

**Advent**  
**A Light in the Darkness**

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**foreword by**  
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## **Advent: A Light in the Darkness**

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Redeemer Christian Church,

Advent is a season to purposefully build our expectation and yearning for the kingdom of God. In Advent, we place ourselves into the story of ancient Israel yearning for the Messiah. Likewise, as the church, we yearn for the final return of our Savior Jesus and the coming of his perfect Kingdom. Our culture's tendency towards hurry and haste only accelerates as we approach Christmas. It is easy for Christmas to be just another day. But it is not. It is a "Holy Day". During the season of Advent, we will center our hearts and expectations on the beautiful truth that God became man so he could redeem his rebellious bride.

May this study guide, in conjunction with your Bible and a copy of the Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd-Jones, be a blessing and a resource to you and your family, so that this season may be a season of worship!

Pastor David A. Ritchie

## Using with an Advent Wreath

The Advent Wreath is a timeless Advent tradition. Traditionally arrayed with five candles, which are lit over the course of Advent, the wreath is laden with spiritual imagery.

The light from the candles represents the coming arrival of the Messiah (John 8:12) that pierces the spiritual darkness and death that inhabits a world without him (1 John 1:5-6). But Jesus doesn't light the world by his mere presence. He offered up his body as a sacrifice for sin to begin healing this dark world. The red berries on the Advent wreath remind us of Jesus' blood shed at the cross for our redemption (Ephesians 1:7). The circular wreath itself represents God's eternal love and the evergreen of the wreath symbolizes new life found in Christ for eternity (Titus 3:4-7).

As you and your family, friends or Community Group work through this Advent devotional, light one new candle in addition to the candles previously lit every Sunday after you read the recommended passage of Scripture.

**Week One - Darkness:** The color of the first candle is purple. This candle is to be lit for the Scripture readings during the first week.

**Week Two – John the Baptist:** The color of the second candle is purple and it is to be lit during the second week of Scripture readings along with the “Darkness Candle.”

**Week Three – Light:** The color of the third candle is purple and it is to be lit during the third week of Scripture readings along with the “Darkness Candle” and the “John the Baptist Candle.”

**Week Four – The Good News -** The color of the fourth candle is pink and it is to be lit during the fourth week of Scripture readings along with the previous candles.

**Christmas Day – Christ:** The fifth candle is white and is lit on December 25 along with the other four candles.

## First Sunday of Advent

*Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and for ever. Amen.<sup>1</sup>*

## The Darkness

Have you ever woken up earlier in the morning than most people are used to? Your room is dark, except for the gentle red glow of the alarm clock. The house is quiet, and the faint hum of the streetlights and distant traffic is all you can hear. Coffee has yet to be brewed or breakfast yet to be served, so no aroma wafts into the room. The stillness is almost palpable.

At the same time, you know that in short order, the sun will pierce through the darkness, coming

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<sup>1</sup> The Book of Common Prayer. New York: Seabury Press, 1979, 159.

over the eastern horizon to wake the slumbering world beneath. Children will stir and clamor for attention, food will make its way to the table, the sound of traffic will intensify from a quiet murmur to a roar. But not yet. Darkness still encapsulates your corner of the world.

During the time of King Herod, under the reign of Caesar Augustus, it was this restless darkness that ruled the small sliver of the vast Roman Empire called Judea. The Jewish people had endured captivity, exile, and foreign domination. Their temple had been desecrated by the Greeks, their political system abducted by the Romans, and self-determination handed to Herod, an Idumean, a descendent of their ancient enemies, the Edomites, all the while their God had seemingly been silent in the 400 years since the prophet Malachi penned the book bearing his name. The darkness was thick in Judea.

