

Background to scripture readings in December

For Sunday December 6

Baruch 5:1-9

Many prophets had proclaimed that the exile happened because many people did not obey the Law of Moses, but God has noted the people's return to obedience. Their return to Jerusalem is imminent.

Philippians 1:3-11

Paul thanks God for the Christians at Philippi. He expresses confidence that God will complete, at the end of the era, the transformation to godliness already begun in them.

Luke 3:1-6

Luke tells us that John the Baptist's mission is to prepare the way for Jesus, by inviting people to turn back to God and make a new start in life.

For Sunday December 13

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Zephaniah has written that God will cause Gentiles to turn to his ways and they will permit the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem. This passage exhorts Israel to rejoice.

Philippians 4:4-7

Paul tried to finish his letter earlier, but certain concerns about the community and its members intruded. Paul now encourages them to rejoice.

Luke 3:7-18

John the Baptist travels throughout the Jordan Valley, preaching a return to God's ways, adoption of an ethical way of life under God and preparation for the messiah.

For Sunday December 20

Micah 5:2-5a

Micah has told of the difficulties Israel will experience in the near future, but he has written that later God will give them victory over their enemies. A shepherd-king will be born of David's line, and put an end to their oppression.

Hebrews 10:5-10

Under Jewish law, on the Day of Atonement each year, the high priest offered sacrifices for the forgiveness of certain sins. Jesus' total self-offering, once and for all on the Cross, makes these sacrifices unnecessary.

Luke 1:39-45

Elizabeth is now six months pregnant with John the Baptist, and her relative Mary carries Jesus, foretold to be the Son of God, in her womb.

For Sunday December 27

1 Samuel 2:18-20,26 Hannah has been given a son by God and has vowed that she will dedicate him to the service of the Lord. Accordingly she has placed him under the tutelage of the priest Eli.

Colossians 3:12-17 The lifestyle expected of Christians is described. His readers, "have clothed ... [themselves] with their new (baptised) identity.

Luke 2:41-52 This is the only passage in the Bible that tells of Jesus' boyhood and a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus listens to religious experts and asks them questions.