



# Advent

## Celebrating Christ's Arrival

BY ONEHOPE PRESIDENT ROB HOSKINS

# The Background of Advent

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DAY 1



# Advent

Advent, often confused with Christmas, is a distinct season in the Christian calendar with its own unique significance. The term *advent* is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming” or “arrival.” It is a period of anticipation, looking forward to the arrival of the Lord.

When Christians refer to the coming of Jesus during Advent, they encompass three dimensions of this arrival. First, there is the past coming, commemorating the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ more than 2,000 years ago. Second, there is the present coming, signifying God’s entry into our lives when we choose to place our trust in Him. Third, there is the future coming, a belief in God’s upcoming return to fulfill His redemptive work and renew all things.

During Advent, specific texts are read, focusing on the anticipation of God’s arrival to save His people, the birth of Jesus, His earthly ministry, and the expectation of His second coming. These texts are all intertwined with the central themes of Advent.

Advent serves as a season of both reflection and anticipation. For OneHope, Advent reinforces a crucial reminder that the children and youth of the world need to have access to God’s story. OneHope works with local churches worldwide to share God’s Word with children and youth so that they may experience His peace, joy, love, and hope.

## Reflection Point:

Ask God to help you focus on the true reason for the Christmas season, the coming of Jesus Christ to live among humanity. How can you live out your faith in your interactions with others today?

Though the traditional Advent season begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, this time of reflection can be done over any five days during the Christmas season. Over the next few days, we’ll dive into various Scriptures, each corresponding to one of four spiritual themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. These themes guide us through a period of preparation, deepening our understanding of how we are called to await the coming of the Lord.

SCRIPTURES: ISAIAH 7:14; LUKE 2:11-12

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

—Isaiah 7:14, NIV

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

—Luke 2:11-12, NIV

# Hope

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DAY 2



# Hope

The Advent season, marked by the theme of hope, does not commence with the festive lights and joys of Christmas. Instead, it begins in darkness, as aptly noted by theologian Fleming Rutledge. It prompts profound contemplation of the darkness that envelops our world and the darkness within us, symbolizing our sinfulness. Today's selection of passages offers insights into grasping hope amidst this darkness, emphasizing the anticipation of the Lord's coming.

The prophet Isaiah directs our gaze both backward and inward. He looks back to the awe-inspiring deeds of God in the past when He intervened miraculously on behalf of His people. However, Isaiah also acknowledges the present darkness of sin that threatens God's people, declaring, "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6, NIV). Faced with the darkness of the world and the sin within, our only cry is for God to come and rescue us.

The psalmist echoes this plea, acknowledging that God's judgment weighs upon the people of Israel. Nevertheless, he fervently implores, "Restore us, O God...that we may be saved."

In Jesus' teachings, we find a vision of the Son of Man's arrival amid profound darkness, symbolized by the darkened sun and the absence of light from the moon and stars. This signifies God's arrival in the midst of the darkest of darkness.

Although we do not know the precise moment of this coming, Jesus provides clear guidance: watch and wait. Look upward! Remain vigilant and do not fall into slumber. For those dwelling in darkness, take heed and watch, for the Lord approaches.



# Hope

Throughout the Advent season, God's people are reminded of their calling to stand beside those ensnared in darkness. However, they do so not as passive bystanders but as expectant witnesses, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Son's radiant light.

Hope is not merely an abstract concept; it is a lived experience expressed through our actions. As we await God's intervention to set things right, we embody this hope, ever watchful for the dawn that will dispel the darkness.

## **Reflection Point:**

In challenging moments, remember that God only places us in situations within our capabilities. Your attitude during these tasks is pivotal; choose between worry and praise wisely, for it shapes your journey. Who can you share hope with today?

Hope is not merely an abstract concept; it is a lived experience expressed through our actions.

SCRIPTURES: ISAIAH 64:3-4; PSALM 80:1-7; MARK 13:24-37

For when you did awesome things  
that we did not expect,  
you came down, and the mountains  
trembled before you.

Since ancient times no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who acts on behalf of those who  
wait for him.

—Isaiah 64:3-4, NIV



SCRIPTURES: ISAIAH 64:3-4; PSALM 80:1-7; MARK 13:24-37

Restore us, O God;

make your face shine on us,  
that we may be saved.

How long, Lord God Almighty,

will your anger smolder  
against the prayers of your people?

You have fed them with the bread of tears;

you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.

You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors,  
and our enemies mock us.

Restore us, God Almighty;

make your face shine on us,  
that we may be saved.

—Psalm 80:3-7, NIV

SCRIPTURES: ISAIAH 64:3-4; PSALM 80:1-7; MARK 13:24-37

Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: “Watch!”

—Mark 13:35-37, NIV

# Peace



DAY 3



# Peace

The psalmist's earnest plea to God resounds, "Show us your unfailing love, Lord, and grant us your salvation." In this context, salvation is interpreted as the "peace" promised by God to His people. The Hebrew word for *peace*, "shalom," transcends mere absence of conflict or serenity; it signifies wholeness and completeness, a state where things are as they ought to be. The psalmist yearns to witness God's fulfillment of the promise to bestow "shalom" upon His people.