But something was stirring in the land. A Hero was coming. A Messiah. An Anointed One. A Savior, foretold in ages past. An Ancient Good. An old man named Simeon waited patiently for the consolation of Israel, knowing he would live to see the Lord's Anointed One because the Spirit of the God the Israelites worshipped was beginning to whisper once more (Luke 2:22-32). A prophetess

named Anna, a widow in her eighties, devoted to fasting and prayer, could feel the darkness beginning to fall (Luke 3:36-38) like winds beginning to change. Maybe it was like the first cry of a hungry newborn in the morning, or the first car daring to honk its horn blocks away. But the light was beginning to sneak into our world, making its way through the alleys and cul-de-sacs, through the labyrinth of sin and dead ends of pain, creeping its way into the lives of a restless people.

**Jesus Storybook Bible Connection – Get ready!, pp. 170-175<sup>2</sup>**

### **Scripture Memory** **Romans 3:23-25**

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*

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<sup>2</sup> For *The Jesus Storybook Bible Connections*, refer to Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderkidz, 2007). This resource will be very helpful in making biblical, Christ-centered connections to Advent for any small children you may have.



## **Monday**

### **Romans 1:18-32**

*What brings the wrath of God?*

*Why do we as humans not see clearly the greatness of God compared to the weight of our sin?*

*Which comes first; sin against God or dishonoring God in the heart?*

*Do you see any of the sins listed in verses 29-30 in your own life? If so, is it clear that you need Someone other than yourself to rescue you from those sins?*

## **Tuesday**

### **Romans 2:1-10**

*Who do you judge and for what?*

*If you're honest, are you totally innocent of what angers you?*

*What does this sense of justice built within you say about the character of God?*

*What does God's demand of grace say about his character?*

## **Wednesday**

### **Romans 3:9-20**

*What is your reaction to the idea that “no one seeks God...no one does good, not even one”?*

*Are there “good works” that you try to use to make God happy with you?*

*Are there “good works” you demand of others to make you happy with them?*

*Is the need for a Savior clear to you?*

## **Thursday**

### **Romans 3:21-31**

*How has the manifestation of God’s righteousness changed? From what to what?*

*How can one be justified – have their sin and rebellion wiped out? How do we normally try to justify ourselves?*

*What does God’s offering of Jesus on our behalf reveal about God?*

*Does Paul say that faith “overthrows” or “upholds” the law in verse 31? How does that mean the believer should live?*

## **Friday**

### **Romans 4:1-12**

*Was Abraham justified by works? Does he have anything to boast about?*

*How about you? Are you made right with God by what you've done? What do you brag about?*

*If Abraham wasn't justified by his works, what did justify him?*

*What or who did he have faith in?*

## **Saturday**

### **Romans 4:13-25**

*Why can't the promise given to Abraham and his offspring come through the law?*

*Abraham did not perfectly obey God's will or trust his power – he used a concubine, Hagar, to bear a son, Ishmael, despite God's promise that Sarah would bear a son – but Paul still counts Abraham's faith as his righteousness. Why?*

*How have you not trusted God but can still be counted righteous through faith?*

*Verses 23-25 show that the expectation and hope the Jewish people had was fulfilled in Jesus. What things do you hope in that fail you?*

## Second Sunday of Advent

*Merciful God, who sent thy messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*<sup>3</sup>

### The Voice in the Wilderness

If a would-be conqueror is polite, he will send to his enemies' city-state a messenger, carrying a declaration of war and an opportunity to lay down arms in order to avoid violence. The messenger will taunt the leadership of the besieged city and call for the residents therein to defect. He will announce the king coming with his vast army ready to lay waste to all who resist. For example, Jerusalem once found itself surrounded by the army of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, who sent his servant to the city to ridicule the Judahites huddled within and to blaspheme their God. They ridiculed King Hezekiah saying, "Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, 'On what are you

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<sup>3</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 159.

trusting, that you endure the siege in Jerusalem? Is not Hezekiah misleading you, that he may give you over to die by famine and by thirst, when he tells you, "The Lord our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria"? (2 Chronicles 32:10-11 ESV). God ultimately delivered Judah from Sennacherib, driving the blasphemer back to his land (2 Ch 32:20-23).

