

# Stars of Christmas

## A Devotional

by Sharon Stults

*Twenty-Five Days of Reflections About the Miraculous  
Prophecies Fulfilled by Christ's Birth*

### Introduction

The wonders and miracles of Christmas began in the garden of Eden. Above the dark moment when Adam and Eve chose evil over perfect goodness, God positioned a Christmas star. In Genesis 3:15 he promised that One would be born who would crush the head of Satan and destroy his dark plans to destroy humans, the pinnacle of God's creation.

Throughout the dark periods in Israel's history before Christ's birth, God raised up prophetic voices who continued to place prophetic stars of light and hope into the hearts of the Jewish people concerning their coming Messiah. I was given the idea of calling these prophecies the stars of Christmas during my Bible study one day when I found a diagram in the back of my Scofield reference Bible entitled, "Messianic Stars." The diagram shows all the Old Testament prophecies that predict the fascinating details of Christ's one-of-a-kind birth and life. And just like that, a devotional series about the messianic prophecies began tossing around in my head.

A mathematics professor at Westmont College was intrigued by the mathematical probabilities of Jesus Christ fulfilling the major prophecies given about his birth, life, and death. He

used 600 math students to work calculations and then submitted those to other scientists and probability experts. Finally, he turned in the calculations to the American Scientific Affiliation. Many of its members were very skeptical of the entire project. However, after examining only eight different prophecies, this group concluded that the chances of one man fulfilling just those eight prophecies was  $10^{17}$ . (Ten with seventeen zeroes.)

The professor used this illustration to better demonstrate this number. Take this number of silver dollars, with one having a special mark on it, and lay them on the ground in the state of Texas. They will cover the ground two feet deep. Now blindfold a man and let him know that he can walk wherever he likes and attempt to pick up the one silver dollar that has a special mark on it. What do you think his chances are of picking up the right one? The birth of Jesus Christ is a mathematical miracle.

Centuries of prophecies are fulfilled starting with the moment Mary is informed by an angel that she will experience an unusual pregnancy. God's ancient love story with humans culminates in Christ. The miracles of prophetic fulfillment concerning the who, what, when, where and why of his birth and life are dazzling once you start to add them up. Join me for twenty-five days of signs that will fill you with wonder.

\*\*\* *All scriptures are ESV unless otherwise noted.*

## December 1

*“And I will put enmity (open hostility) between you and the woman, and between your seed (offspring) and her Seed; he shall [fatally] bruise your head, and you shall [only] bruise His heel,” Genesis 3:15 Amp.*

**Prophecy:** Messiah would be born only of a woman and would go on to crush Satan’s plan to annihilate humans. (Original Hebrew indicates Christ born *exclusively* of a woman alone)

**Fulfillment:** Matthew 1:20, Galatians 4:4, Colossians 2:15, Revelation 1:18

**Reflection:** Every creature, and one especially, held its breath in Eden, waiting for Eve’s response, wondering at Adam’s silence. The wicked serpent entered their paradise and now dangled a choice before humans, believe God and obey his word or doubt him and break covenant.

What happened in those moments after Adam and Eve chose darkness instead of obedience? Did animals creep away fleeing the murderous shadows that would now take their lives so humans could use their skins as covering? Did the wind roar through the trees with anger at the ruination of perfection? Adam and Eve knew immediately that perfect relationship between them and God was now broken, and so they hid in fear.

While angels wept and darkness triumphantly took its stance on earth’s soil, God placed a Christmas star in the sky over Eden. God activated his redemption plan and promised Lucifer that the plan to crush him was now at defcon one. Heaven’s host would now for centuries be on full military alert to preserve humans, specifically

the line of Christ. In one of humanity’s darkest moments God sent light and aimed it directly in Satan’s face.

God’s plan of salvation for humans persisted through centuries of Jewish history and remained constant despite their failings and disobedience. Why did heaven rejoice so magnificently over the shepherds? Because the plan to save you and me was still on target and began to see fulfillment in a feed trough in Bethlehem. Centuries of supernatural warfare were now narrowed down to thirty-three years and a few more prophecies to fulfill, before complete triumph.

The wonder today of this prophecy being fulfilled is that redemption is still available to us if we have breath. Whether it’s your first time to choose Christ’s gift of payment for your sin or the millionth time that he’s covered your failings with Jesus’ blood, the promise of his triumph over darkness remains. Satan, our enemy has been brought down by Bethlehem’s sweet baby boy so that we can be lifted into unbroken fellowship with God. We do not need to hide in shame and fear from an angry Creator.