This fulfillment, as the New Testament authors proclaim, materializes with the advent of Jesus of Nazareth. Mark initiates his account of Jesus by presenting it as "good news" and quoting the words of the prophet Isaiah.

In Isaiah 40, God addresses His people during their exile, a period marked by displacement and captivity under foreign rule. The prophet commences the chapter with the word "comfort," as God offers solace to His exiled people. The message is described as "good news," the same term used by Mark to describe Jesus' story. So, what is this good news? It is the revelation that God is coming to rescue His people and establish His reign as King. Yet, God's kingship manifests with the tenderness of a shepherd who gathers His sheep into His loving embrace.

Mark endeavors to convey that Jesus' arrival fulfills Isaiah's prophecy. Jesus, God incarnate, descends into the world to redeem His people and establish His kingdom.

## Reflection Point:

Despite Jesus being born in humble circumstances, God brought peace during a difficult situation. Recognizing the Lord's peace in our lives can empower us to change the world—how will you do it?

Throughout the Advent season, we confront our brokenness. None of us, apart from God, can claim to possess lives characterized by the "shalom" depicted in Scripture. However, God has pledged to bring peace to His people and the world, and He never falters in keeping His promises. During this season, we reflect on the peace Jesus has already secured for us in the past, we discern the signs of His peace in our lives today, and we anticipate the day when God will restore and heal every fragment of this world and our souls, making all things whole once more.

SCRIPTURES: ISAIAH 40:1-2; PSALM 85:7-9; MARK 1:2-3

Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.  
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her  
that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins.

—Isaiah 40:1-2, NIV

SCRIPTURES: ISAIAH 40:1-2; PSALM 85:7-9; MARK 1:2-3

Show us your unfailing love, Lord,  
and grant us your salvation.

I will listen to what God the Lord says;

he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—  
but let them not turn to folly.

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,  
that his glory may dwell in our land.

—Psalm 85:7-9, NIV

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way”—

“a voice of one calling in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.’”

—Mark 1:2-3, NIV

# Joy



DAY 4



# Joy

Christ's coming is a reason to celebrate with joy! Isaiah 65:17-25 paints a vivid and captivating image of God's promise to create a new heavens and a new earth—a realm of unparalleled joy and delight. In the midst of our world's brokenness, this promise serves as a profound reminder that God is actively engaged in the process of restoration, offering a joy that surpasses all imagination.

Psalm 126 beautifully captures the exuberant joy of the Israelites upon their return from exile. Their mouths resonated with laughter and resounded with songs of joy, for they recognized the magnificent deeds God had wrought on their behalf. The psalmist also acknowledges that the path to joy can sometimes be paved with sorrow: "Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy."

This sentiment resonates deeply with Advent—a season marked by waiting. Although we anticipate the arrival of the good news that will bring great joy, we currently reside in a time often characterized by tears, sorrow, and pain.

John 3:22-30 recounts the joyful anticipation of John the Baptist as he prepares the way for Jesus. He likens himself to the friend of the bridegroom who eagerly awaits the bridegroom's arrival. John's joy reaches its zenith upon hearing the voice of Jesus.

During Advent, we emulate John the Baptist as we prepare our hearts for the Messiah's coming. In doing so, we can experience profound joy—a joy rooted in the knowledge that God faithfully keeps His promises. This joy fills our hearts as we eagerly await the advent of the Lord, embracing the anticipation and hope that characterize this season.

## Reflection Point:

Embrace the joy that God provides, understanding that the efforts you've invested will yield something greater, even when facing challenges that make quitting seem easier. How can you find joy today, knowing that something remarkable is being forged within you?

Anticipated presence can bring immediate joy. Just the thought that I will soon be with my laughing grandchildren, that my whole family will gather for a wonderful meal, and that I will play golf with my sons-in-law. The anticipated presence of being together fills my heart with wondrous and joyful anticipation. How much more exciting to think that soon, and very soon, we are going to see the King; that all sorrow, pain, confusion, and most importantly, separation will be gone. Anticipating His presence fills me with overwhelming joy in the here and now.



See, I will create

new heavens and a new earth.

The former things will not be remembered,  
nor will they come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever  
in what I will create,

for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight  
and its people a joy.

I will rejoice over Jerusalem

and take delight in my people;

the sound of weeping and of crying  
will be heard in it no more.

—Isaiah 65:17-19, NIV

The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.

—John 3:29-30, NIV

# Love



DAY 5



# Love

In this culminating theme of Advent, we delve into the profound promise that God bestows upon David and his lineage. God enters into a covenant with David, vowing that one of his descendants will establish an everlasting kingdom and bear the title of God's own Son.

God's love for David serves as a reflection of His love for the entire nation of Israel, and His love for Israel mirrors His boundless love for all of humanity. A pivotal moment unfolds when the Babylonian empire conquers Israel over five centuries before the era of Jesus, causing the lineage of David to lose its earthly kingdom.