But what happens when God is the conqueror? Does he come unannounced? Certainly not! But as with God's quiet conquest of this world, his messenger is perplexing. And as with his coming, the story starts with a quite unexpected baby. Zechariah was a priest living in Judea with his aging childless wife, Elizabeth. When it came time for Zechariah to offer a sacrifice on behalf of the people of Israel, a once in a lifetime opportunity for a Hebrew priest, an angel (The Greek word for angel translates literally as messenger) appeared to him, causing Zechariah great fear. The angel wasn't there to kill Zechariah, but to tell him that years of labored prayer and waiting were over. His wife was to bear a baby boy! This boy would grow to be a man and this man would "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." Zechariah, much like his ancestor Sarah (Genesis

17:15-27), was deeply skeptical, and confessed as much. The angel responded: "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time" (Luke 1:19-20 ESV). Muted, but convinced, Zechariah went home to convey the news to the soon-to-be pregnant Elizabeth. When the child was born, Zechariah, following the orders relayed by the angel, named his son John (Luke 1:63).

John grew up to be a man, but he wasn't an ordinary man. John was strange. John clothed himself in camel's hair and fed on locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4). He lived in the wilderness, away from the trappings of civilization and most importantly, as "the voice in the wilderness", he told all who would listen – and many who would not – about the coming light (John 1:6-8). "Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said!" (John 1:23 ESV) he shouted to the people. God's Anointed One was coming! John's voice rang out in the darkness. Jesus is coming and he will conquer this world and establish his kingdom. He is the Christ! He will deliver his people from the darkness!

Repent and join him!<sup>4</sup> But that story, as well, begins with a baby...

**Jesus Storybook Bible Connection – Heaven breaks through, pp 200-207**

## **Scripture Memory**

**John 1:6-8**

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*

## **Monday**

**2 Chronicles 32:1-23**

*Where does Hezekiah encourage the Judahites to put their hope?*

*How does Sennacherib mock Hezekiah and the Israelites?*

*What do the voices in your life tell you to place your hope in other than God?*

*What will be the ultimate end of a hope not placed in the God of the Bible?*

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<sup>4</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 44.

## **Tuesday**

### **Luke 1:5-25**

*When God sends his angel to Zechariah, how did he react to the news he was given?*

*How would you react to similar news? With credulity? Disbelief?*

*Why do you think God chose an elderly couple such as Zechariah and Elizabeth to conceive a baby?*

*What surprising ways has he used you?*

## **Wednesday**

### **Luke 1:57-63**

*Did God's promise come to fruition? Was there any doubt that it would?*

*Scripture is full of promises to the believer. Do you ever doubt that those promises will come true?*

*Why does God seal Zechariah's mouth until John is born?*

*When John is born, does Zechariah gloat in God's using him? How does he respond to God?*

*How should that shape our response to God's work?*



## **Thursday**

**John 1:6-8, 19-28**

*What purpose did John serve?*

*Why did God send someone ahead of Jesus?*

*Who is John talking about when he refers to "he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie"?*

*What did John say about himself? Why do you think he describes himself in such self-deprecating terms in relation to his cousin?*

## **Friday**

**Matthew 3:1-17**

*John is very odd. He is not what one might think of when thinking about a preacher. Why does God use such an odd man?*

*Why does John use such strong words for the Pharisees? (Remember, serpents in Jewish thought are almost always associated with sin or the Devil.)*

*What is the primary difference between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism? (For a clue, you might also read the story of several of John's followers converting to Christianity in Acts 19:1-7.)*

*Why does Jesus allow John to baptize him? In what ways does God reveal himself during this act and what does that tell us about him?*

**Saturday**

**Mark 6:14-29**

*Why did Herod have John the Baptist arrested?  
Why was he afraid of him?*

*Why was he executed? Is the connection  
between sin and death accidental?*

*John was the messenger pointing to Jesus and  
he still suffered. What does this say about believers  
now?*

*Do we say Jesus' suffering was good only for  
that time, or do we look to the future in hope as  
well?*

## Third Sunday of Advent

*Stir up thy power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let thy bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory, world without end. Amen.*<sup>5</sup>

### Looking to the East

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). This is a reassuring and profound reality we take for granted. The light always drives back the darkness and the darkness never consumes the light. As long as a light source is available we needn't stumble around blindly because the darkness will be driven back. But John the Evangelist is not speaking of lamps or candles. The source he is writing about is the eternal Word of God that lit the universe in the first place (John 1:3). This Word was at the beginning; he was with God and he was God (John 1:1-2). John the

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<sup>5</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 160.