Now matter how great the size and number of our sins, the prophetic, redemptive Christmas star of Genesis 3:15, is unfathomably brighter. There is no life so dark and hardened that cannot be penetrated by God’s light once the soul seeks it. Let’s keep our own accounts very short with God. Then, let’s pray fervently for unsaved family and friends to open their hearts and minds to the wonder of this star so they may seek and then worship the Christ of Christmas.

**Prayer:** God, forgive me for the times I choose my own understanding instead of obeying you. Holy Spirit, help me intercede for my lost friends and family so they can know Messiah.

## December 2

*Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting, "Clear the way through the wilderness for the LORD!*

*Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God! Isaiah 40:3 NLT*

**Prophecy:** A special messenger would prepare the way for Messiah

**Fulfillment:** Luke 1:76-77, Luke 3:3-6

**Reflection:** Most of us would never choose a guy like John the Baptist to be our introduction into circles of people we wanted to influence. Today, he'd be that odd cousin who brings Brussel sprout and venison casserole to a Christmas potluck, wears flannel year-round, and asks everyone he meets, "Are you right with Jesus?"

Sometimes we overlook God's treasures because we are subconsciously trying to fit into the world and its systems. We don't recognize jewels among us because often they are odd. John *knew* Jesus was the Messiah when they were both still in the womb. That's odd. At birth, his father prophesied that his son would be *the* prophet who would prepare Israel for Emmanuel, God with us. That's odd. John then spent his *entire adult life* in the wilderness, clothed in rough outfits made from camel hair, eating bugs, and preaching loudly to whomever would listen that Jesus had arrived, and folks better get right with God. That's really, odd. We don't like odd so much, do we?

If I chose the one prophet to announce Christ's earthly ministry, I'd pick someone who dressed sharp, talked eloquently, and knew how to network. I'd choose the wrong person entirely. God selected John the Baptist because he knew his heart was humble and uncorruptible. He knew John wouldn't care what people thought of

him and would speak the truth about the Messiah fearlessly. God knew he wasn't afraid of new things. When people came to John to get right with God, he literally put them underwater as a sign of the death of their old life and the birth of a new one. No one ever did that odd thing before.

Everything about Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension was out of the ordinary. We shouldn't wonder that God chose a very unusual man (by our standards) to be his front man. The Christmas star known as John the Baptist was a rare light from God for Jews who were paying attention. He was God's way of saying, "Hang in there Israel, my son is coming soon to teach you the truth about my kingdom, instead of that religious junk you're learning in synagogue. John's my guy! He's going to help you understand my son's methods and message!"

God placed John's prophetic star in the sky at a time when Israel existed subservient under the iron boots of the Roman empire. Jews who recognized God's favor and anointing on John were prepared to meet Jesus. Those who scoffed at John, most likely missed the wonder of Jesus too.

Whatever may be crushing our hearts this Christmas season, let's be careful not to miss stars of hope and encouragement God may send to our lives simply because they arrive in unusual packages. God has also chosen each one of us for extraordinary things. Open your eyes and heart to new ways God may be trying to use you, speak to you, or provide for you. God chooses unlikely people for unlikely missions in unlikely places, to produce uncommon results. Listen for the voices and circumstances in your life crying, "Jesus is approaching."

**Prayer:** God, I need to hear your voice and sense your comfort today. I'm drawing near to you so you can draw near to me.

## December 3

*“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2) unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks (69 units of 7 years) the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troubled times,” Daniel 9:25 KJV*

**Prophecy:** 483 years – that is, 69 units of seven years – would pass from the time of the command in Nehemiah 2:1-8 to rebuild the temple, until the appearance of Messiah the Prince.

**Fulfillment:** Using the correct Jewish calendar, a 360-day year (which Israel used in Daniel’s day) shows that a Gentile king made a decree to Nehemiah and 483 years later *to the day*, Jesus presented Himself as Messiah the Prince, in his triumphant entry.

**Reflection:** Royalty cannot always be counted on to keep to their schedules and commitments. England’s Prince Charles and Princess Diana left their wedding reception for heads of state so quickly, that when then- first lady, Nancy Reagan and Princess Grace of Monaco arrived on schedule, the couple was gone.

