



GOD WITH US

ADVENT GUIDE 2020



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ADVENT

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:8-13

Advent is the season in which we celebrate that the Savior has come, as well as a time to grow our anticipation for His coming again. The observance of Advent has deep roots within the Christian faith. It's been celebrated in the Church since the 4th century. Advent is formed from a Latin word meaning "coming" or "arrival". This is a time for us to not be taken away by the rush of the holiday season, but to slow down and focus on the glories of our Savior, Jesus Christ. That He came, at the right time, to save us from our sins, and that He is in fact coming again. The Advent season is a time for remembering and rejoicing, watching and waiting. May this guide help us reflect and think on the wonders of this Christmas season, that God is with us.

Using the Guide

This guide contains 4 weeks of material, which can be used for personal study and reflection, small group studies, or for family worship times. All parts of this guide are meant to facilitate discussion within your family, small group, neighbors, or other members within your community.

This Advent guide walks through the promise made years ago of the coming Messiah, all the way to the eager expectation of Jesus' promised return. In this guide we see the great love with which God has for His people in coming to be among us, and to rescue us from our sins.

Advent is an opportunity to pause and reflect on the birth of Jesus. For families, this time can become hectic and over-scheduled. Before the calendar begins to fill up, set aside a few minutes each night to read and pray through each week's study.

At the end of each week is a song to be sung together. What better way to celebrate and set our hearts on the truth of what God has done for us through sending His Son than to sing of His glory.

God has come, and dwelt among us, and He is coming again! There is much to be celebrated.

WEEK 1

(December 6th-12th)

The Promise of A Savior

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head, and you shall
bruise his heel.*

Genesis 3:15

*Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise
up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely,
and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah
will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely.*

And this is the name by which he will be called:

The Lord is our righteousness.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

*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 9:6-7

In the Beginning

When God created the world, He created all things as they should be. In perfect rhythm and harmony. Man walked in perfect, unbroken relationship with God. But with one act of disobedience, sin entered the world and fractured all that was right and good. Fellowship was broken. Peace was shattered. Sin brought with it death and darkness that flooded into every human heart. Ultimately separating us from God and bringing about our spiritual death. The situation was dire.

But in that same moment, God spoke a word of hope: a Savior would come, born of a woman, to defeat sin and reverse the curse of the Fall. From the first moment of our need for a rescue, God was there. He promised that He would come. That He would be with us and make all things new.

Echoes of His Promise

Throughout the Old Testament, God continually spoke to His people about this promise and gave them things to watch for in order to recognize the Savior's coming. God revealed 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). The promised Savior would be a Man of Sorrows – crushed, despised, and rejected – justifying many through what He suffered (Isa 53). This Deliverer would be a light in the darkness and would usher in an eternal kingdom (Isa 9:2). The echoes of God's promise could be heard everywhere.

God also reminded His people not to lose heart as they waited for their rescue. It's important to remember that God did not fulfill this promise right away. His people had to wait a long time. They watched and waited – anxiously, expectantly – for God's faithfulness.

There is no one who eluded the flood of darkness that came forth from the fall. We are all in desperate need of salvation. We see it in our thoughts and in our actions how tainted we are with sin. We need a Savior. We can also see the effect in the world around us. We know something is wrong and needs to be made right. The reason we celebrate Advent is because our story doesn't end in man's rebellion – but instead in redemption. God kept His promise.

Reflection and Response

The fall effected every part of us, as well as creation. What are some effects of sin that you see within yourself? Within creation?

Think about Israel's long wait for the promised Savior to come. How do you think they fought against doubt, despair, and the temptation to believe God forgot about them? How do you fight against those things?

God gives us seasons of waiting to grow and strengthen our faith. If you're in a season of waiting, what might the Lord be teaching or showing you?

What is one hope you have for yourself, and for your family this Holiday season? How can you make this a reality?

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?

