



Advent Devotional

*Messages of Christmas
anticipation and reflection*

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Introduction

If you were raised in a Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, or other mainline denomination you undoubtedly celebrated **Advent**: the four weeks before Christmas. It's a time to reflect on the prophecies, God's promises of the coming of the Messiah, **The Promised One**. We may think when mankind fell into sin in the Garden of Eden God needed Plan B: He didn't. The prophecies show He was already prepared to rescue mankind from sin, death, and the devil, not discarding His original plan: In God's mind there was no Plan B.

... the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

Revelation 13:8b NIV

From God's perspective, He'd already completed the Plan, it was a finished work in the spiritual world that needed to be played out in the natural world; the **Lamb of God** would need to die a physical death. The prophecies of the coming Messiah, meaning Anointed One sent from the Father, assured God's people that He hadn't forgotten them; it was a done deal in His mind.

Let's celebrate together the Advent of our Lord throughout this season with a Scripture reading, short message, prayer, and song suggestion every day of December until Christmas Eve: December 24. We'll prepare our hearts together to '*let earth receive her King*'.

**If you're reading this on paper, go to YouTube and search for the song suggestion; if you're reading digitally then simply click on the link.*

Day 1

God is not man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that He should change His mind. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not fulfill it? Numbers 23:19 ESV

The word 'advent' comes from a Latin word meaning coming, arrival, or appearing. When we talk about **Advent** we usually think about Christmas, however, it's clear that our Fathers in the faith, the early church, meant **Advent** to include both the first and second coming of Jesus Christ. In both times of waiting we're expectant and anticipating the celebrations, but in this devotional I want to *combine* those expectations: He not only experienced a first advent, but will experience a second advent with even more bravado ... and we'll be with Him.

There's evidence that by the 4th century Christmas was given a set date, therefore, a time of prayer, reflection, and anticipation was given this name: **Advent**. Our opening verse reminds us that God isn't like us, He doesn't lie, not even a little, and He doesn't change His mind. If He really said it, which He did, He'll be sure to accomplish it. His Word is true and He's faithful to fulfill every prophecy He spoke.

We'll spend some time on the ancient prophecies of the first advent of Christ, and allow God's Word to prepare our hearts to make Christmas more meaningful as the Spirit expands our understanding of Scripture. Those prophecies bring the hope of eternal life in a declining world. If God said it, He'll do it, as our opening verse teaches. Remember, we celebrate His first coming, but also His second in these devotional readings, allowing His Spirit to give us a renewed sense of His Presence and encouraging us in our daily life.

Come, Holy Spirit, and renew my mind as I prepare for Your first coming, remembering and expecting that You're coming again. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *O Holy Night*, by Sandi Patty:
<https://youtu.be/gH6v8i2YkMo?si=Ipt3ArZHAQUjEnAO>
Day 2

How great are His signs, how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endures from generation to generation. Daniel 4:3 ESV

Prophecies are *signs* or evidence that point us in the right direction. We see signs every day: stop, yield, merge, turn right or left and our destination is safer and easier to reach. In the Bible, prophecies are those *signs* eventually proving to God's people that His promises were true. Even when times are hard in their lives, the ancient prophecies gave them reassurance that God hadn't discarded Plan A and He'd still rescue them. Should Christians care about Old Testament prophecies? Well, are you suffering today in any way? Do you need words of hope and encouragement that Jesus is coming to rescue us again?

Christians today await the **advent**, or coming of Jesus Christ a second time. Life can be difficult, but His Word gives us **signs** and evidence that He'll return and set up a new Kingdom where we'll rule and reign with Him. Great signs and wonders, as Daniel wrote, are ahead pointing us to His everlasting dominion, the Kingdom of God, for all generations. I hope that truth brings you great hope and more trust in the Lord as you walk through this season of Advent with a renewed sense of assurance. God's got this. If He fulfilled the prophecies the first time, which are proven, He'll fulfill them again.

He came as a human child the *first* time, but He'll return as the King of kings the second time. His *first* advent was as a suffering servant, however, His second advent will be that of Warrior and King descending to this earth in all His glory. What a contrast!