Baptist heralded the coming of the light into the world the Light had created, a world that had forgotten its Maker (John 1:6-10).

This Word, "who both was always God and afterward was the artificer of the universe," the French Reformer John Calvin points out, is "properly placed at the highest level [of all divine revelation], as the wellspring of all oracles. Unchangeable, the Word abides everlastingly one and the same with God and is God himself."<sup>6</sup> This Eternal Word is God and was with God from the very beginning. It was through this Word from God who is God that the foundations of the earth were laid, the day was rent from night, that all the flora and fauna of the world came into being, and that man and woman were made in the image and likeness of God and placed carefully in a garden. All was well with all that God had spoken into being.

But all did not remain well. The serpent, a treasonous creature, coaxed man into disobedience. His false lying words were given parlay in the mind of man and man rejected the True Word. The world was broken and fractured; man was cursed to a slavery to sin and death - a slavery worse than anything Rome could bring to Judea - that would

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<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 1:130.

haunt him and all his descendants (Genesis 3:17-19). But hope was not lost. The first murmurs of a Savior came from the voice of God to the serpent. "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 ESV). God has made it clear by his Word. He would defeat his enemy and deliver his people by the child of a woman. Theologians call this first utterance of God's rescue plan the proto-gospel, the first gospel.

God's people have a hope from the beginning. The child of a woman will deliver them. Millennia later, the prophet Isaiah told God's people to look for the sign of Immanuel, God is with us, in a virgin conceiving and bearing a son (Isaiah 7:14). The people who walked in darkness, Isaiah said, would see a great light. They will be delivered from their oppressors - "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" (Isaiah 9:2-6). The Word was coming back and with him the light. But he was coming back in the most curious way; he was coming as a baby, as the son of a woman and it was with the eager

expectancy of a woman awaiting her newborn, that Israel awaited their King.

**Jesus Storybook Bible Connection – The beginning: a perfect home & The Terrible Lie, pp 18-37**

## **Scripture Memory**

### **John 1:1-3**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

### **Monday**

#### **John 1:1-18**

*Who is the Word? Through him, what was created?*

*What must one do to become a child of God? Is this “childhood” a biological process? Who “wills” it?*

*The Word was God, but what did he become? What did he bring and what did he reveal?*

## **Tuesday**

### **Genesis 2:15-3:24**

*What did God give to Man?*

*What was his only command?*

*What was the lie Adam and Eve believed that led them to sin?*

*Identify the hope God gave Adam and Eve, specifically in verse 3:15.*

## **Wednesday**

### **Isaiah 7:10-25**

*This prophecy is telescopically fulfilled in a way by King Hezekiah, but ultimately by Jesus. What is the sign God gives Ahaz?*

*What can Israel expect before their Messiah comes?*

*What can the church expect before our Messiah returns once and for all?*

## **Thursday**

### **Isaiah 9:1-7**

*Who has seen a great light? What is the implication for believers?*

*Who is the "you" who "multiplied the nation" and "increased its joy"?*

*How does he do that?*

*What is the son called and what are the implications of such titles?*

## **Friday**

### **Psalm 72**

*David prays this psalm over his royal heirs, but its fulfillment comes in Jesus. What characteristics does David ask for first for his heir?*

*Whose cause does Jesus defend?*

*Who does he oppose?*

*Does David end this psalm praising himself or God? How does all this affect how we live our lives?*

## **Saturday**

### **Micah 5:1-6**

*What is the situation and the emotional tone of the beginning of this passage?*

*What does the hope of Israel turn on? Where does it come from?*

*Assyria is the enemy here, but Assyria is used as a stand in for sinful or demonic forces in prophetic language. What is their fate?*