Song of Celebration

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

*Come, thou long expected Jesus
Born to set they 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 they 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 2

(December 13th-19th)

The Promise Fulfilled

*This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about:
His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph,
but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through
the Holy Spirit.*

*Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to
expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

*But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared
to him in a dream and said,*

*“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary
home as your wife, because what is conceived in her
is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son,
and you are to give him the name Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins.”*

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

*“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call
him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”)*

Matthew 1:18-23

True to His Word

From the beginning God has promised that a Savior would come. All throughout the Old Testament, the prophets spoke of this Savior, telling the people how to recognize His coming. Also, reminding them that God had not forgotten, but would be true to His word.

The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the Son of a virgin, a King to rule according to the lineage of David, ushering in an eternal era of unprecedented peace. The people of Israel waited and watched, filled with longing and expectation for this promised Messiah.

Cry of Deliverance

And then, on a night just like any other, God came – just as He said He would. Mary, who was with child, and her husband Joseph, journeyed to Bethlehem to be counted in the census according to Caesar’s decree, and God’s sovereign plan. The couple took their stay in a lowly stable. There, Mary gave birth to the promised Messiah. He was wrapped in cloths, laid in a manger and given the name Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. Just like that, a cry in the dark, would echo into the spiritual realms. A cry of deliverance. A cry that would send shivers into the citizens of the dark domain. A cry from God Himself that the kingdom has come, and our rescue has arrived.

Four hundred and fifty years of silence had passed since the final words of the prophets. At last, a cry of deliverance was heard again. This newborns cry pierced the night sky like a trumpet heralding sin’s demise and the defeat of sin for all who would believe. The Ancient of Days stepped into time and wrapped Himself in frailty of human skin. He came, full of pity, compassion and power, to rescue those lost in darkness and carry them to His kingdom of light. He came, just as He said He would, to do what we never could.

Hindsight is a beautiful thing. We can now look back at all that the prophets proclaimed and see that Jesus had fulfilled them all. We understand that our Lord has done just what He said He would do in exactly the right way, and at the right time. We also see that God is full of compassion. He saw our desperate need and acted by sending His only Son to save us. God came to be with us, and to restore us back to Himself.

Reflection and Response

Think about all the circumstances that Mary and Joseph went through. What do they show you about God's sovereignty?

The OT contains many prophecies pointing not just to Jesus' birth but also to the salvation he would accomplish. Read these passages and see how they illustrate this truth.

OT Prophecy

Genesis 3:15

Isaiah 53:10-11

Isaiah 61:1-4

NT Prophecy

Romans 5:6-8, Galatians 4:4-7

Romans 5:1-2

Luke 4:16-21

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?

Song of Celebration

O Holy Night (Gospel Story)

*Come then to Him Who lies within the manger,
With joyful shepherds, proclaim Him as Lord.
Let not the Promised Son remain a stranger;
In reverent worship, make Christ your Adored.
Eternal life is theirs who would receive Him;
With grace and peace, their lives He will adorn.
Fall on your knees! Receive the Gift of heaven!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night, O holy night when Christ was born*

WEEK 3

(December 20th-26th)

The Promise Proclaimed

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 2:8-18

*How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?
And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?
And how are they to hear without someone preaching?
And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"*

Romans 10:14-15

Good Enough to Share

We love hearing good news. More than that, we love to share good news with others. Engagements, a new job, expecting a child. We love to share things that are worth sharing. Today the ability to share good news is quicker and easier than ever. Things were a bit different back in the times of Jesus' birth. If you had news good enough to share, you had to hire someone to travel around the community to proclaim it. Mary and Joseph, of humble means, did not have the ability to do this. But God Himself provided a host of heavenly angels to proclaim the birth of His one and only Son.

What a scene that must have been. Shepherds doing what they have done for years, tending the sheep and staring up at the midnight sky. Then, out of nowhere, an angel of the Lord bursts onto the scene with the news of the Savior's birth. Of all the people to first proclaim this to, He chose lowly, insignificant shepherds. He invited them into His story and moved them to share this good news far and wide. As soon as they heard news of Jesus' birth, they felt compelled to act. They went with haste to see and marvel at this revelation. And once they had beheld the One through whom salvation had come, they spread the word of all that had taken place. God had truly come and come with great purpose. To free the captives and give life to the dead.

