Preparing Young Hearts

For Christmas

Elizabeth Long

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Note to Parents

This book is intended to be used as a family devotional to help children prepare spiritually for Christmas. There is a labeled reading for each day from December 1st to December 25th along with at least one scripture reference.

Older children might benefit from reading the scripture passage before reading the book page for the day. After the book page for the day is read, it might be helpful to have your children tell you what they remember. For the Old testament portion, you could have your child tell you what promise God gave and how Jesus fulfilled it. For the New Testament portion, you could ask how God used the Bible character to fulfill his plans, or how God helped the Bible character to be faithful. Then thank God together for keeping the promise or for working in the life of the Bible character.

The back of the book contains black and white copies of each day's picture. These are intended to be copied, cut out, colored, and hung up as each day's reading is read.

I pray that this book will be useful in stirring your family's affections for our promise-keeping God.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:9-14 ESV

On the first Christmas, many old and precious promises from God started to come true.

The Old Testament is full of promises about a super special king that God was going to send and about God's plan to rescue his people from their sin.



God's people waited

hundreds and hundreds

of years for these promises to come true

...and then Jesus came.

Here are some of the promises that Jesus fulfilled.





December 1st

Genesis 3:1-21

In the Garden of Eden, the first people, Adam and Eve, listened to their enemy, Satan, and disobeyed God. (At this point in the story, Satan looked like a snake.) While God was giving Adam and Eve their punishment for disobeying, he also gave them a promise. God promised that one day someone from Eve's family would crush Satan forever.

When Jesus came to earth as a human, he became part of Eve's family. Jesus defeated Satan by dying on the cross for our sin. Because of Jesus, Satan can **no longer accuse** God's people.



December 2nd

Genesis 12:1-3

In Genesis 22, God promised Abraham that all of the nations on Earth would be blessed through his family. Abraham's family was supposed to help the nations worship the real God. But they didn't. Instead, they joined with the nations in worshiping false gods. Jesus is from Abraham's family and he **has** blessed all the nations. Jesus has made a way for people from **every nation** to be rescued from sin and adopted into God's family.



December 3rd

Genesis 49:1-10

In Genesis 49, Jacob gave a final message to each of his sons before he died. He told his son Judah that kings would come from his family until the **True King** came—the one whom all of the nations would obey. When Jesus came to Earth as a human, he became part of Judah's family. Jesus is the one true king of the whole world. One day, all nations will obey him.



December 4th

2 Samuel 7:1-17

In 2 Samuel 7, King David wanted to build a house for God, but God said no. Instead, God said that **he** would build a house for **David.** David did not need to take care of God. God was going to take care of David.

The house that God promised David in this passage is not the kind that you sleep in. God's promise about a house meant that someone from David's family would always be king. Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise. Jesus is already king. He is sitting on his throne beside God the Father in heaven. But one day Jesus' kingship will be clearly seen by **everyone everywhere** and his kingdom will never end.



December 5th

Psalm 110:1-4

Even though the Messiah was supposed to be from David's family, David shows us in Psalm 110 that the Messiah is not just a regular man. David calls the Messiah his Lord (which is a strange thing to say about your great great great ... grandson). David also says that the Messiah will sit at God's right hand (a place of honor) and that he will be a priest and a king at the same time, just like Melchizedek.

Jesus is David's Lord because he created David. Jesus sits at the Father's right hand in heaven. Jesus is our perfect king and our perfect priest. He made the perfect sacrifice for our sins.



December 6th

Isaiah 9:1-7

About 700 years before Jesus was born, in Isaiah 9, God told the people that a time was coming when the place called Galilee would get a special honor. A son would be given to them and he would reign on King David's throne with justice and righteousness forever.

When Jesus became a human, he was born into King David's family and his earthly parents were from Nazareth in Galilee. Jesus is the **only** king who will **ever** reign with perfect justice and righteousness and his kingdom will never end.



December 7th

Isaiah 52:13-53:5

In Isaiah 53, which was also written about 700 years before Jesus was born, God told his people about a special servant that he would send to bear his people's sin. This servant would be rejected by the people that he came to save, but would still choose to be punished for their sins so that he could bring them healing and peace.

Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise. John 1:11-12 says that Jesus "came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." By his death on the cross Jesus bought us peace with God and healed our sinful hearts.



December 8th

Micah 5:2-4, Colossians 1:15-17

Another promise written about 700 years before Jesus was born is found in Micah 5. In this passage, God told the people that a ruler would come out of Bethlehem who would shepherd God's people in the strength and majesty of the Lord. This ruler would be different than the people around him. Unlike them, this ruler had been around a LONG time—from ancient times! Jesus' human body was born in Bethlehem, but he has ALWAYS existed. Colossians 1 tells us that the whole world was made through Jesus and for Jesus.

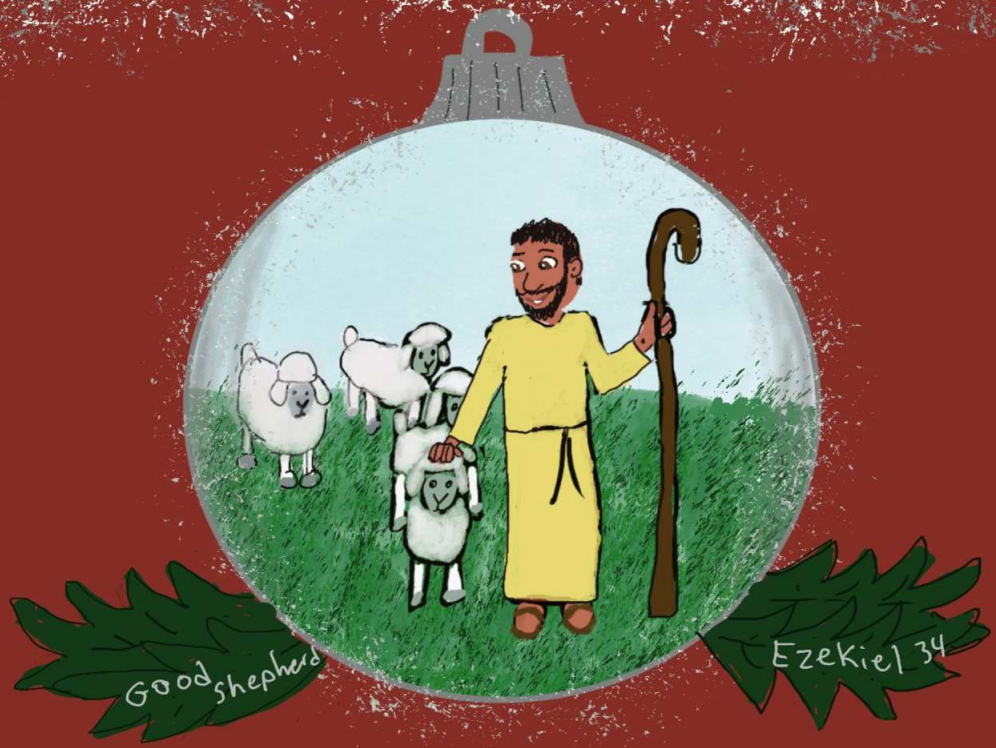


December 9th

Jeremiah 31:31-34

About 600 years before Jesus was born, in Jeremiah 31, God told the people that a time was coming when God would make a new covenant with his people—not one that they would break like they usually did, but one where everyone would know God. God's law would be in everyone's heart and mind and God would forgive their sin.

For that promise to come true, God needed to do something about the people's sin and about their rebellious hearts. Jesus made it possible for our sin to be forgiven and for our hearts to be changed so that we truly love God and his law.

