

# A D V E N T 2 0 2 1

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## VICTORY LIFE CHURCH

### INTRODUCTION

*For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation for all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. **Titus 2:11-13 (NLT)***

The King is coming. Jesus Christ has come, bringing grace and salvation, and He will come again, revealing glory and new creation. Jesus' coming again is the eager expectation and desire of His redeemed people. This is the theme of "Advent," formed from a Latin word meaning "coming" or "arrival." It's the historic celebration of the first advent of Jesus, as He came in humility. It's also the celebration that builds the hopeful anticipation of His second advent in glory.

### ADVENT INTRODUCTION

The Advent season is a time for remembering and rejoicing, watching and waiting. Beginning four Sundays prior to Christmas and ending on Christmas Eve, Advent helps us prepare for the coming, or "advent" of the Christ child at Christmas.

For hundreds of years, Christians have used an Advent wreath as a visual example of a symbol that is borrowed from the emphasis throughout Scripture of Jesus Christ being the Light of the World (Matt. 4:16; John 1:4-9; 8:12). Each week a new candle is lit, building up anticipation for Christmas Eve. The last candle, called the Christ Candle, is lit on Christmas Eve to represent Jesus' first advent. Through this theme of ever-increasing light breaking into the darkness, we see a visual picture of the gospel. We are reminded about the meaning of Christ's birth and become more excited about his coming in the past, in the future, and in the present, through each of our lives.

Advent is an important time in the life of the church. Instead of being increasingly busy, frenzied, and cluttered like the world around us, it's an opportunity for believers to remember God's promise to send a Savior who would overcome sin and death forever.

He kept that promise in Jesus Christ, and He will do it again. That is what we are hoping for, longing for, and are now waiting patiently, but expectantly, for.

## USING THE GUIDE

This guide contains Four weeks of material, with both a study to complete that includes scriptures that frame part of the story, some thoughts to get you engaged into the story, then some questions and additional resources to engage deeper. Any part of the guide can also be used to facilitate discussion within your Life Group or with friends, roommates or other community.

The Advent study walks through the narrative of Jesus' birth. It begins in the Garden with God's promise of a Savior and ends with an eager anticipation of Jesus' promised return. In the middle, God shows His unmistakable faithfulness in sending the promised Rescuer. We see His love for the lowly and outcast as He proclaims the news of His Son to the shepherds. We marvel at His heart to see all nations come and worship His Son through Simeon's moment of consolation.

Even if you know the Advent narrative well, don't rush past what God has for you in this season. For many, this may be the first time to consider all that God is saying through the birth of His Son. For others, it will be an opportunity to rediscover the way God intimately works in the details of life for His glory and the good of man. For all of us, may this season be one marked by hope, expectation, remembrance and worship. The King has come and is coming! There is much to celebrate.

## A NOTE FOR FAMILIES

Advent is an opportunity to pause and reflect on the birth of Jesus. But especially for families, this time of year can be filled to the brim with activities and obligations. Before the calendar begins to overflow, set aside time to consider what you want this season to be for your family. Then make a plan so that a time intended to remember and celebrate Jesus doesn't get swallowed up by lesser things.

# WEEK 1: ANCIENT PROMISES

## SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2021

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*"And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*

### **Genesis 3:15 (NKJV)**

*But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.*

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shone.*

*You have multiplied the nation;  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.*

*For the yoke of his burden,  
and the staff for his shoulder,  
the rod of his oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.*

*For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be burned as fuel for the fire.*

*For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called*

*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.*

*The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

**Isaiah 9:1-7 (ESV)**

Think about a time in your life that you feel like you were stuck in darkness or confusion. How did you feel in that moment? What did it feel like when you first saw light? How does Jesus' birth bring light into the darkness in the world?

## IN THE BEGINNING...

The story of Advent, the story of Jesus, the story of humanity, all begins long, long ago, in a garden. God creates a paradise, the Garden of Eden. He makes a beautiful world and creates humanity in His image, after His likeness, and blesses them. He tells them to be fruitful and to multiply, to fill the earth with His goodness and beauty. They walked in unhindered relationship with the Creator God, unafraid and unashamed. But Adam and Eve soon rebelled and ate the fruit from the forbidden tree. Sin and death came in like a flood. Shame and fear, pride and darkness shattered the fellowship and peace and plunged the world into chaos, and separated humanity from relationship with God and enjoyment of His presence. It was a dark and terrible condition.