Lord, help me to understand and remember that You always point me in the right direction when I ask. I know there are better days ahead because of Your promises. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *Ancient Words*, by Michael W. Smith:
<https://youtu.be/ouTgX9hcwk4?si=RlnB6etBJpW2F18K>
Day 3

And I will put enmity (hatred) between you (Satan) and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He (Messiah) will crush your head (Satan), and you will strike His (Messiah) heel. Genesis 3:15 NIV

This is the first prophecy in the Bible. God wanted us to be clear right from the beginning that **One** is coming who'll destroy Satan's power and authority; he also hates God's image bearers. We are a reminder of his defeat. Messiah will be born of a woman (physical) and of God (spiritual), therefore, those who believe in Him will also become sons and daughters of God. That's you and me. We live in two worlds as well: the spiritual and the physical ones. Jesus fulfilled that prophecy in both worlds and when we're born again we join Him in that victory.

It's no wonder we sing, "*Joy to the world, the Lord is come; let earth receive her King!*" When Jesus was born into our world it was as the king of the Jews, but when He returns it will be as the King of all kings, consequently, we'll continue to sing of that joy, the hallelujah, experiencing the second advent of our Savior.

We're looking at prophecies to help us understand the 'big picture' of Scripture, the past and the future. It reassures us in this in-between time in which we live, that our lives are an example to the world of the love and mercy of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If you've listened to the masterpiece of Handel's *Messiah* you'll find that he and Charles Jennens (who wrote the lyrics) understood that 'big picture' of prophecy since it summarizes the ancient words by putting them to music.

Lord, help me understand in a new way that You took my punishment on the cross and You're returning as King for all eternity. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *Hallelujah Chorus* by the Tabernacle Choir:
<https://youtu.be/BBZ7AfZR9xs?si=UKd76uSp4Ezh5akT>

Day 4

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.
Isaiah 7:14 ESV

This prophet or messenger of God told the people that the Lord Himself will choose a virgin-woman to bear the Son of God: a miraculous sign of God's faithfulness. ***Immanuel***, meaning God's presence is among us, would be the fulfillment of their expectation of deliverance and love. When that occurred in the village of Nazareth did they recognize God's promise? Not at first.

During Advent many churches display a circular wreath of evergreen and four candles, lighting one each week. The picture is of God's constant love and mercy (evergreen) giving increasing light during this season. It brings us great comfort regardless of what's happening around us, knowing that God is with us; He'll never leave or forsake us and He's coming back to set up His final kingdom. He invites you into His presence every day in order to fill you with all you need to live the victorious life He died to give you.

Remember, the purpose of *signs* is to give you direction, in this case leading you into a deeper understanding of the first coming of Christ. Will there be more signs for His second coming? Absolutely, however, they may not be what you picture. The Book of Revelation is full of signs, symbolic pictures of what we're to expect, but our

world must hit rock bottom before He comes. The Apostle John began his series of visions in Chapter One telling us these things **must** take place. Hopefully we'll recognize the *signs* of His second coming and be prepared.

Immanuel, thank you for being with me every day giving me the direction I need in my life to walk closer with You. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *Emmanuel, God with us* by Chris Tomlin:
https://youtu.be/mt_xfOutfSQ?si=8i3E9g2jYUMW6boK

Day 5

And your house and your kingdom (David) shall be made sure forever before Me. Your throne shall be established forever.
2 Samuel 7:16 ESV

It wasn't coincidental that Jesus was born in Bethlehem at His first advent; it was the hometown of King David. You may have heard that Bethlehem means 'house of bread' and that's true, but it can also be translated '*place of war*'. Doesn't sound very Christmasy, I know, but when you're looking at both Advents, first and second appearances of Christ, then you can see why this village was chosen. David was a great military man, kingly warrior, as well as a good shepherd: so is Jesus. Our Savior was predestined to be born into the family line of this king as the Son of David: a sign of His eternal kingship.