Called to Herald

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 life, death, and resurrection. As believers, we have been invited into His story, and sent out to proclaim both Jesus' first coming and His second. Let us respond as the shepherds did to this good news of great joy – with amazement, belief, and action.

Reflection and Response

How did you first hear the gospel? Who told you, and how did you respond?

God does not need messengers to communicate His gospel. But He does anyway. Why do you think He called the shepherds to share the good news? Why does He now call us to do the same?

What fears keep you from sharing the Gospel? Look up Colossians 1:3-6
How might this passage help strengthen you to be bolder?

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?

Song of Celebration

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 angelic host proclaim
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”

Hail the heav’n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris’n 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

CHRISTMAS

EVE

(December 24th)

Set aside ten minutes to talk, reflect, and pray about God's faithfulness in sending a Savior.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 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 2:1-20

Song

Silent Night

*Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child
Holy infant, so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace*

*Silent night, holy night
Shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!*

*Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord at thy birth
Jesus Lord at thy birth*

WEEK 4

(December 27th – Jan 2nd)

The Promise of Jesus' Return

And they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

Luke 21:27-28

For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

2 Peter 3:8-14

His Return

We spend months preparing to celebrate and remember the birth of Jesus. We adjust schedules, budgets, and plans. We travel, decorate, shop, and cook for family. There is great intentionality, joy, and anticipation in this season because we see this day as significant. Not only significant but a reality. We know God truly did come to be with us. He came to save us from our sins. He brought life and light back into a world full of darkness. Jesus the Messiah did indeed conquer sin, Satan, death, and Hell. His birth is cause for great celebration, as it represents our victory. We have victory for our God is with us!

We spend a lot of time rejoicing and remembering Christ's first coming. How much more should we seek to be ready for His second coming. That day is also a reality. Christ will return! In the fullness of time, He will split the sky and descend to destroy all wickedness for good, 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, and look to prepare for His return.

Ready in the Waiting

The day of Jesus' return is certain, but so far, it is not today. So, we find ourselves like the people of Israel long ago -- waiting, longing, anticipating.

This brings up an important question. How shall we wait?

Peter asks and answers this very question in his second letter. He reminds us that though the days seem long and weary in the waiting, God is not slow to keep His promise. He assures us of the absolute reality of the appointed day when Jesus will return. He then tells them exactly what kinds of lives we are to live in light of this coming day – lives of holiness, godliness, and hopeful expectation.

This Advent season is meant to remind us that 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 as well as joyful anticipation – just like a child who cannot wait for Christmas morning. Let us, the people of God, be found ready in the waiting.

Reflection and Response

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?

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?

As this Advent season comes to an end, take some time to reflect on how the reality of Jesus' birth and return affects the way you live. May your heart be full and your mind sharp as you center your hope in Christ and look to His coming.

Song of Celebration

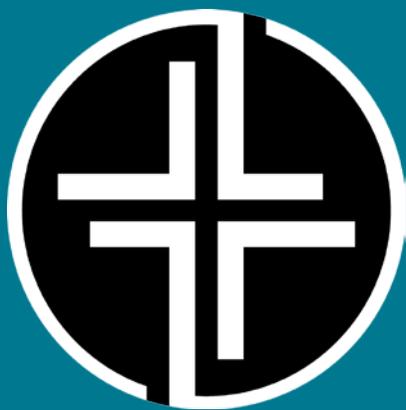
God With Us

*You've come to bring peace
To be love
To be nearer to us*

*You've come to bring life
To be light
To shine brighter in us*

*Oh Emmanuel
God with Us*

*Our Deliverer
You are Savior
In your presence we find our strength
Over everything
Our redemption
God with us
You are God with us*



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