But God was not without a plan and did not leave humanity without hope. In dark chaos, He spoke a word of promise: one day, a Savior would come. A son would be born of woman, a promised Seed, and would destroy evil at its source and deliver humanity. God promised that sin, rebellion, and evil would not have the last word; that the serpent, the enemy, and his plans will not prevail in the end. Our rescue would come. God promised it.

## THROUGHOUT THE YEARS...

Throughout the Scriptures, God spoke to His covenant people about this promise and gave them what to look for in order to recognize the Savior's coming. God revealed that the Messiah would be born in the line of David (Isa. 9:6-7), of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and in the town of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). He would be a Man of Sorrows—crushed, despised and rejected—reconciling many through what He suffered (Isa. 53). The promised Deliverer would be a light overcoming darkness (Isa. 9:2), preaching Good News to the poor (Isa. 61) and One walking in the power of the Spirit (Isa. 42:1).

God kept reminding His people not to lose heart as they waited for the Savior to come. It's important to remember that God did not fulfill His promise right away. His people waited many, many years. They spoke of the promised Rescuer from generation to generation, enduring cycles of war, rebellion, captivity and restoration. They watched and waited—anxiously, expectantly—for God's faithfulness.

We all have times and seasons of feeling hopeless, helpless and in desperate need of rescue. This can be especially real when it comes to sin. We know its effects with every breath—in our bodies, our minds, our hearts—both our own sin and that of others. Our world is full of evidence that something is deadly wrong and needs to be made right.

The world needs rescued. We need rescued. The reason we celebrate Advent is because the story the began in the Garden doesn't end with man's rebellion—but instead his redemption.



## REFLECTION

Think about Israel's long wait for the promised Savior to come. How do you think God's people fought against doubt, discouragement and the temptation to believe that God had forgot them?

God reveals many things about His nature and character through the birth of His Son. What attributes of God do you see in this part of the Advent narrative?

## RESPONSE

What is one hope you have for yourself, your family or your community as you begin the Advent season? How can you strengthen that hope this season?

Pray for yourself and those around you, asking God to open your eyes and heart to what He has for you this Advent season.

## READING

Psalm 25:1-15

Isaiah 40:1-3, 28-31

Isaiah 55:6-11

## ADVENT HYMN

### *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appears.*

*Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.*

*Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory over the grave.*

*Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace.*

*Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

## WEEK 2: WAITING AND HOPING

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2021

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*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed  
That I would see the goodness of the LORD  
In the land of the living.*

*Wait on the LORD;  
Be of good courage,  
And He shall strengthen your heart;  
Wait, I say, on the LORD!*

***Psalms 27:13-14 (NKJV)***

*"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts."*

***Malachi 3:1 (ESV)***

*In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.*

*Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him,*

*"Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."*

***Luke 1:5-17 (ESV)***



Think about a time when you were in a situation that seemed hopeless and you were tempted to give up hope. What did that feel like? What was it like waiting a long time?



## WATCHING AND WAITING

God continually reminded His people throughout their history that He would be faithful to His promises, He would send a Rescuer and redeem His people. These promises were to give them hope in the midst of challenging and difficult times. But each generation was tempted to lose heart. Only a nurtured faith that God would be true to His promises and reveal His goodness to them kept them encouraged while they watched and waited.

*I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;  
my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning,  
more than watchmen for the morning.*

**Psalm 130:5-6 (ESV)**

Very few of us like to wait. We have microwaves to make cooking faster, On Demand video streaming to make our entertainment faster, Drive-Thru lines to make our fast food even faster, social media to make our relationships faster. Being patient and waiting for anything is a discipline few of us work at developing. Our world is structured to give us immediate gratification for any need, any desire, any craving, anything we want we can get quickly. With that kind of convenience, why would we want to go through the hassle of developing such a difficult thing as patience? Until we are forced to wait.

