work/school? In our community? What is the gift of Emmanuel? What promise comes to your life because of God's presence?

Christmas in Lent?! Most definitely! Jesus' job description was “the king born to die.” We cannot celebrate the birth of Jesus without remembering the promise behind it—this is the Savior, the one who would pay the ultimate sacrifice for us all—for God's love is truly endless.

Acknowledge your brokenness this week ... see once again your need for a savior ... because not a day goes by where we do not live out our reality of being a “stinking sinner.” Thank God for the King Who was Born to Die!

Love *The Story*

Intentionally take a step forward in faith.

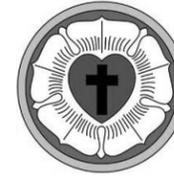
God's love was for the whole world ... for all time! God's love lived out in Jesus was miraculously, extravagantly generous—knowing no bounds. It's something to truly celebrate! It's something to share! “Merry Christmas” is both an attitude and a blessing that should know no season.

Go Christmas shopping for someone in your life this week—an acquaintance who needs to “feel the love of Jesus” (preferably someone who does not know Jesus as well as you or someone who needs the encouragement of Emmanuel this week). Wrap it up. And enjoy bringing a little of God's love their way as you gift it to them. When they look a little confused—share with them that you are celebrating Christmas in March! Share with them why Christmas comes every day for us who follow Jesus.

Luther's Explanation

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory; the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

In the Old Testament, God revealed his glory in the tabernacle. When Christ took on human flesh, he dwelt, or "tabernacled" among his people. The translation called, *The Message*, uses interesting wording for this verse: "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." God's glory would be made manifest in Christ throughout his entire ministry, but especially in his submission to the cross.



Martin Luther gave great weight to this verse. He writes, "It is certain that if anyone could speak these words, 'And the Word became flesh,' in true faith and with strong confidence in hours of the greatest temptation, he would be delivered from his trouble and distress; for the devil fears these words when they are uttered by a believer. I have often read and also witnessed it myself that many, when alarmed and distraught, spoke these words, 'And the Word became flesh,' and at the same time made the sign of the cross, and thereby routed the devil. Belief in these words was so powerful that it overcame the world and the devil. There is another story or legend which is told about the devil. He was listening unmoved as the initial words of the Gospel of St. John were being read: 'In the beginning was the Word.' But when the words, 'And the Word became flesh,' were pronounced, he vanished. And again, whether this story is truth or fiction, the fact remains that the devil will surely take to his heels before anyone who speaks or meditates on these words in true faith. That the Son of God is the Light and Life of mankind is a thought he can bear. He chuckles contentedly inside himself when he observes that man does not accept Christ, as St. John declared in verse eleven of our chapter ('...and his own people did not accept him'). But the words, 'God became man,' knock all his thoughts to pieces." (*Luther's Works*, Volume 22, p. 106)

PROMISE

This week, cling to God's promise for you:

"Endless is my love for you; My power knows no bounds."

The EXTRA Mile



"*Be Born in Me*" by Francesca Battistella includes these prayer-filled words: "I am not brave. I'll never be. The only thing my heart can offer is a vacancy." "Make my heart Your Bethlehem. Be born in me."

Let Mary's song become your song! Listen to "*Be Born in Me*" on YouTube.com (<http://youtu.be/QsXOP7aQeqQ>)