*Does the Messiah's coming from little Bethlehem instead of a great city change your expectation of how God works?*



## Fourth Sunday of Advent

*We beseech thee, Almighty God, to purify our consciences by thy daily visitation, that when thy Son our Lord comes he may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*<sup>7</sup>

### The Good News

What woman should be worthy enough to carry the King of the Universe in her womb, to nurse him upon her breast, to raise him in her home? Surely a queen of a great empire! Or a princess betrothed to a warrior prince with conquest after conquest under his belt! Or a priestess whose entire life has been devoted to God, serving in the temple and adorned in holy robes!

But the God of the Bible has a way of turning our expectations on their head and so it was when he sent his angel Gabriel to a small town (Nazareth) in an unimportant district (Galilee) in the far reaches of the Roman Empire to a young, unwed woman

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<sup>7</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 160, 1979.

named Mary, betrothed to a young man named Joseph, a skilled carpenter of no fame. The angel gave the frightened Mary a message, "You have found favor with God" (Luke 1:30). Favor is the same Greek word translated as grace, *charis*. Favor is not something that is earned from God. It is given. In God's infinite sovereignty and goodness, he chose this young girl, a poor and unwed virgin to be a vessel through which his purposes would be achieved. It was she who would "conceive...and bear a son, and [she would] 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" (vv. 31-33). Mary had done nothing to earn this great honor, but nonetheless, she was chosen to bear the light into the darkness.

How, the young girl understandably asked, could this be? She was a virgin and would remain so until this son was born, so such a gift seemed impossible. Gabriel reminded her that with God, nothing is impossible. The Holy Spirit, the third person of God, would come upon Mary and the Most High would overshadow her.

Many of us would react to being given this news in one of two ways. We could be incredulous. Why

should God select someone of no import? How could he cause a child to be formed outside his natural order? We would dismiss and minimize God's declaration because it defies our preconceptions that such a person should be important or that sex must be involved. That's the way man's economy works! Or we would be tempted to become prideful and self-congratulatory. "Of course, God selected me! I'm just that great! I don't think he could do it without me, actually." But Mary, an imperfect, poor, backwoods virgin girl, gives us a model response starting in Luke 1:46 when she sings, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name." This song, called the Magnificat, portrays a trust in God's power and holiness and a recognition that without his saving grace toward Mary, she is no better off than anyone else. Mary has placed her trust not in herself, but in God and his power over his creation and grace toward her.

We won't be asked to bear the Son of God into this world - at least not through pregnancy! - but we are asked to have this humble expectation that God

is still powerful and he gives grace to us his creatures and we look, like Mary, to Jesus as the ultimate demonstration of God's power and grace.

**Jesus Storybook Connection – He's here!, pp 167-183**

### **Scripture Memory**

#### **2 Corinthians 4:6**

*For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

**On Christmas Day, skip to the Christmas Day Devotional on page 28.**

### **Monday**

#### **Luke 1:25-56**

*From Scripture, does Mary seem like anyone special prior to her conversation with Gabriel?*

*What prophecies have we read so far that show up again in the angel's description of Jesus?*

*How do you think you would react to receiving news like Mary has? Disbelief? Arrogance? Fear? How does Mary react?*

## **Tuesday**

### **Luke 23:26-56**

*When Jesus, the seemingly promised Messiah, the Light in the darkness, was put to death, how do you think the disciples felt?*

*With all the talk of a coming Messiah to save the people of Israel, many expected Jesus to save them from Rome. But like Assyria, is it possible that Rome is merely a stand-in for evil?*

*Was it any accident that when Jesus died the light in the world seemed drained?*

## **Wednesday**

### **Luke 24:1-35**

*If not Rome, what has Jesus defeated by his resurrection?*

*How does this provide us hope?*

*Why did the disciples on the road to Emmaus not recognize Jesus?*

*How does Jesus interpret the Scriptures?*

*How often do you read the Bible (particularly the Old Testament) and struggle to see how it is pointing to Jesus?*