## YOUR PRAYER HAS BEEN HEARD

Zechariah is introduced in the story as an old priest, whose wife Elizabeth “among the daughters of Aaron” is barren. They advanced in years and childless. Long ago they may have given up hoping for a child. But their life that may have fallen into monotony or despair gets interrupted by the angel Gabriel, who is bringing a message of hope and joy. He says, “Don’t be afraid...your prayer has been heard.” Through years of waiting and hoping, in times of fear or despair, he prayed. And God heard his prayer. And the answer to his prayer involved them into God’s story.

Waiting is a painful reminder that you are not in charge. Waiting puts control in someone or something else’s hands. It demands that the inner self that is so demanding and so controlling be shut up and shut off and patience take its place. The season of Advent is primarily about this one thing: waiting. It’s recognizing the Creator of the universe is in control and not us. His plans are accomplished His way and in His timing. What is needed from us is simply trust. Many things in life are confusing and challenging. The pride in us desires control over anything and everything. But humility

requires us to release our demand for control into the hands of a loving God and train our soul to put our trust in Him. For those who feel like they have waited a lifetime for God to come through for you, let Zechariah and Elizabeth encourage you that no one is too old or too far God to be involved into God's story. Your prayer is heard. Don't give up hope.

## REFLECTION

Think about Zechariah and Elizabeth's life and circumstances. What do you think it was like hearing news about having a baby at their age? What would it be like to hear the words from an angel, "Your prayer has been heard?"

In seasons of waiting, God can strengthen our faith and patience. If you are in a season of waiting, what might you learn about the Lord, His promises, or maybe even yourself? How can your relationship with the Lord deepen in this season?

## RESPONSE

Is there an area of your life you feel like you have given up hope? How does this story change your perspective on God's story? Take time to rekindle hope in prayer.

Pray for those you know are in despair, or are struggling to see God's goodness, and ask God to strengthen their hopes again.

## READING

Psalm 130:1-6

Psalm 62:5-8

Luke 1:5-25, 39-45, 57-80

## ADVENT HYMN

*Come Thou Long Expected Jesus ~ Charles Wesley*

*Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art;*

*dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.*

*Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child and yet a King,  
born to reign in us forever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.*

*By thine own eternal spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all sufficient merit,  
raise us to thy glorious throne.*

## WEEK 3: THE TIME IS NEAR

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2021

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*It seemed like a dream, too good to be true,  
when GOD returned Zion's exiles.  
We laughed, we sang,  
we couldn't believe our good fortune.  
We were the talk of the nations—  
"GOD was wonderful to them!"  
GOD was wonderful to us;  
we are one happy people.  
And now, GOD, do it again—  
bring rains to our drought-stricken lives  
So those who planted their crops in despair  
will shout hurrahs at the harvest,  
So those who went off with heavy hearts  
will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing.*

#### ***Psalm 126:1-6 (MSG)***

*In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"*

*But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.*

*And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

*And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"*

*And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."*

*And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."  
And the angel departed from her.*

*Luke 1:26-38 (ESV)*

Remember a time you were pleasantly surprised. Not just a little surprised, but a big surprise. How did it feel being shocked with joy? Was there a little bit of confusion? Describe the feelings of joy.

## DO IT AGAIN

The hope of the Jewish people was that God, the Creator God who spoke light and life into the darkness and chaos, the Covenant God the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Savior God who delivered their enslaved ancestors from the oppressive empire of Egypt would do it once again for them. Their sin and rebellion had exiled them into the foreign nation of Babylon, and by the waters of Babylon, they wept when they remembered their homeland (Psalm 137:1-4).

And then one day, out of nowhere, they were released to go back home! They returned with excitement and joy to rebuild their cities and rebuild their lives. So they did with singing, dancing, and excitement, ready for God to return to Israel. But time went on. And God never returned to the Temple. They waited for hundreds of years for the Messiah, their long awaited king, to come and be a new Moses and bring deliverance to their people and defeat their enemies. It seemed like it would never happen, that God had forgotten, and that it won't happen again.