During their exile, the people of God clung to the promise made to David, contemplating whether and when God would fulfill this pledge and restore His Kingdom and King for all eternity. Even upon the return of the Jewish people to their homeland, they endured foreign occupation—from Persia to Greece to Rome—all while pondering and eagerly awaiting the fulfillment of God's promise. For, if God's promise remains unfulfilled, then His love, not only for David and Israel but also for the entire world, might be called into question.

Then, one extraordinary day, an angelic visitation descends upon a humble Nazarene girl named Mary. The angel proclaims that the time has come for the son of David, who is also the Son of God, to be born. He will usher in an everlasting kingdom.

## Reflection Point:

Just as you will give and receive Christmas gifts, consider how you can also share the gift of Jesus with those who may not yet know Him during this Advent season. Share the light of Christ's love with others through your actions and words. Pray for children, youth, and families worldwide to experience the love of Christ.

Mary serves as a poignant symbol, representing the collective anticipation of the people of Israel. She carries within her womb the hope of Israel, the promised child, the Messiah. God's promise is realized; His love remains steadfast, and we, like Mary, must patiently await the advent of that promised time.

During the Advent season, we align ourselves with Mary's expectant waiting and trust in God's unwavering love. It is a season of anticipation and hope, as we believe that God's love, as exemplified in the birth of Jesus, transcends time and fills our lives with profound and enduring love.

SCRIPTURES: 2 SAMUEL 7:15-17; PSALM 132:10-12;  
LUKE 1:32-33

“But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.

—2 Samuel 7:15-17, NIV

For the sake of your servant David,  
do not reject your anointed one.  
The Lord swore an oath to David,  
a sure oath he will not revoke:  
“One of your own descendants  
I will place on your throne.  
If your sons keep my covenant  
and the statutes I teach them,  
then their sons will sit  
on your throne for ever and ever.

—Psalm 132:10-12, NIV

SCRIPTURES: 2 SAMUEL 7:15-17; PSALM 132:10-12;  
LUKE 1:32-33

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.

—Luke 1:32, NIV



# Final Thoughts

Christmas is about a person, and Advent is a time to celebrate the breaking of chains and the freedom found in Jesus Christ, our Emmanuel.

Luke 2:11 tells us, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (ESV). Matthew 1:21 reminds us, “She shall bring forth a son, and you thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (KJV).

When the weight of guilt and the burden of your actions bear down on you, when self-punishment threatens to consume your thoughts, remember that Jesus has already acted on your behalf, lifting the heavy load of punishment from your shoulders!

Christmas and the birth of Jesus naturally lead us to Easter. His death and resurrection have permanently removed fear, guilt, shame, and punishment, making us whole!

When you can truly accept this greatest of Christmas gifts, you become a new creation in Christ Jesus our Lord. You stop viewing yourself as a broken vessel and recognize that because of Him, you are made whole and royal. “We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10, NIV).

Even the greatest gifts of this world are incomplete without a deep understanding of Christmas. Jesus offers us an opportunity to reflect on His coming during Advent, reminding us that He is with us and working through us to transform our lives and the lives of others.

As we observe Advent in our own lives, may we also continue to pray for the children and youth of the world as millions of them encounter the transformative power of God and His Word this season.

# Additional Resources

**Fleming Rutledge on Living in Advent Time:** Rutledge is a theologian and gifted preacher who has some rich reflections on the Advent season. In particular, in this video, she focuses on what it means for Christians to live within the already-not-yet tension of God's work in the world.

[Link](#)

**Robert Barron on the Three Comings of Christ:** Bishop Robert Barron offers powerful reflections on how Advent joins together the three comings of Jesus—past, present, and future.

[Link](#)

**Bible Project Advent Word Studies:** Four short animated videos include some helpful information on how the Bible uses the four key terms of the Advent season: hope, peace, joy, and love.

[Link](#)







## About Rob Hoskins

Dr. Rob Hoskins is president of OneHope, a global ministry committed to engaging every child in the world with God's Word. OneHope has already reached more than 2 billion children and youth worldwide through partnerships with local churches.

Rob serves as the senior advisor to the World Evangelical Alliance, is on the Strategy Working Group for the Lausanne Movement, and is the recipient of John C. Maxwell's EQUIP Leadership Award. He also holds a bachelor's in cultural anthropology from Vanguard University, a Master's of Theology from Evangelical Theological Seminary, a Doctor of Divinity for distinguished service in spiritual leadership from Oral Roberts University, and a Doctor of Ministry in world missions and cross-cultural studies from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Rob is the author of various books, including *Hope Delivered*, *Reimagine Mission*, and *Change Your World* (which he co-wrote with Maxwell). He currently invests in training and teaching Christian global leaders through Southeastern University's Doctor of Missiology program.

Rob and his wife, Kim, have two married daughters and three grandchildren. Rob and Kim are committed to building young leaders and serving great leaders.

## About OneHope

OneHope helps children and youth worldwide engage with God's Word. Our vision is for every child and youth in every generation to encounter Jesus through His Word. We believe the life-changing narrative of the Good News brings hope and has the power to affect destinies. We create research-based, contextualized Scripture engagement programs and work alongside the global Church to share them with young people. Through OneHope's diverse partnerships, more than 2 billion children have received God's Word since 1987. To learn more, visit [OneHope.net](https://www.onehope.net).

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