

Love

ADVENT 2021

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DECEMBER 19- 24

# Introduction

The Advent season is a four week period before Christmas that celebrates the anticipation and coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. The origin of "advent" is from the Latin word *adventus* which simply translates "coming" or "arrival". Not only is the Christian meaning for preparation and celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ, His birth at Christmas, but also to celebrate the new life when someone accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior, and lastly, the anticipation of Jesus returning again.

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# The Four Weeks of Advent

The four Sundays of Advent each have a specific theme or focus. The purpose of each theme is to spend time reflecting on the true meaning of the season - the life of Jesus Christ. The goal should be to come before God with a sincere heart and to worship Jesus Christ. To help the observation of these weeks, many churches led their congregation through Advent Readings. This tradition includes the reading of Scriptures that reflect the theme of each week. Whether in a traditional church or at home with your family, these Bible verses are a great way to reflect on the promise of the Messiah both yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

## Week 1: Hope

*Isaiah 9:2, 6-7*

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned...For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”

# Week 2: Preparation

***Isaiah 40:3-5***

“A voice of one calling: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’”

# Week 3: Joy

***Matthew 2:10-11***

“When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.”

# Week 4: Love

***John 3:16-19***

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”

DECEMBER 19

## King, God, and Savior

In Matthew 2:11, the Magi bring Jesus three famous gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Did you know these gifts have special significance in the Old Testament and reflect the One they came to worship?

Gold represents royalty in Psalm 72:15, and the gift of gold affirmed Jesus as the King of Kings. Frankincense is related to the worship of God in Exodus 30:34, and the gift of frankincense acknowledges that Jesus is God. In Exodus 30:22-25, myrrh was used to anoint people for special purposes. The first time Jesus received myrrh was as a gift at His birth. The last times Jesus would be given myrrh were on the cross and during His burial. This gift points to the special purpose of Jesus' life: He would die on the cross to save us from our sins and then be raised to life, victorious over death.

The verse in Matthew 2 mentions that when the Magi saw Jesus, "they fell down and worshipped Him." We worship Jesus as our King because He has "all authority on heaven and earth" Matthew 28:18-20. We worship Jesus as our God because "through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made" John 1:3. And we worship Jesus as our Savior because "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16. Ask God to use this Advent season to bring you closer to Jesus through worship, just like the star brought the Magi to worship Him.

**Prayer:** Father, thank You for leading me to You. Just like You brought the Magi close to Jesus, please bring me closer to Jesus than I have been before. Jesus, I worship You as my King, my God, and my Savior! Holy Spirit, help me guide other people who are far from you to draw near and worship Jesus.



DECEMBER 20

## Climbing The Family Tree

Today, we skip ahead in Luke's Gospel to a particular moment in the story of Jesus' earthly father, Joseph. In this passage, we glimpse the wider political and national landscape of the time.

Jesus was born in the royal city of Bethlehem because Joseph belongs to the House of David. Luke's Gospel traces Joseph's genealogy right back to Bathsheba, with whom King David had an adulterous and murderous affair!

Isn't it interesting how God works through family trees? At Christmas, we may enjoy the blessing and endure the brokenness of families.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You for the blessing of those in my family who have loved me most. Thank You that You can also bring blessing through the broken parts of my family history. I ask You to give me an extra helping of patience this Christmas to be kind to difficult relatives. I take time now to name those for whom I'm especially grateful or especially concerned.

DECEMBER 21

## Peace on Earth

Today we're reflecting on the angel of the Lord appearing to the shepherds and announcing the birth of Jesus.

The last books of the Old Testament were written around 400 years before the first books of the New Testament. The silence of those 400 years comes to an end in a spectacular way - with a baby born to a teenage mother, surrounded by hosts of angels all singing, 'Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to everyone!'

***Prayer:*** God, I yield to Your peace plan for my life. Help me to seek first the kingdom of peace in the world, to be a peacemaker in a divided world.





DECEMBER 22

## Moved by the Spirit

As we reflect on the Christmas story from Luke's Gospel, and today we meet Simeon, a man who had been waiting patiently for God to fulfil a promise.

Waiting for something that we want is never easy. In his letter to the church in Galatia, the apostle Paul describes patience as a fruit of the Spirit. Like a fruit, patience grows over time, in season and out of season.

Although every painting of this passage depicts Simeon as an older man, Luke doesn't tell us whether he was old or not. Simeon may have been waiting for a short time or many years. All we know is that he was full of the Holy Spirit and that he was prepared to wait.

***Prayer:*** Help me, God, to become more patient, to trust that You are with me - in season and out of season.

DECEMBER 23

## Pursuit Leads to Growth

In modern culture, we're bombarded with self-help marketing that tells us how we can make our bodies stronger, become more successful in business, help ourselves overcome depression... For just a few dollars, we can learn more and do more and make ourselves better.

It's important to note that the Word talks about Jesus' growth taking place as He and his family honored God.

During this Christmas season, focus on what's possible when you draw near to Jesus. You don't have to struggle to measure up to some unattainable worldly standard. Rest in knowing that true wisdom and strength will come from your proximity to Him. When you pursue Him daily, you're guaranteed to grow and be equipped for your purpose.

***Prayer:*** Father, thank You for being my source of wisdom and strength. Your grace gives me hope for my future. I know You are so much greater than I could ever be and I'm so grateful for Your willingness to share Your strength with me. When I struggle, help me lean on You rather than myself.





DECEMBER 24

## The Light Has Come

Christmas is here! It's time to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ—the Light of the World!

In the first act of Creation in Genesis, God spoke and light was immediately separated from darkness. But it wasn't long before Adam and Eve chose to sin, and God's presence, His light, was separated from man. The need for light to shine through darkness was no longer just night and day, but life and death. God's greatest desire was to be in relationship with us, so He sent a Light to guide us out of our darkness and back to Him.

This is Christmas: "The One who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world!"

God's only Son was born so that with the forgiveness of sin, we could be reconciled back to Him. The separation that kept us in darkness was overcome by Jesus' light. Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

No matter where you are today, and no matter what you've done, the Savior of the world has come to restore everything that was broken by sin: all of creation, all of humanity, and YOU! Let His light shine on all the dark places of your life and restore what has been lost in the darkness. The Light is here, and He has declared that you never have to walk in darkness again. Receive His love and experience Christmas like never before!

**Prayer:** Father, thank You for working out your plan of salvation and reconciliation since the beginning of time. Thank You for sending Your Son to be born, and to die, so I could live and that the world would be saved! Today, as I celebrate Christmas, help me have a deep appreciation of Your love for me and the Light You have brought. I praise You for making it possible for me to never walk in darkness again! Thank you for allowing me to share that light with others so that they too may receive your love!



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