## UNEXPECTED PLACES AND UNLIKELY PEOPLE

But then in a small country town named Nazareth, to a young, teenage girl named Mary, the angel appears again with a powerful message of Good News, God is coming back to Israel, but in a place no one expected to a person most unlikely. God had not forgotten, He had remained faithful to His promises. The same God who spoke light into the darkness, who set the people free from slavery to Egypt, will come into the world as a baby, a son born of woman, in the line of David, to be the long-awaited Messiah who will be the delivering King to set God's people free!

The story of Advent proves to us that God does not forget His promises, but often fulfills those promises in unexpected ways. It shows us that anyone who believes in God's character to bring about His promises, and keeps their hopes alive that they He will fulfill them can be involved in the story. It doesn't matter where you are, however small or obscure you feel, God has not forgotten you and will come through.

The angel Gabriel makes a powerful statement that "nothing will be impossible for God." Nothing! There is nothing that is too difficult for God, nothing too hard, nothing impossible for Him. He is very capable of overcoming any obstacles standing in the way of His promises coming to fulfillment. He can come into our "drought-stricken lives" and bring rains of refreshment. We may carry heavy burdens in life that cause us to have heavy hearts, but God enters into the wastelands of our lives and can turn our

mourning into dancing, or spirit of heaviness into shouts of joy. We simply need to give over our lives and circumstances to God, and posture our hearts the same way Mary did, “let it be to me according to your Word,” trusting that He will be true to His Word.



## REFLECTION

Think about Mary and what the circumstances of her life were in that moment: a young teenager, engaged to be married, in a small country town. How does God selecting a person in those circumstances make you feel about what kinds of people He brings into His story?

Have you ever felt that you were not the kind of person God would use to bring about His promises? How does this story change your mind?

## RESPONSE

Are there areas of your life that you have thought were too impossible for God to work out? Allow the words in this story, “nothing will be impossible for God,” to strengthen your faith in the midst of that challenge or circumstance.

Think of someone in your family or workplace who may be in a “drought-stricken” season in their life, or who may have “heavy hearts.” Be a source of encouragement and strength for them in this season, and pray for the seeds they have sown in tears bring a harvest of laughter and “armloads of blessing.”

## READING

Psalm 37:1-11

Isaiah 61:1-11

Luke 1:38-56

## ADVENT HYMN

### *Joy to the World ~ Isaac Watts*

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.*

*Joy to the earth! the Savior reigns;  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy,*

*Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make his blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as, the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of his righteousness,  
And wonders of his love,  
And wonders of his love,  
And wonders, wonders, of his love.*

## WEEK 4: A SAVIOR IS BORN

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2021

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*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news,  
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,  
who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."  
The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;  
together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the Lord to Zion.  
Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem,  
for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.  
The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

#### **Isaiah 52:7-10 (ESV)**

*And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

*And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them,*

*"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."*

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,*

*"Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace among those  
with whom he is pleased!"*

*When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.*

#### **Luke 2:4-18 (ESV)**

Describe a time when you looked forward to an event for a long time. What emotions did you feel as you waited? How did you feel when the wait was finally over? Who is the first person you tell when you hear or experience something good?



## HE CAME AS HE SAID HE WOULD

Israel watched and waited, filled with longing and expectation for this promised Deliverer and Messiah. And then, on a night unassuming and normal, God came—just as He said He would. A young woman named Mary, who was with child, journeyed alongside Joseph, her betrothed, from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be counted for the census according to Caesar’s decree. The couple entered the sleepy Judean town, filled to the brim with the descendants of David, and took refuge in the only place available: a stable. And when the time had come, Mary gave birth to her firstborn son. He was wrapped in cloths, laid in a manger and given the name Jesus. And just like that, a whisper in the Bethlehem night, a Child was born, a Son was given.

Hundreds of years of silence had passed since the final words of the prophets. At long last, a cry of deliverance was heard again, uttered from the lips of the Word Made Flesh. The Ancient of Days stepped into time and wrapped Himself in the frailty of human skin. He came, full of pity, compassion and power, to rescue those lost in darkness and carry them into the kingdom of everlasting light. He came, just as He said He would, to do what we never could.