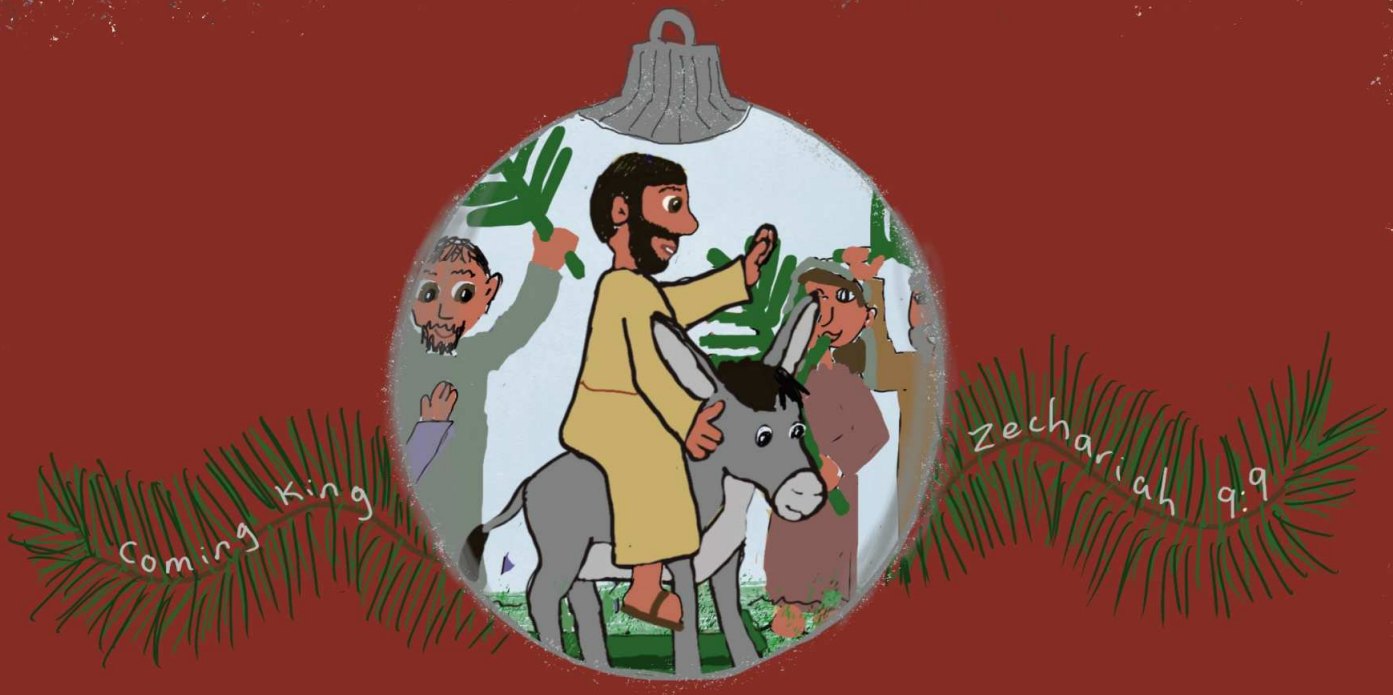


December 10th

Ezekiel 34:1-24

In Ezekiel 34, which was also written about 600 years before Jesus was born, God told Israel's rulers that he was angry with them for not being good shepherds of God's people. They were not healing the sick, strengthening the weak, or searching for the lost and bringing them back. God said that he would give the people a **new shepherd** from David's family.

In John 10, we see that Jesus is the good shepherd that God promised to send. Unlike the bad shepherds that God was mad at in Ezekiel's time, Jesus would lay down his own life to rescue his sheep.



December 11th

Zechariah 9:9-10

About 500 years before Jesus was born, in Zechariah 9:9, God told the people that a king would come who was righteous and victorious, but also humble. This king would come to his people riding on a donkey's colt instead of a beautiful war horse like a typical king.

Jesus was perfectly righteous. He never sinnned. Jesus was victorious over Satan on the cross. Jesus was also humble. Even though he deserves everyone's worship, he chose to be born as a baby into a poor family in Israel in order to save sinners like you and me. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on his way to the cross, he rode a donkey just like Zechariah 9:9 promised.

The First Christmas

The first 2 chapters of Matthew and Luke tell us the story of the first Christmas. When the story starts, God's people are living in a scary and sad time. They hadn't received any messages from God for 400 years and they had a very mean king—King Herod of Judea. The people probably felt that God had forgotten about them and about his promises to them.

But that was **not** true.





December 12th

John 5:16–17, Galatians 4:4–7

In John 5:17, Jesus told people that God the Father is always working. Galatians 4 tells us that when the right time came, God sent his son to rescue his people from sin so that they could be adopted as his sons. Even though God had not spoken to the people for 400 years, he was still at work to bring about his very good plan.