It wasn't by accident that the Apostle John wrote the words of Jesus to the Church reminding them He was the 'root and descendent of David' (Rev. 22:16). Our Lord was born in a place of war, pointing us to the final war, when our King will appear a second time from heaven, riding a white charger, and dressed like a Warrior/King. His name is King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16), the same King of the Jews that was born in Bethlehem, lived in Nazareth, was sacrificed, and resurrected from Jerusalem: the ancient city of David.

During this first week of Advent join me reflecting on the value of prophecy and God's unfailing promises to us ... not just for the past but for the present and the future.

Holy Spirit, bring to my memory these wonderful words of encouragement from Your Word this week. You are same God today as You were yesterday. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *Same God* by Elevation Worship:
<https://youtu.be/LawxIZE9ePE?si=6smZb7rC7LoAmela>

Day 6

Ah, Lord God! It is You who have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for You. Jeremiah 32:17 ESV

This prophet got it; nothing is too difficult for God. Leaving heaven to be like us? Impregnating a virgin? Declaring where the Messiah would be born? Nothing is too hard for Him: If He said, He'll do it. It made no difference to God that it took 500 years; we're impatient in 5 days! But it was clear, every scripture promise would be fulfilled in their time as the angel told Zechariah, the priest, in Luke 1:20.

It wasn't long after that visitation that another person had received a prophecy: Mary. This one wouldn't take 500 years but only 9 months. She was the highly favored virgin chosen to carry the Son of God in her womb. Think about that. Do you know what her response was? She echoed Jeremiah, "*Nothing will be impossible with God.*" Interestingly, the Hebrew word for *nothing* actually means *no thing*, and the word for 'thing' can also mean word or matter. We could read it as God telling the prophet that no promised word from Him will fail. It may take a while, however, He is faithful to accomplish everything He said.

We can trust God's Word, His literal words, signs, and promises because He is faithful; He'll always do what He said He'll do. It's our job to find those promises in Scripture, read them, pray them, sing them, and declare them. He is faithful, He doesn't change His mind, or withdraw His promises. Be assured of those truths as you believe God for what's happening in your life during this first week of Advent.

Heavenly Father, strengthen me to be as confident as Mary, knowing that no promise is too hard for You. I trust You. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *Believe for It* by CeCe Winans:
<https://youtu.be/jx9SvluLybo?si=ENIK18bSJIOEicBg>

Day 7

For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; Isaiah 9:6a ESV

We've reflected on Gen. 3:15 encouraging us that a Child, born of a woman, was coming who'd crush Satan's authority, therefore, if God said it ... it was final. The prophet Samuel proclaimed He'd be of the royal bloodline of King David and Daniel wrote that great signs and wonders, eternal dominion, and an everlasting kingdom would come through Him. It seems impossible, but Jeremiah reiterated that nothing, no word from God is impossible.

We come now to another prophet who confirms the message: a physical Child will be born and He'll be a spiritual Son who's a gift to us from the Father. Remember, we live in two worlds: *physical and spiritual*. Jesus temporarily gave up His place and form in heaven (spiritual) to take on human form (physical). I hope this stretches your thinking because Advent is a time of reflection, growth, and understanding Scripture better; there's often a spiritual meaning behind a physical truth.

This second week of Advent we'll be focusing on Isaiah 9:6 and the meaning of His various names helping us identify who this Child and Son

really is. Most of you already know it's Jesus, but is there more to this unique One, *par excellence*, who came the first time and is coming again to set up His eternal kingdom?

It wasn't coincidental that Jesus quoted Is. 9:1-2, the previous verses, alerting people that He was the fulfillment of that passage bringing light to those in darkness and salvation to all who'll believe (Matt. 4:16). He is who He said He is. If we can believe that truth, then we can believe that's He's coming again with the same love and faithfulness.