## HERALDS OF GOOD NEWS

Imagine the scene: shepherds on the midnight watch, ears and eyes open for signs of danger, sheep bleating in the background. And then, out of nowhere, an angel of the Lord bursts onto the scene with the news of the Savior’s birth. It is amazing that God chose this group of men as the first to hear the good news. In the time of Jesus’ birth, people regarded shepherds as liars and thieves. Because they were nomadic, moving from place to place to graze their flocks, people didn’t readily trust them. Yet it was to men such as this that God announced the Messiah’s coming. He told them first! Not royalty, not the religious leaders of the day, but shepherds—lowly and insignificant. He invited them into His story and then mobilized them as the very first evangelists.

As soon as they heard news of Jesus’ birth, the shepherds felt compelled to act. They went with haste, leaving their flocks behind, to find Mary, Joseph and the Savior Child lying in a manger. And once they beheld the One through whom salvation would come, they spread the word of all that had taken place.

We are like these men—unlikely recipients of an unbelievable reality. Just as God called the shepherds to witness and testify to Christ’s birth, so we are called to herald the saving work of His death and resurrection. As believers, we have been invited into His story, sent out as heralds of both Jesus’ first coming and His second. As we consider the shepherds, let us respond as they did to this good news of great joy—with amazement, belief and action.

With reflection, we see in Jesus the fulfillment of all that the prophets spoke concerning the Messiah. We understand that our Lord has done just what He said He would do in exactly the right way, at exactly the right time. We also see that God is full of compassion. He saw the desperate need of His people. He cared and acted by sending His only Son to save them. May our hearts be encouraged! Let Advent be a time to reflect on God's faithfulness to do exactly what He said He would.



## REFLECTION

Think about the circumstances that led Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. What do they show you about God's sovereignty?

God reveals many things about His nature and character through the birth of His Son. What attributes of God do you see in this part of the Advent narrative?

## RESPONSE

In prayer, thank God for His goodness in sending a Savior. Confess places where your confidence in His faithfulness is weak and ask Him for increased trust, belief and hope.

## READING

Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:14-18; Romans 10:14-15

The Old Testament contains many prophecies pointing not just to Jesus' birth but also to the salvation He would accomplish. Jesus was the perfect fulfillment of all that was spoken through the prophets about the Messiah. Below is a list of some of the Messianic prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' coming. They serve as a reminder of God's perfect faithfulness to do all that He has promised.

### OT Prophecy

Genesis 3:15  
Isaiah 9:2  
Isaiah 53:10-11  
Isaiah 53:4  
Isaiah 61:1-4

### NT Fulfillment

Romans 5:6-8; Galatians 4:4-7; Colossians 2:13-15  
Matthew 4:12-17; John 1:4-5; 12:46  
Romans 5:1-2  
Matthew 8:14-17  
Luke 4:16-21

## ADVENT HYMN

### *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

*Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th' angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"  
Christ, by highest heav'n adored;  
Christ, the everlasting Lord;*

*Late in time behold him come,  
Offspring of the favored one.  
Veil'd in flesh, the Godhead see;  
Hail, th' incarnate Deity:  
Pleased, as man, with men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel!  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"  
Hail! the heav'n born Prince of peace!  
Hail! the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
Risen with healing in his wings*

*Mild he lays his glory by,  
Born that man no more may die:  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"*





# CHRISTMAS DAY: WHAT WE'VE WAITED FOR

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2021

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*Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
let the field exult, and everything in it!  
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy  
before the Lord, for he comes,  
for he comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness,  
and the peoples in his faithfulness.*

### **Psalms 96:11-13 (ESV)**

*"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant  
to raise up the tribes of Jacob  
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;  
I will make you as a light for the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*

### **Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)**

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,*

*"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,  
according to your word;  
for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared  
in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and for glory to your people Israel."*

*And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.*

### **Luke 2:25-33 (ESV)**

Think about the different ways in which you prepare for things in your life—whether it's making dinner, getting ready for work or having a guest over. How much time and

intentionality do you invest and why? What motivates you toward careful preparation?  
What adjustments do you make to your schedule, plans, budget, etc.?



