

**Planning to do your shopping early?**

*"What are you accused of?" the judge asked.*

*"Doing my Christmas shopping early," the prisoner replied.*

*"That's not a crime," the judge wisely pointed out. "Just how early were you doing this shopping?"*

*"Before the shop opened."*

Some plans are obviously better than others. This week we will learn about the best plan, God's plan for salvation. God has planned through all eternity – past, present and future – to bring his people to himself in a kingdom where he reigns forever, not only as our King but also as our Father and Counselor. His is a kingdom of eternal peace and joy. This week we learn together about this wonderful plan, God's gift for us.

**Monday – Joy to the World!**

*"As the grace grows nearer, my theology is growing strangely simple, and it begins and ends with Christ as the only Savior of the lost."* Henry Benjamin Whipple, 19<sup>th</sup> c. American pastor

1. Please read Psalm 98, the Psalm that inspired the Christmas carol, *Joy to the World*. Focusing on verses 1-3, what are we invited to do? What reasons does the Psalmist give for engaging in song to the Lord?

**Text Insight:** When the Bible speaks of God remembering things (such as in verse 3), it's not referring to things forgotten and now recalled. Rather, it refers to God showing he is mindful of his people.

2. Read Luke 2:21-38. How are God's actions as recorded in Psalm 98:1-3, seen in these statements about the birth of Jesus?
3. Now look at Revelation 7:9-12. How does Jesus' future reign fulfill what had been said before (Psalm 98) and at the time of his birth (Luke 2)?

**Making it Personal:** How would you like to respond to God's work of salvation?

**Tuesday – Joy to the World! The Savior Reigns!**

*"Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die; another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity."*

Horatius Bonar, 19<sup>th</sup> c. Scottish poet and hymn writer

1. Please read Psalm 98:4-6. What type of royal procession comes to mind from this imagery?
2. What does Revelation 1:4-8 tell you about Jesus' reign as King over all?
3. Now read Revelation 4:8 and 11:15. What is your reaction to the truth that Jesus will rule forever over everyone, including you?

**Making it Personal:** Ask God to work in you now to make you into the person he wants you to be for all eternity.

**Wednesday – He Rules the World with Truth and Grace**

*"Heaven is above all yet; there sits a judge that no king can corrupt."* William Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*

1. Please read Psalm 98:7-8. The earlier images of God in this psalm pertain to his salvation and kingship. What is the image in these last two verses?
2. Now look at Genesis 18:25, Psalm 9:8 and 45:6. What characteristics does God display as judge?
3. What will result from God's judgment according to Isaiah 11:1-10?

**Text Insight:** The "Root of Jesse" is a reference to Messiah. Jesus fulfills this prophecy, since both Mary and Joseph are descendants of Jesse (the father of King David).

**Thursday – Joy, joy, joy!**

*"We want to live forever for the same reason that we want to live tomorrow. Why do we want to live tomorrow? It is because there is someone who loves you, and whom you want to see tomorrow, and be with, and love back."* Henry Drummond, 19<sup>th</sup> c. Scottish Christian writer and lecturer

1. Please read Psalm 98:4, 6 & 8. What theme is repeated there? Have you ever experienced this joy?
2. What do Proverbs 10:28-29 and Psalm 30:11-12 tell you about the nature of the joy God offers his people?
3. How does 1 Peter 1:8-9 tie together with Psalm 98?

**Digging Deeper (optional):** Read John 15:1-17. This well known passage of Scripture is centered around the matter of abiding in Christ. It is a favorite passage of many. And yet the whole point of this passage might evade us if we are not careful. What insight does Jesus reveal in verse 11? How do the concepts of abiding and joy relate to one another?

**Friday – A Ruler to Rejoice In**

*"Rejoice, that the immortal God is born, so that mortal man may live in eternity."* John Huss, 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> c. Czech philosopher

1. Please read Isaiah 9:2-7. To whom is this ruler sent (verse 2)? How do these people respond (verse 3)?
2. What had life been like for God's people (verses 4-5)? How do our Savior's attributes (verses 6-7) assure us we are truly saved forever under his reign?
3. Read Acts 2:22-39. How does this passage support the reality that Jesus is the Savior depicted in Isaiah 9? What is the appropriate response according to Acts 2:37-38?

**Making it Personal:** Have you acknowledged Jesus as your King, joyful that he is also your Savior? Why not do so now?

**For the Weekend:** Read Jude 24-25. How does this statement of God's awesomeness strike you? What items in these two verses support all the ideas and concepts you've been considering in this week's passages?