December 13th

Luke 1:5-25

Zechariah was an elderly priest who loved God. Luke 1 tells us that Zechariah's wife Elizabeth was unable to have children. In the Old Testament, God promised to give his people children if they were faithful. Zechariah and Elizabeth were faithful, but for a long time they were **not** given children. God had a different plan to bless them.

One day, God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Zechariah that Elizabeth was going to have a baby. The baby's name would be John, and he would be God's messenger to his people – the first one in 400 YEARS! Zechariah didn't believe this promise at first because Elizabeth was too old to have babies... but nothing is too hard for God. John's birth was a miracle! This miracle probably helped to get the people's attention so that they would listen to John's message.

Nothing can stop God's promises and his plans are **always** good.



December 14th

Malachi 3:1-5, 4:1-6, Luke 1: 11-17

About 400 years before John was born, in Malachi 3 and 4, God promised that he would come to his people, to judge their sin and to make them righteous. Before God came, he would send the prophet Elijah to get the people's hearts ready.

The angel Gabriel told Zechariah that John would be like Elijah. John would have Elijah's spirit and his power, so that he could get the people ready for God to come. Jesus is God the Son, so when he came to live with his people, the promise from Malachi 3 and 4 was fulfilled. John got the people ready, and God came.

Elizabeth and Zechariah had to wait a very long time to have a child, but God's plan for them and for their son was bigger and better than they understood. God always keeps his promises and his plans are always good.



December 15th

Luke 1:26-38, Isaiah 7:14

Mary was a young girl who was not yet married. An angel of God appeared to Mary and told her that she was going to have a baby by a miracle, and the baby would be God's son. This was probably scary for Mary. The people around her probably didn't believe her about the angel's message. They might have treated her badly because she had a baby in her tummy when she had no husband, which usually happens because of sin. But Mary did not give in to fear. She chose to trust God and follow his plan.

This happened to fulfill God's promise in Isaiah 7:14 that a virgin would give birth to a son and would call him Immanuel, which means "God with us." When Jesus came into the world as a human, God was with his people in a way that had never happened before. Before, only prophets heard God's voice and only the high priest could come into God's presence. Now regular people could hear God's voice and touch him and eat with him. Revelation tells us that one day God himself will wipe away our tears. How precious that our perfect God and maker would touch us and comfort us!



December 16th

Luke 1:39-56

Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah, had a visit from Mary while she was pregnant with John. During that visit, God gave Elizabeth words to say by his Holy Spirit to encourage Mary. Elizabeth told Mary that she believed her about the angel's message, that the baby in Mary's tummy was put there by a miracle. Elizabeth told Mary that she was blessed for trusting and obeying God. How comforting this must have been for Mary! It made her burst out in a song of praise to God.

Our God knows us and understands us. He knows just what encouragement we need when we need it most!



December 17th

Matthew 1:18-25

Joseph had promised to become Mary's husband, but when he found out that Mary was pregnant, he did not believe her that the baby was made by a miracle. He thought that Mary had been unfaithful to him, and he decided to end their engagement. Then God sent Joseph a special dream. In the dream, God told Joseph that the baby in Mary's tummy really was put there by a miracle and that Joseph should still become Mary's husband.

Obeying God in this situation was probably hard for Joseph. (Remember that the people around Mary were probably thinking that the baby in her tummy was there because of sin.) If Joseph became Mary's husband, then he would join with her in being falsely accused of sin. God was calling Joseph to do something hard and humbling, and he obeyed! Mary and baby Jesus needed a husband and father to protect and care for them and God helped Joseph to humbly and bravely meet those needs.



December 18th

Luke 2:1-5

Late in Mary's pregnancy, Caesar Augustus, the Roman ruler who was in charge of Israel at the time, made a law that everyone had to travel to the city that their family came from so that they could be counted. Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem, because King David was from Bethlehem and Joseph was from King David's family. That meant that Joseph had to leave his job and home and travel about 98 miles, mostly on foot, when Mary was very pregnant.

Mary and Joseph were probably not happy about Caesar's law.This trip would be very difficult for them, but God used it to fulfill the promise that he made in Micah 5 that his special king would come out of Bethlehem.

God always has a plan and he is always at work. He can even use a wicked Roman king like Caesar to make his plans happen!