## **Thursday**

**Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:6-11**

*Where does Jesus reside now?*

*Who acts as his emissaries on earth?*

*How and for what are they empowered?*

*Like Israel looked for their coming Messiah,  
what does the church today look forward to?*

## **Friday**

**2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6**

*What is this veil on our hearts?*

*How is it lifted?*

*Where does the glory God brings come from?*

*Who is our light in the darkness?*

## **Saturday**

**Revelation 21**

*What is the purpose of this new heaven and  
new earth?*

*Why is there no temple?*

*Why is there no sun?*

*How does this vision of eternity differ from what  
is commonly thought "heaven" looks like?*

## The Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Day

O God, who hast caused this holy night to shine with the illumination of the true Light: Grant us, we beseech thee, that as we have known the mystery of that Light upon earth, so may we also perfectly enjoy him in heaven; where with thee and the Holy Spirit he liveth and reigneth, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.<sup>8</sup>

### The Light Breaks In

Read Luke 2:1-21

Today is the day! Christmas! It seems we have all been eagerly awaiting this day for a variety of reasons. Children are desperate to open presents and gorge themselves on sweets. Parents are ready for a harried - and all too often expensive - season to come to a close. Retail workers will breathe a sigh of relief as the crowds of already frustrated guests subside and they finally put the store's Christmas mix tape to rest. But these expectations always ring

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<sup>8</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 161.

hollow. The toys will break. The credit card bill will come in the mail. The shops will fill up next year.

Advent was meant to look to something better, to look for the light in the darkness. Christmas wasn't supposed to be a time of exhaustion, but a time of rest, a time of memory and a time of expectation. Believers have historically taken this day to remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus. The light has broken forth on the horizon! The rays of light have begun piercing through dark places in the hearts of people. Whereas the Enemy, the "god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4), God himself has shone his light in the hearts of Christians, showing us his glory in the person and work of Jesus (v. 6). Our King has come and as Jesus himself declared many times in his life, the Kingdom of God has come in Christ Jesus.

The Kingdom of God came to a poor young girl. The Kingdom of God came to shepherds. The Kingdom of God came to small unimportant cities and to fishermen and to tax collectors and prostitutes. And the Kingdom of God comes to us, sinners in need of a savior, subjects in need of a King. While Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, his life, preaching sermons, healing the sick,



forgiving sin, led ultimately to dying on a Roman cross. The King who came as a helpless babe in a stable was murdered in the place of sinners and rose from death to save them from their captivity to sin, slavery to death, and the enmity of Satan. The first light of Christmas Day reminds us that the Kingdom of Light has dawned in this world.

But Christians also spend the Advent season, and subsequently Christmas day, longing for the return of the same Jesus, who after his crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven will one day return to this world to become for us not the Cracking Dawn, but a glorious and eternal Mid-day. Our King is coming once again and while the Kingdom has already been inaugurated, it has yet to be consummated.<sup>9</sup> When Jesus returns he will free his people from all the oppression, injustice, suffering, and last vestiges of their sin nature. He has promised to return and restore all things back to the way they were before the darkness came (Acts 3:21, Revelation 21:1-8). In his capital city, a renewed Jerusalem will have no need for the sun or moon because God's glory resides there and Jesus is enthroned, casting light and hope into every dark corner.

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<sup>9</sup> C Samuel Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2013), 28-29.

As you celebrate this day, remember that our hope is not found in this world, that Jesus is coming back and he will rescue and restore us and then and only then will we truly possess peace on earth and goodwill to men.

**Jesus Storybook Bible Connection – The Light of the Whole World, pp 184-191**

## Advent: A Light in the Darkness

Advent throughout the centuries has been a time of expectation and longing. As Israel longed for their coming Messiah, the Church longs for Jesus' return and for the consummation of the kingdom inaugurated with his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit, but believers know that he will come again and have cried "*Maranatha* - Come, Lord, come!"

This devotional seeks to help you, your family, or your Community Group walk through the Advent and Christmas season to enrich your faith in Jesus, looking toward him and not toward the trappings and busyness of this world.

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