



Advent Devotional Guide

What Is Advent?

Christians who follow a liturgical calendar know that the Advent season focuses on expectation and serves as an anticipation of Christ's birth in the season leading up to Christmas. While we are anticipating the celebration of the incarnation of our eternal hope, Jesus Christ, this season can also be a time to reflect on the attributes of Christ's character that are highlighted during this season of goodwill, including hope, joy, love, and peace.

What is the History of Advent?

The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming," which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. Scholars believe that during the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God's incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1), his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (John 1:29), and his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1). During this season of preparation, Christians would spend 40 days in penance, prayer, and fasting to prepare for this celebration; originally, there was little connection between Advent and Christmas.

By the 6th century, however, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. But the "coming" they had in mind was not Christ's first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but his second coming in the clouds as the judge of the world. It was not until the Middle Ages that the Advent season was explicitly linked to Christ's first coming at Christmas.

What Can Advent Mean For Us Today?

Today, the Advent season lasts for the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. At that time, the new Christian year begins with the twelve-day celebration of Christmastide, which lasts from Christmas Eve until Epiphany on January 6. (Advent begins on the Sunday that falls between November 27th and December 3rd each year.)

Advent symbolizes the present situation of the church in these "last days" (Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2), as God's people wait for the return of Christ in glory to consummate his eternal kingdom. The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: in exile, waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Messiah. Israel looked back to God's past

gracious actions on their behalf in leading them out of Egypt in the Exodus, and on this basis they called for God once again to act for them.

In the same way, the church, during Advent, looks back upon Christ's coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation to the coming of Christ's kingdom when he returns for his people. In this light, the Advent hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" perfectly represents the church's cry during the Advent season.

As we offer prayers that can focus on our hearts and spirits on the miracle of Emmanuel, it is also a time when we can reflect on the beautiful way in which animals played an instrumental role in the story of Christ's birth and how our hearts, attuned to God's redemptive work, includes our gifting compassion to family, friends, the poor and vulnerable among us, as well as animals during this season.

Please join us in the weekly scripture readings and prayers as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and the way in which he brings hope to all of creation during this season of anticipation.

Week 1: Hope, in God.

** For those who celebrate the prayers with an Advent Wreath, please light a purple candle this week.*

Reading: Jeremiah 33:12-16

12 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'There will again be in this place which is waste, without man or beast, and in all its cities, a habitation of shepherds who rest their flocks. 13 In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland, in the cities of the Negev, in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah, the flocks will again pass under the hands of the one who numbers them,' says the LORD. 14 'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is *the name* by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.'

Prayer

Father, as we reflect upon the fulfilment of your promise, we give thanks for the hope we have hidden in Christ our Savior. A hope that endures throughout generations; a source of hope in times of helplessness. God we ask that you lift up those who have lost hope because of failure and adversity. We ask that you incline our hearts to share your hope with the sick, the poor, the widow, the fatherless, and all creatures you have entrusted us with. In Jesus name, Amen.

Week 2: Love, in God.

** For those who celebrate the prayers with an Advent Wreath, please light the purple candle from last week and another purple candle this week.*

Reading: 1 John 4:13-16

13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Prayer

Father, during this season of goodwill, we give thanks for the love we have hidden in Christ our Savior. A love that is deeper than mere sentiments; a love so profound You sent Your Son to become a man that we might become Your children. God we ask that you would continue to manifest Your love to all, that they may taste and see that You are good. We ask that you incline our hearts toward demonstrating your love through both word and action to our both humankind as well as all of creation. In Jesus name, Amen.

Week 3: Joy, in God.

** For those who celebrate the prayers with an Advent Wreath, please light the two purple candles from the previous two weeks as well as the pink candle this week.*

Reading: Galatians 5:22-25

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Prayer

Father, we give thanks for the joy we have hidden in Christ our Savior and celebrate the true joy that comes through knowing Him as Lord and Savior. This is a joy that surpasses all understanding and is not dependent upon our temporary circumstances. God we ask that you restore joy to those whose lives have become joyless because of difficulty. We ask that you would show us how to share the joy of your gift of salvation with the whole earth as it is groaning in anticipation toward the day of your return. In Jesus name, Amen.

Week 4: Peace, in God.

** For those who celebrate the prayers with an Advent Wreath, please light all four candles this week.*

Reading: Micah 5:4 and Isaiah 9:1-7

Micah 5:4

4 He will stand and shepherd his flock, in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

Isaiah 9:1-7

2 The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. 3 You shall multiply the nation, you shall increase their gladness; they will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. 4 For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. 5 For every boot of the booted warrior in the *battle* tumult, and cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire. 6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Prayer

Father, we give thanks that you are truly our Prince of Peace who gives us a peace we can draw strength from in times of uncertainty. God we ask that you remember those whose lives lack peace because of sin and darkness. We ask that you would manifest your light which is hidden in Christ our Savior. We ask that through your Holy Spirit the true peace, Shalom, of God that is promised to us would continue to bring wholeness to all individuals and creatures in our lives. In Jesus name, Amen.

Prayer 5: Christmas Day

** For those who celebrate the prayers with an Advent Wreath, please light all four candles as well as the white candle in the center of the wreath.*

Reading: Luke 2:1-20

2 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. 6 While they were there, the days were completed for

her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 This *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” 13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds *began* saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.” 16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Prayer

Father, as we celebrate your miraculous birth on this Christmas Day, we ask that you fill our hearts with your hope, love, joy, and peace that we have discovered through your Word during this Advent season. Just as you revealed to your coming to Shepherds through an angel, so lead us through earthly difficulties toward the glory of your resurrection, and the restoration of the earth when all things will be made new again. Glory in the Highest to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

Scripture quotations taken from the [NASB](#).