December 19th

Luke 2:6-7, Isaiah 53:1-5

After baby Jesus was born, he had to sleep in a manger because there wasn't any room for him anywhere else. (A manger is a container used for feeding animals.) This should remind us of God's promise in Isaiah 53 about the special servant that he was going to send.

Isaiah 53 says that God's servant had nothing special about the way that he looked to make us admire him. In fact, he was looked down on and rejected by the people around him. But he still chose to die for us. The punishment for our sins was put on Jesus and his wounds healed us.



December 20th

Luke 2:8-18, 1 Samuel 16:1-7

When Jesus was born, God sent his angel to tell some shepherds who were taking care of their sheep. At that time, shepherds were considered very unimportant—people that you wouldn't want to talk to or be friends with because they were so poor and dirty. Why would God tell poor dirty shepherds about the arrival of the Son of God instead of King Herod or the priests?

1 Samuel 16:7 tells us "...the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (ESV)



December 21st

Luke 2:10-14

The shepherds were terrified when they saw the angel! The angel told them to stop being afraid because he had great news for everybody. A savior had been born to them and he was Christ the Lord! The special sign that this was true was that the shepherds were going to find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Then a whole bunch of angels appeared and praised God. They praised God for his glory and announced peace for everyone who pleases God. Through faith in Jesus, God is pleased with us and we have peace with him.



December 22nd

Matthew 2: 1-12

God announced Jesus' birth to some shepherds and also to some wise men from the East. These wise men were people who did not know the true God and were not part of Abraham's family (the Jews). God used a special star to help them find Jesus. When they found him, they worshiped him and gave him precious gifts like you would give to an important king—gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The Jewish people at that time thought that God only cared about them and not the other nations around them. However, God had promised Abraham long ago that he would bless all the nations through Abraham's family. When the wise men from the East worshiped Jesus, it was a sign that God's promise to Abraham was coming true.



December 23rd

Luke 2:22-38

When Jesus was 8 days old, his parents brought him to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord and to offer the sacrifice that they were supposed to bring for a first born son.

Two people were in the temple that day who were ready and waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled. Their names were Anna and Simeon. They both recognized baby Jesus as God's Messiah right away. Simeon praised God that his eyes had seen God's salvation and that God was going to make the non-Jewish people understand about God and bring glory to Israel. Anna gave thanks to God and spoke about baby Jesus to everyone who was waiting for God to rescue Israel.

Anna and Simeon understood what God was doing because their hearts were waiting and ready. Are you ready to hear and obey when you read God's word? Are you expecting him to keep his promises?



December 24th

Matthew 2:13-23

The shepherds ran to greet baby Jesus and then told the good news to everyone they saw. The wise men worshiped Jesus and brought him precious gifts. But when King Herod heard about Jesus, he was angry and jealous. He tried to find Jesus so that he could kill him. Herod wanted to stop God's promise from coming true.

No one is strong enough to stop God's plan! God used Joseph to protect Mary and Jesus by telling him to move them to Egypt. This fulfilled what Hosea said in Hosea 11, that God would call his son out of Egypt. God used King Herod's bad plan to keep yet another of his Old Testament promises.

There were thousands of years of promises that God had been making to his people before Christmas came—from Eve to the prophet Malachi. Someone from Eve's family would defeat Satan. Someone from Abraham's family would bring blessing to all the nations. Someone from David's family would be a good Shepherd for God's people who would care for the sick and the weak and the lost. God would give his people new hearts to love him like they should. God would send a king who would be righteous, just, and humble, and who would reign forever.





December 25th

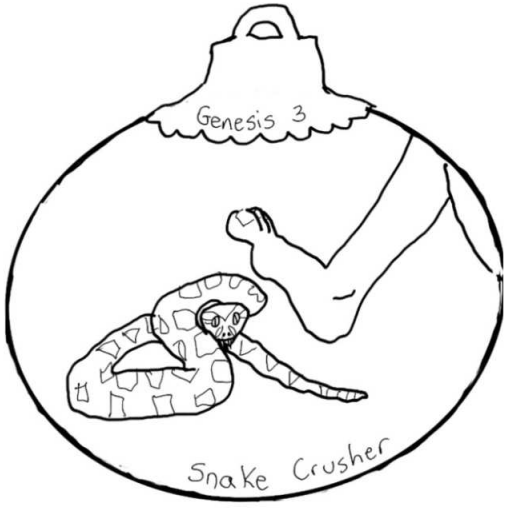
Galatians 4:4–7

When the time was right, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under God's law, to buy back God's people who were slaves of sin so that they could be adopted into God's family. Praise God for his good plan! Praise God for Jesus!