The Prince of Heaven, Jesus Christ, appeared precisely where God ordained him to be, 483 years after his schedule was disclosed to Israel. He was not a day late nor did he leave early and disappoint those who came to cheer him into Jerusalem. Why? Because he was obedient to the Father and he understood the significance his appearance on that day would take on in the centuries to come. Nothing about Jesus’ birth and life was random. God’s plans for his earthly life were precise, perfect.

Satan repeatedly attempted to end or change Jesus’ earthly life so that prophecies would not be fulfilled, and his ministry would be

aborted. Then, just when Lucifer thought he’d accomplished that via the cross, he discovered he played right into God’s hand.

I think God designed this star especially for skeptical scholars and scientists who persist with the lie that if Jesus did exist, he was just a man like any other man. This argument gets tough when the man declares himself the Messiah on the exact day that was foretold 483 years earlier. God’s shining star.

For those of us who believe, we should remember that this cosmic play with God as writer/producer/director and Satan in a minor role, continues to act itself out every day, in every believer’s life. If we have breath, Satan will be relentless in his attempts to change the destiny and purpose God assigned to our lives.

Satan will distract and discourage. He will appeal to our flesh and urge us to give way to that instead of Holy Spirit. He will whisper to us that God is late in our hours of need and distress. Sometimes, we will fall off God’s path for us. Falling off does not mean staying off. With loving, redemptive hands, God picks us up and places us back on our road. He comforts us and heals the damage we did to ourselves when we strayed.

Are you waiting on God for something? Maybe you’ve been hanging on for years growing discouraged or bitter because your financial breakthrough, healing, or the salvation of a loved one has not yet come to pass. Oh, dear one, this prophetic star is our reminder that God’s timing is precise and perfect for you just as it was for Jesus. God can always be counted on to keep his perfect schedule for you. May he grant you grace and peace in his waiting room.

**Prayer:** God, I declare that your timing is perfect and that I will live by faith and not by my feelings or my own self-will.

## December 4

*“...and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice,” Genesis 22:18 ESV*

**Prophecy:** Messiah will come from Abraham’s line

**Fulfillment:** Matthew 1:1

**Reflection:** Did Abraham understand what God meant when he promised that the whole earth would be blessed through his offspring? Moments before, Abraham’s knife had been poised above his son, Isaac’s trembling body, ready to make the ultimate sacrifice God had asked of him. Did Abraham’s hand still tremble at the horror of what almost happened? Did his heart race with the anxiety of explaining it all to Sarah for surely Isaac would tell his mother about the events on the mountain. Was he still comforting his shell-shocked son as he listened to God’s promise about his descendants?

I think Abraham couldn’t fully understand in that moment that God promised him he’d be the great (x14) grandfather of the Messiah. I’m not sure he could imagine how his descendants might bless every nation in the world. At this dark moment in Abraham’s life, after coming so near to the greatest sorrow any parent might bear, God placed this prophetic star over him. He promised that not only would Isaac live but he would be the second of fourteen generations ending with Jesus, the Messiah.

There are moments in our lives when God asks us to give up things we love. We might be shocked and fearful that if we let go of that which he asks for, it will be the death of our future with all its dreams. Living open-handed and open-hearted before God means he will place wonderful people and opportunities into them generously. Sometimes though, we close our hands and wrap our

hearts too tightly around something or someone he’s given us. It may even be a ministry involvement or a spiritual habit or discipline where God says, “Time’s up for this.” Returning to an open-handed stance like Abraham did, can be excruciating. These moments will define us. Will we live by faith, like Abraham, or will we live by our own design, hands clenched with a resistant heart?

God may allow us to keep something once we’ve demonstrated that we do not value it more than our love for him and obedience to him. Whether he does or not, if we listen, God will speak prophetic words of hope and light, over our lives in those moments of sacrifice. He will communicate with us through his Word, his voice, and other people, so that we may go forward in faith as Abraham did. God does not take people and things away from us because he is capricious and unkind. His plans for us as individuals are perfect but he his cosmic purposes also require us to obediently find our place within them.

Could Abraham imagine that his life and choices would inspire people like you and me to greater faith? We cannot imagine the profound reasons God will ask us to relinquish something or someone over to him. That’s why he will send light into those painful moments. Look for his light this season, if you have experienced a terrible loss in this last year or are struggling to walk away from someone or something. Listen for his voice saying, “My plans are never to harm you but to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

**Prayer:** Father, I’m keeping my hands, heart, and mind open to you. I want you to feel free to take things and people in and out of my life in ways that best fit your eternal purposes.