## LONG AWAITED ARRIVAL

The story of Simeon is a beautifully placed story that ties many Advent themes together. Just like Israel had been waiting and hoping for the Messiah, and all of humanity had been waiting for the Savior, Simeon is looking, waiting, and hoping for the consolation of Israel, the One who would come and save Israel. He waited many years, hoping he would see it with his own eyes. The Holy Spirit even promised him that he would.

And then one day, somehow he sensed the Spirit leading him to the Temple to see what he had waited so long to see. He sees this young couple carrying a tiny baby, and knows that He is the One. He picks up the little One in his arms and brings all the of prophetic promises into one moment, “a light for the nations.” He had waited and hoped, he had prepared for the moment God’s promise get fulfilled for him, and that was that moment. He was now at peace.

## PREPARING WHILE WE WAIT

For many of us, Christmas Day is one of the most important days of the entire year, which is obvious given the intense amount of preparation that often goes into it. We adjust schedules, plans and budgets months in advance. Family members travel in from far away. Decorations are perfectly placed, menus are planned, and gifts are purchased, wrapped and hidden. There is intentionality, joy and anticipation; all because this day is significant. And also because we believe it is a reality.

Christmas isn’t a pretend day; it’s real. We wouldn’t go through all the trouble to prepare if we didn’t believe Christmas was, in fact, an actual day. We trust it to come on the same date every year. Out of love and expectation, we make every necessary preparation, so that when it becomes our reality, we are ready.

We spend months preparing to celebrate and remember Christ’s first coming. How much more should we seek to be ready for His second coming? That day, too, is a reality; an absolute certainty. Unlike Christmas Day, which happens every December 25, only the Father knows the day and hour His Son will return. But He is coming. In the fullness of time, He will split the sky and descend to destroy all wickedness, receive the worship that is rightfully His and usher in a new age—the beginning of unbroken, unending fellowship with Him. We should believe in, think about, look to and prepare for that day.

The day of Jesus’ return is certain and coming, but—so far—it is not today. We find ourselves much like Simeon and all of the Israelites long ago—waiting. Which begs the question: How then shall we wait?

Paul reminds us in his letter to Titus that because of Jesus' first Advent, God's grace and salvation has been unleashed into the world, so we should live in the midst of evil world with "wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God," all while we are waiting "with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed." Though the days seem long and weary in the waiting, God is not slow in keeping His promise. Jesus will return.

This promised future hope reminds us that really believing in and looking toward the reality of Jesus' return changes the way we live. It reorients our hope and perspective. It creates a sense of urgency and sobriety, as well as giddy anticipation—just like a child who cannot wait for Christmas morning.

Let us, the people of God, be found ready in the waiting. As this Advent season comes to a close, take some time to reflect on how the reality of Jesus' return affects the way you live. May your heart be full and your eyes bright as you hope all things in Christ and look to His coming. Take heart, beloved. It won't be long.

## REFLECTION

How does your life reflect your belief that Jesus will return? Is it something you think about and long for? If not, why do you think that is?

How does the story of Simeon speak to your season of waiting? Do you feel the same sense of hopeful expectation?

Look up Romans 8:22-25. Compare it to Revelation 21:1-7. What future birth do we await? How does looking expectantly to the promised return of Jesus affect the way you see your present circumstances?

## RESPONSE

In prayer, thank God for the reality that Jesus will return and make all things new. Confess any areas of your life—finances, time, relationships, stewardship of your body—where you haven't been diligent in pursuing wisdom and righteousness and devotion to the Lord. Ask the Lord to show you specific ways you can actively await His promised return in the coming year.

## READING

Psalm 40:1-11; Isaiah 42:1-7; Isaiah 49:1-6; Matthew 2:1-12

## ADVENT HYMN

### *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

*O Come All Ye Faithful  
Joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye,  
O come ye to Bethlehem.  
Come and behold Him,  
Born the King of Angels;  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.*

*O Sing, choirs of angels,  
Sing in exultation,  
Sing all that hear in heaven  
God's holy word.  
Give to our Father glory in the Highest;  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.*

*All Hail! Lord, we greet Thee,  
Born this happy morning,  
O Jesus! for evermore be  
Thy name adored.  
Word of the Father,  
now in flesh appearing;  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.*