Merry Christmas!

Activity Pages

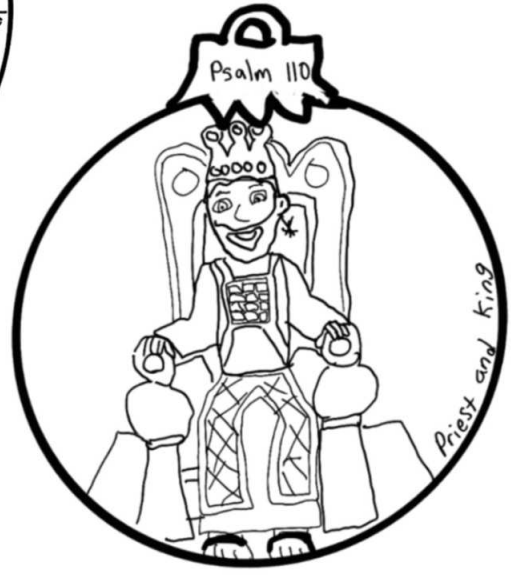
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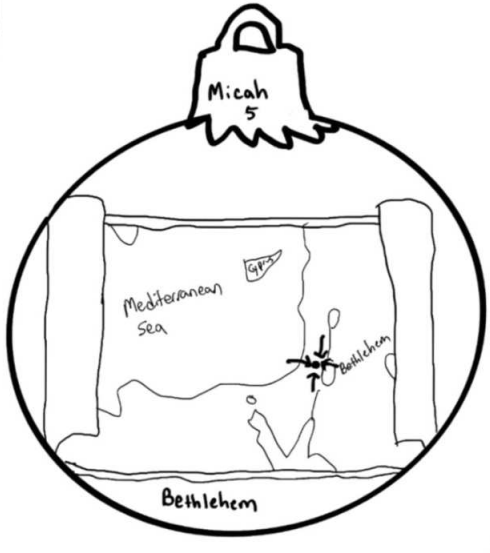


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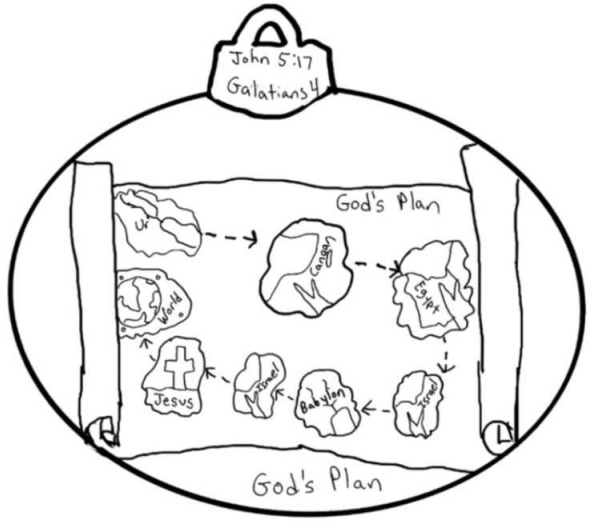


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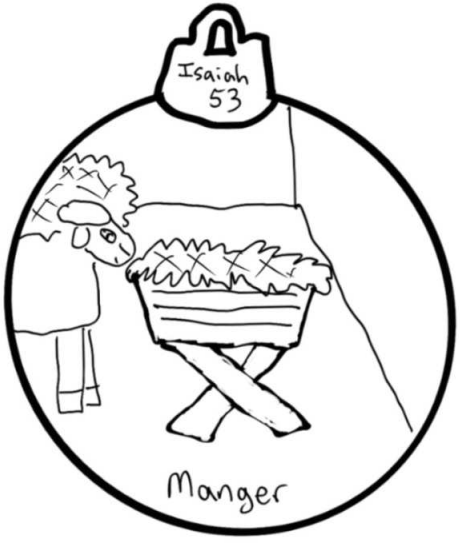
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