## December 5

*“But God said to Abraham, “Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring,” Genesis 21:12-13*

**Prophecy:** Messiah will come through the line of Isaac

**Fulfillment:** Luke 3:34

God keeps his promises even when we don't. Abraham promised to obey God. Most of the time he did, but there were key moments when he choked and took things into his own hands, like lying about Sarah being his sister instead of his wife. Twice. The sin of he and Sarah's conspiracy to create their own offspring using Sarah's servant, created a division in his family line that continues to this day. Weary of waiting on God for Sarah's pregnancy, Mr. and Mrs. Abraham thought Creator of all that exists needed help.

What God desired was patience and faith. Nevertheless, the deed is done and now Ishmael hovers in the background of Abraham's household after the promised son, Isaac, is born. Abraham is caught in a terrible spot, he thinks. Ishmael is his firstborn and by the customs of the culture should be the one in the line of the Messiah. Yet, Abraham knows that God said it would be the child of he and Sarah who would become Jesus' great grandfather (x13). Would God keep his promise or would the line of the Messiah switch to Hagar and her son, Ishmael?

I know this sounds like a tempest in a teapot to our 21<sup>st</sup> century minds but this was huge in the Abraham household. God saw that Abraham was deeply troubled when Sarah insisted that Hagar and

Ishmael go make their own way in the world. He spoke to Abraham directly about this complicated mess and its innocent victims that he and Sarah created. God placed another prophetic star over Abraham by specifically naming Isaac instead of the generic “offspring” he used in the original covenant because God is incapable of going back on his word. Additionally, Ishmael would get his own nation too.

Now God never intended that Ishmael and his descendants, known as the Arabs, today, should spend millennia in hostility towards Isaac's descendants, the Jews. This is the choice they made very early on, according to Genesis 21:10 and 25:18. However, none of this would have occurred if the Abrahams hadn't taken matters into their own hands.

We can all recall times when we lived by our own wits instead of faith. Some of us carry deep scars from those experiences. Perhaps you find yourself in a fix now because you “leaned on your own understanding,” (Proverbs 3:5-) instead of keeping faith with God. He is speaking over your life today. Messiah came so that there could be forgiveness for the repentant and healing for the wounded. Whatever mess we've created, a repentant, faith-filled heart motivates God to create beauty from our ashes and order from our chaos.

With all your heart, trust him to keep his promises to you. Memorize them and keep your feet firmly planted on them no matter what icy winds blow. Messiah has come and is standing shoulder to shoulder with you. He is a promise keeper.

**Prayer:** Lord, strengthen me to be patient and faithful, and wait on you to unfold all your plans for my life rather than taking things into my own hands.

## December 6

*"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel..." Numbers 24:17.*

**Prophecy:** Messiah will come from Jacob's line

**Fulfillment:** Matthew 1:2, Luke 3:33

Seeing one of my faults mirrored back at me in my daughter has always stopped me cold. When mini-me displayed one of my less attractive qualities during her childhood, it was a wake up that I had passed along things I didn't desire to see manifested in her life.

Yesterday we talked about the conniving of the Abrahams to produce their own heir. Today we consider the scheme Abraham's grandson, Jacob, and his mother concocted to steal the firstborn birthright from Jacob's older brother, Esau. The sin of sidestepping God's perfect plan managed to grow roots in Abraham's descendants and so we now come to the drama-filled story of how Jacob came to be in the line of the Messiah and why he got to stay.

First, remember that God told the boy's mother, Rebekah, when the twins were still in the womb, that "the older would serve the younger," (Genesis 25:23). Clearly God always intended for Jacob to receive the firstborn blessing and responsibility and Jacob knew that. There's a beautiful article by Christopher Smith on his blog, ["Good Question,"](#) that answers the question, "Why didn't God give back the blessing Jacob stole," if you find yourself stuck on that.

For our purposes, let's stand on Genesis 25:23 and agree that God had a plan to grant Jacob this honor, in God's own way and timing. Perhaps God was working in Esau's heart to willingly give it to Jacob who was better suited to handle all the responsibility it involved. (See article). We don't know the original plan because Jacob and

Rebekah hijacked it. They chose "the ends justify the means," protocol because they thought Isaac would do the wrong thing. They didn't trust God to work it all out.

