

Advent



Isaiah 7:14

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”

Luke 1:30-33

The angel said to her: “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

When did Advent start. What does it mean? Until I really started studying it, I was not aware of what Advent really meant originally. Yes, it is a time when we look forward to the advent of

Christ's birth, but it was much more than that when it was first celebrated. The first celebration of Advent had dual meanings. It began with the Latin *adventus* which means coming and had preparation for the second coming of Christ during the first two weeks and the preparation for the birth of Christ during the second two weeks of the celebration. The date for the first celebration is unknown but it probably started in the 4th or 5th century in the Catholic Church.

In many of the Eastern countries this is still true and it often included fasting and lasted 40 days before Christmas. In Spain it was often associated with Epiphany and the Baptism of Christ and new Christians. It had very little to do with Christmas. By the 6th century it was changing, and it was coming to celebrate the coming of Christ, but not in a manger, but in the clouds as the second coming and King to judge the world. During the Middle Ages it was getting tied to the coming of Christ as a babe in a manger. It has continued to change in many ways until today.



We often tend to forget that many generations before us were looking for the second coming, just as we are today.

When Christ left he told the disciples *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* John 14:3 They must have thought that he meant he would be back during their lifetime. And many generations since then have thought the same thing and waited for Christ to appear in the clouds for what has been called The Rapture.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, 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.”
Isaiah 9:6-7

As early as the 700's BC, Isaiah and Micah were prophesying and Jeremiah is said to have told of the coming Messiah as early as 600's BC.

Isaiah's prophecy has been told in song by Handel and is probably best known. He does not tell them they won't live to see it and we don't know if he knew how long it would be before it happened. His duty was to try to get them to repent and God had told him to tell them about this wonderful thing that was going to happen. They were going to have the king they had been told about all their lives.

I often feel sorry for Isaiah as I am studying. He had been told many wonderful things by God to tell the people, but they

weren't seeing anything happen and they must have been very frustrated with Isaiah and he must have sometimes wondered when he would actually see what he had been told. We sometimes doubt, but we know about the birth of Christ and that it actually happened. These people had only faith that it would happen.



Micah tells the people the King will come from Bethlehem even though they are a small kingdom. That would have been quite a promise to them.

Many times we want to picture a King with a halo and much pomp and circumstance in a noble setting. That was not the way we are told it was. Christ came in a humble manner in a humble manger to a small, relatively unknown clan of Judah, people who were just as important in God's eyes as the royalty in the capital city and as important as the least of us is today. His coming was told to a group of common shepherds and to

a young couple with no social status. Christ came for sinners, and we all fall into that category! Regardless of our social status or financial well being the gift of salvation through the birth and resurrection of Christ is for everyone today as we celebrate the coming of Christ and wait for the second coming as promised to all of us.

The Scripture does not say when. It does say "from the days of eternity." That can still be a long time and so just as they had faith, we also must have faith that Christ will come again and we need to be ready for that coming. That is what the people who first started Advent were preparing for. They knew that Christ had come as a baby, but they were preparing for the second coming which Christ had promised while he was on this earth.

Today western Christianity begins observation the fourth Sunday before Advent including the Roman Catholic Church, and most Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others.

As we prepare at home or at church we will concentrate on the themes and suggested Scriptures as given by the traditional Advent Season.— Hope, Preparation, Joy, and Love.

The traditional Advent Wreath has a candle for each Sunday and one for Christmas Day usually called the Christ Candle, but colors vary. The most important thing is our inward preparation to accept Christ as Lord and Savior.

Prayer: Dear Lord and Savior, thank you for coming to this earth so that our sins can be forgiven and someday we will be with you. There will be no more hunger and war. Help us to be prepared and seek to do your will so that we will be ready to join you when you call us. Amen.



1. Why should Advent be a part of our preparation for Christmas?
2. Do we ever think of Advent as a preparation for Christ's second coming?
3. How should we prepare?
4. What connection does Advent have with Lent?
5. Are we too busy to read a Scripture verse and say a prayer each day as we light the candle for Advent?
6. How does a daily devotion prepare us for each day's activities?

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