Jesus, I believe, but help my unbelief when I let the circumstances of this life interfere with my faith. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *Immanuel* by Michael Card:
<https://youtu.be/mrmMQdkBPwY?si=SSgj6-K6RMTZotE4>

Day 8

*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** ... Isaiah 9:6a ESV*

We know from this verse that the government will be on the 'shoulder' of this coming Child; the shoulder pictures a place of burden, but also the rule and dominion of government. Right from the start during Herod's reign, Jesus' parents fled from the government of Israel to a place of safety in Egypt as a *physical* fulfillment of this passage. However, *spiritually*, He 'shouldered' our sin as a burden to the cross, then, in the final days, the world's government will be on His shoulder remaining under His dominion. Feeling stretched in understanding Scripture? It was one of my goals.

Our first name to consider is that He's *Wonderful*. He's a Redeemer who's full of signs and 'wonders', is He not? Whatever He did, as we read in the gospel accounts, was full of wonder or more accurately:

miracles. Jesus remains full of wonder today as we draw closer to Him recognizing His miracles every day. He's incomprehensible, unexplainable, and causes astonishment in our souls when He moves in our lives.

Knowing our Savior as Wonderful reminds us that nothing, no thing, is impossible for Him. No burdens, financial, health, relationships, family, or friends, is too difficult for Him because He's full of wonders. He'll move supernaturally in your life when the time is right just like the timing of the miracle conception, the miracles in His ministry, the miraculous resurrection, and finally the miracle of His Return. Timing is everything.

Wonderful One, as Your birth was a miracle, I believe You have miracles awaiting us every day. Help me to recognize and appreciate them giving You the glory. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *Wonderful One*, by Paul Wilbur:
<https://youtu.be/Z304kr49B2A?si=ykEsupRSQGIrJ-sg>
Day 9

*... and His name shall be called Wonderful, **Counselor**, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6b ESV*

Many people recognize the need for some type of counseling or trusted advice to help them when they're confused or discouraged. There's no shame in that; it's wisdom. However, this passage reminds us that the most trustworthy advisor is Jesus, and specifically, the **Holy Spirit**. Jesus told His disciples that after He was gone He'd send the Spirit (John 14:16-17), who'd be another Counselor, Helper, or Comforter: all aspects of the same word.

Another character trait of the Holy Spirit who's a Counselor is that of a divine *Defense Attorney*. He'll represent you, stand up for you, speak for you, make your case, and walk alongside you through any process. He promises to help you devise a plan, and then lead you

into victory in that situation. As our Senior Advisor when we're unsure of a decision or perspective He'll help clear things up for us. That kind of support is just what we need and this passage promises us that support system in Christ.

During Advent it's a great time to appreciate once again the divine Plan of our *Counselor*, even a strategy, for our salvation. He sent His Son from heaven to take our place on the cross giving us the free gift of forgiveness, but that's not all. The next step in His strategy for our eternal life will be that inaugural day when the trumpet sounds, the sky opens up, and He rides in on the clouds. Oh, what a Plan, oh, what a Planner!

Spirit of Christ, thank You for being a Counselor that I can trust. Clearly show me Your plan and the steps to follow as I make decisions in my life. I promise to listen to the counsel of the Lord. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *Almost There*, by Michael W. Smith, featuring Amy Grant: https://youtu.be/nEwTXMLy-1E?si=in_Er3GKBuaD8yK9

Day 10

*... and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, **Mighty God**, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6b ESV*

One of my favorite names for God is ***El Gibbor***: Mighty God. I enjoy calling Him that name because Satan can hear me and know that I'm sure of God's power available to me. Even if I don't feel very powerful at that moment, I can call out to our ***Mighty God*** and His power overrides my fears or worries. He's our Champion, the only One who can overcome any obstacle that tries to rob me of the victorious life He died to give me.

Do you feel like you're in a battle today? Warring for your marriage, children, finances, job or reputation, you name it, Jesus, has the prevailing strength to push you over the finish line. When we confess our sins and receive His forgiveness we're given the gift of the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Trinity, God Himself, supernaturally lives in us ready to infuse us with power to overcome. We simply have to ask.