So why did God speak through the prophet Balam to put this prophetic star up, the assurance that scheming Jacob was in Messiah's line, not Esau? I believe God worked to silence any grouching within the nation of Israel and within Esau's descendants, the Edomites, about how Jacob came to that position. God didn't want to facilitate any false Messiahs being raised up because it wasn't crystal clear that Jacob was his chosen man. So, God put up this beautiful prophetic star, a reminder that he uses unlikely people and that our sins and mistakes do not have to define us.

Have you ever manipulated or schemed, even just a little, to gain something that you believe God designed for you? Just as he did with Jacob, God longs to wrestle these things out with you.

Or maybe, you're the Esau in the story and you've been overlooked. Are you tempted with bitterness as Esau was? Do you feel that God hasn't done right by you? This prophetic star is for you also and here's why. God chose Jacob for one specific blessing. God designed other, specific blessings for Esau and his descendants also, not the least of which was the promise of the coming Messiah. They didn't need to split away and form their own nation but could have remained inside the blessed Jewish nation instead of becoming the treacherous Edomites. (Numbers 20:21)

Don't waste your life as an Edomite envying the blessings you wish you had instead of being thankful, especially at Christmas, for the ones he's designed just for you.

**Prayer:** God, thank you that you've created me for unique purpose. Help me to do things in your way and in your timing.

## December 7

*“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come...” Genesis 49:10 NIV.*

**Prophecy:** Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah

**Fulfillment:** Luke 3:33, Hebrews 7:14

One of the miracles of God’s grace is that he generously showers it onto the most unlikely and unlikeable people. We are more measured with our grace, doling it out more to those who hold a sweet spot in our heart or earn our favor by modeling our definition of good behavior.

How in the world did Judah wind up in the lineage of the Messiah? He wasn’t even the second son but was the fourth in line. The phrase, “The Lion of Judah” holds significant meaning and power for us today but the original Judah was a sketchy guy. Of the events recorded in scripture, from his life, the weight is on the side of evil not, good.

First, he suggested selling his brother Joseph, as a slave, for profit. (Genesis 37:26) Second, he dealt treacherously with his daughter in law (Genesis 38:26) and then slept with her as a prostitute. (Genesis 38:18) His historic moment of righteous behavior came when he interceded with Joseph, now the ruler of Egypt, to stand in for Benjamin when Joseph insisted on keeping Benjamin in Egypt. (Genesis 44:18-34) Yes, that one act was noble and courageous, but his treatment of his daughter in law, years later? Yuck.

I agree with the thinking of some Bible scholars who believe that God chose Judah as a demonstration of his richness of grace. I also agree with others who believe it had more to do with his mother, Leah the poor soul trapped in a triangular marriage with her sister, Rachel.

How horrible to exist in a home where every day she was forced to watch Rachel and Jacob’s passionate love story play out while she was treated as a brood mare. How about the pain of watching Jacob favor Rachel’s children over hers? Life gave Leah many reasons to be bitter and sad and this was reflected in some of her children’s names. (Genesis 29:32-34) Then something happened in Leah’s heart.

Instead of focusing on herself and her misery, she did a complete turn around and began praising Adonai. This is reflected in the name she chose for her fourth child, Judah, whose name means, “praise.” A broken woman became a worshipping woman and God’s economy that is powerful. I believe God placed the Judah messianic star in the sky so that Leah’s sacrifice of praise would be honored for all time.

I mean, think about it, wouldn’t Joseph have been the more likely choice with all he achieved and overcame? Or even Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob? No, God chose to honor a woman who praised him during a lifetime of sorrow and setbacks.

The Judah star reminds us that God’s grace falls on those who need it most and that he rewards those who praise him in their sorrow. Maybe you are a Leah, facing remarkably sad circumstances in your personal life. Perhaps you’re like Judah who showed astonishing self-sacrifice in one moment and loathsome behavior in another.

If you are feeling trapped by your circumstances or your own poor choices, there is a Christmas present waiting under God’s tree for you. His grace is like a gift card with endless credit on it. Bring your praise to the Lion of Judah and let him pour his grace back out on you today.

**Prayer:** Thank you God, for your gifts of grace in my life and that I don’t have to earn them or even be deserving of them.



