



## The Meaning of Advent

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)*

"Advent" simply means *coming* as in Christ is coming, and for us now He has arrived. This is referring to His birth in history and in humanity. It meant the welcoming or the arrival of a special king and for us; it is our King of kings. This is what the Old Testament prophecies foretold concerning Jesus' Incarnation, the Word made flesh for our hope and Atonement that brought us our deliverance. Advent represents our expectation, anticipation, and preparation for who Christ is and what He has done for us. He arrived into the world as a human being, being

fully God and fully man. He came to identify as one of us, as the *Son of Man*, as a baby born in a manger. He came for us, He came for you and He comes into our lives and into our hearts. He is coming again in great power and glory to bring His Kingdom into fruition.

## **The Advent Wreath**

*And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him." May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:12-13).*

Traditionally, during the Christmas season we have an "Advent Wreath" in our Churches, and this is remarkably celebrated in all Denominations, including Orthodox, Catholic, liturgical, Mainline and Evangelical. The Advent Wreath is a venerable tradition that cuts across denominational and theological boundaries. It dates to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. This Advent Wreath is arranged with 4 or 5 Advent candles, 3 or 4 of which are in a circle, along with one in the center, all on a base of evergreens each has a powerful message for us about our Lord. This has prevailing imagery we should not take for granted or consider just another holiday decoration.

- **The Wreath:** The wreath itself means "victory" as Christ's victory over sin so He can save us. The Advent Wreath has 4 or 5 candles that are arranged in a circle symbolizing Christ's eternity, as a circle has no beginning and has no end, it is a symbol for God, Who is eternal and thus without beginning or end. The evergreens mean He is "ever with us," they are usually pine branches or holly that are used as a base that represents anticipation, newness, renewal and His everlastingness. The red berries of the holly represent the shedding of Christ's blood.
- **The Candles:** The Advent candles mean the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His Son. This refers to the significance that Christ is the Light of the world. When they are lit, the illumination is to symbolize the Christ of eternity and His coming as the "Light of the World" and our worship and honor of His most precious gift of His Grace and mercy. These candles also have a color theme too, purple, blue, pink or rose and white. The first two or three are purple meaning royalty and this is also the color of suffering and the darkness of sin, connecting Jesus' birth and crucifixion and

His triumph over sin. Blue means sky and life, pink means joy, and white means purity.

**Each candle has a special meaning:**

- The first candle (purple) "CANDLE OF HOPE" means His promise and hope. We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises He made to us. Our hope comes from God. (Romans 15:12-13)
  - The second candle (purple) "CANDLE OF PREPARATION" means His light and preparation. Preparation means to 'get ready'. "Help us to be ready to welcome YOU, O GOD!" (Luke 3:4-6) (Some traditions combine the first two)
  - The third candle (pink or rose) "CANDLE OF JOY" means the angels sang a message of JOY! (Luke 2:7-15)
  - The fourth candle (purple or blue) "CANDLE OF LOVE" symbolizes Christ love. God sent His only Son to earth to save us, because He loves us! (John 3:16-17) (some traditions omit this one)
  - The fifth candle (white) "CHRIST CANDLE" symbolizes the incarnation, the heart and reason of the season, God giving light to the world. Its location is in the center as Christ's light is central and radiant. This reminds us that Jesus is the spotless Lamb of God, sent to wash away our sins! (in wreaths that have 4 candles, it is in the circle among the rest of the candles)
- Each candle is lighted during the worship services each week in progression until Christmas Eve or Christmas Day when the last candle is lit. (some denominations and traditions have different color schemes and some only four candles) Each week the new unlit candle for that week is lighted, and then the previous candles are re-lighted. A family is sent up to do the lighting as a passage is read, a carol sang and or a prayer said. The four weeks are a period of waiting also signifying the four centuries of waiting between the last prophet Malachi and the birth of Jesus. All five candles should

continue to be lighted in worship services through Epiphany on January 6 (*epiphany* means "to show," is the climax of the Christmas Season and the "Twelve Days of Christmas." It is observed to denote the coming of the wise men bringing gifts and their worship to Christ).

### **Advent Verses**

*The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- (Isaiah 11:2)*

**Typical Liturgical Lectionary Verses** (Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Episcopal and many Evangelical Churches too):

Week 1: Isaiah 11:1-10 and/or Isaiah 7:10-14; 9:6-7; Isaiah 11:1-5 and/or Jeremiah 33:14-16;

Week 2: Psalm 25:1-10 and/or Psalm 27:1-7,18-19 and/or Micah 5:2 and/or Matthew 2:1-12

Week 3: I Thessalonians 3:9-13 and/or Romans 15:4-13 and/or Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38

Week 4: Matthew 3:1-12 and/or Luke 21:25-36 and/or Luke 2:8-20;

Also:

The Annunciations of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-25) and Mary's visit to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56) can be read every Advent Sunday and then the following passages just prior to the Advent wreath lighting ceremony:

First Advent Sunday: Annunciation to Zachariah: Luke 1:5-25.

Second Sunday of Advent: Annunciation to Mary: Luke 1:26-38.

Third Sunday of Advent: Mary's visit to Elizabeth; The Birth of John the Baptist: Luke 1:39-66.

Fourth Sunday of Advent: Zachariah's prophecy: Luke 1:67-80.

Christmas Day: The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke 2:1-20.

## **Typical Evangelical Verses:**

*"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." (Micah 5:2)*

## **Additional Scripture verses to be personally read during Advent:**

### **FOUR WEEKS BEFORE CHRISTMAS**

SUNDAY: Isaiah 7:14 and Micah 5:2  
MONDAY: Matthew 1:18-24 and Luke 1:26-33  
TUESDAY: Luke 2:1-5  
WEDNESDAY: Luke 2:6-7  
THURSDAY: Luke 2:8-9  
FRIDAY: Luke 2:10-12  
SATURDAY: Luke 2:13-14

### **THREE WEEKS BEFORE CHRISTMAS**

SUNDAY: Luke 2:15-16  
MONDAY: Luke 2:17-18  
TUESDAY: Luke 2:19  
WEDNESDAY: Luke 2:20  
THURSDAY: Luke 2:21  
FRIDAY: Matthew 2:1-2  
SATURDAY: Matthew 2:3-6

### **TWO WEEKS BEFORE CHRISTMAS**

SUNDAY: Matthew 2:7-8  
MONDAY: Matthew 2:9  
TUESDAY: Matthew 2:10-11  
WEDNESDAY: Matthew 2:12-15  
THURSDAY: Galatians 4:4-5  
FRIDAY: Ephesians 2:8-9  
SATURDAY: 1 John 4:7-16

**ONE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS (You may or may not have a full week before Christmas Day.)**

SUNDAY: Ephesians 2:12-22  
MONDAY: John 7:37-38, and 14:6

TUESDAY: Matthew 28:19-20

WEDNESDAY: John 8:12

THURSDAY: John 9:4-5 and Matthew 5:14-16

FRIDAY: Psalm 98:1-6

SATURDAY: John 1:1-3, 14 and Romans 6:23

## CHRISTMAS DAY

Psalm 100, Revelation 3:20-21

*His birth was for his death; his death was for our birth!* (John 1:29 and John 3:1-8)

*To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. Show me your paths and teach me to follow;  
guide me by your truth and instruct me.* (Psalm 25)

"Make sure you are bringing the Bible into your Church this Christmas Season!"

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