As we prepare for all the Christmas celebrations and activities let's reflect on His character that promises *power* and *strength* in our time of need. We're not only waiting to celebrate His first coming as the Child and Son born in Bethlehem, but also as the soon and coming King of the Universe returning with all might and power to put an end to Satan and his cohorts. You can't have one without the other, so let's join our hearts in thankfulness of this time called Advent and experience Him each day in renewed strength.

Mighty God, thank You for accepting the mission of being made man in order to rescue me from sin, death, and the devil. Help me today to remember that I have Your power in me, all I need for victory through Your Spirit. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *Christmas Day* by Chris Tomlin:
<https://youtu.be/FDZNnjqpAoM?si=7k87OG4onEn9FS60>
Day 11

*... and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, **Everlasting Father**, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6b ESV*

It's hard to believe that this prophet wrote to God's people concerning the advent of Messiah more than 700 years before He'd appear. It's no wonder their faith weakened; our nation isn't even 300 years old and we're impatient! Yet that's the purpose of the ancient prophecies; now, as believers, we remain in the posture of waiting His second advent.

There's a real sense of tenderness when you read that the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, has parental qualities. He's called an eternal **Father**, the parent who's entrusted with loving and caring, but also teaching, guidance, and instruction. Being a father means He wants what's best for us, as most fathers do, and will go to great lengths to ensure a positive outcome. Sometimes we view Jesus as our powerful God, but, at other times, as our loving and nurturing Father.

It can be confusing when we consider the Trinity too narrowly; Father, Son, and Spirit, because they are all equally God. Their attributes are seen in their names helping us in every area of our life where we need Him. Jesus was the Son of God, but He's also the **Everlasting Father** who'll appear again with all of the love and care of a good parent ready to begin a new life, in a new place, with a new name, a new song, I think you get the picture. As Jesus spent time with His Father, we can spend time with both of them knowing they'll guide us into a full life, the hope of all parents.

Heavenly Father, I admit that I need Your guidance and love more today than ever. Help me remember this Christmas season that You love me more than any natural father ever could. Amen

Youtube Song Selection- *Sweet Christmas Birth* by Brian Barrett:
<https://youtu.be/h506CQExvcc?si=TkHDEfsfMvZjMiGR>

Day 12

*... and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**. Isaiah 9:6b ESV*

When you're in trouble, whether in a nation or a family, it's reassuring to remember that you have a **Prince**, a Commander in Chief, who's reigning supreme over your circumstances. Even if you're not in any dire straits at the moment, given time, you will be because you have an enemy working against you. He's your adversary, but he's defeated.

Jesus' name is **Prince of Peace** due to the truth that He came the first time to offer Himself as a sacrifice for your sin; that means you have *shalom*, or wholeness in Christ. He fought the heavenly battle for your soul, and now His desire is that you live in that *shalom*-peace every day. Biblically, peace is not simply tranquility, although it is, it's also experiencing wholeness in your body, soul, and finally, and most importantly, in your spirit. Health is vital (body), emotions in check is crucial (soul), and experiencing life in Christ (spirit) is essential.

Sometimes it's hard to believe that the newborn baby we celebrate this Christmas is also the Sovereign, the King, and the Prince ruling with justice over the world. However, that truth remains secure; you just have to believe it. As you remain in that posture of waiting, remembering He's returning, the second advent, He'll prove to the entire world He's the King of kings and Lord of lords as He takes His place in the renewed kingdom. When you sing '**O come, O come, Immanuel**' this advent season keep in mind that you're inviting His return and anxiously waiting for it.

Prince of Peace, come into my life and reign supremely over my circumstances; I trust You to give me wholeness in every area. You give me victory in my weakness and comfort in my troubles. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*, by Naomi Raine: <https://youtu.be/MtOi0IP0DCo?si=HgF9RuYUxDYBFGS0>
Day 13

*His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of His ancestor David for **all eternity**. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen! Isaiah 9:7 NLT*

Last week was spent focused on one verse helping you get to know Jesus better, however, let's not miss the next, impactful verse! It

prophecies that His eternal kingdom, what Jesus often referred to as the Kingdom of God, would be life that's whole, fair, and just or right. In other words, the Messiah's first coming opened the way for His second. He first had to wipe sin away and now the promise remains active for life in Him.

Why would God, Father, Son, and Spirit go to such extremes for His image bearers who have brought such turmoil into the world from the beginning? The last line gives us the answer: **love**. His fiery, passionate, jealous, faithful love that cannot be quenched. Isaiah, who's considered the 'prince of the prophets' was given these words from God to His people showing them that One was coming who'd defeat our enemy and offer this new life 'in Him'. There's the connection: the Child born, the Son given, the King that rules for eternity.

These ancient words can sometimes seem obscure, vague, or even mysterious, but God's Word never fails to be fulfilled, even when we don't totally understand them. This Advent season let's work through these scriptures and receive more understanding as we patiently wait for our Christmas celebrations and traditions keeping in mind that there's more to come.

Eternal King, my desire is for You to help me, in the midst of Christmas preparations, to remember that it was only the beginning of life in Christ. Amen

YouTube Song Suggestion- *Born That We May Have Life*, by Chris Tomlin: https://youtu.be/iLjN6uWJVDU?si=w35_g-ShOiO9k3h
Day 14

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from His roots shall bear fruit. Isaiah 11:1 ESV

If you've read the Bible much you know that it's full of metaphors, figurative language, or word-pictures to help us understand God and

His Plan better. Our focus verse for today uses the picture of *trees*. Read it again: shoot, stump, branch, roots, and fruit.

This analogy will take some unpacking to get its full meaning since it points to Jesus. First of all, roots are the life source of a tree and when they're deep the tree grows tall and full producing those apples and oranges we love to eat. Jesus' roots, his bloodline, is Jesse, the father of King David. Ahhhh, the picture unfolds. Out of this tree stump (Jesse) Isaiah prophesied that there'll be a shoot that becomes a branch. The shoot is the small, infant-like growth (get it?) that produces the branch, stay with me, from where the fruit hangs. Back in Is. 4:2 God already promised a **Branch** and now it's confirmed.

Interestingly, the word for branch is *natzar*, where get Nazareth, is where Jesus grew up. That wasn't a coincidence since He offers us a fruitful life with purpose and destiny when we follow Him. Jesus came the first time as an infant-child, a sprout, and will return, as I've consistently repeated, as a King. The Apostle John closes his end-time vision reminding us that Jesus is the Root and Descendant of David and we are to invite Him to come back: **Advent**. Remind yourself today that He will bring sweet, juicy fruit in your life as you follow Him.

Jesus, cause fruit to grow in my life as I submit to Your plan and purpose. You are my life-source and I trust You. Amen

YouTube Song Suggestion- *Here Comes Heaven*, by Elevation Worship: <https://youtu.be/cjdEBdNfCd4?si=ZNWtCTzIH3C389JI>

Day 15

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation. Isaiah 12:2 ESV

You know the story, a virgin fiancée gets pregnant by the Holy Spirit, the fiancé is humiliated, then supernaturally visited in his dream by an angel, and instructed to proceed with the wedding. That's not all, this baby is to be named **Jesus**, in Hebrew it's **Yeshua**, meaning that the purpose of this child will be to bring salvation or rescue and deliverance from sin. I can just hear Joseph, "Wait ... what?"

The truth is that hundreds of years earlier this promise was made to God's people: I will be your **Savior** and you will say so. I had to wonder how often I 'say so', how often I verbalize to God, as the Psalmist, that I trust Him to be my Rescuer and Deliverer, my strength and song, and then He 'becomes' **Yeshua** to me: salvation. When I'm suffering, enduring pain or confusion, unable to make sense of my life, do I trust Him enough to ask Him for deliverance and rescue?

There'll be a time when all suffering will vanish and the choirs of heaven roar with the announcement that the marriage of the Lamb and His bride has come: the Second Advent will arrive and we'll be ready. That readiness for His return is the cleansing of our sin, our holiness in His Presence, and our righteous deeds done in His name. May we continue in His mission to represent Him well to the world as we declare Him as our salvation: **Jesus, the Messiah**.

Jesus, my Salvation, I want to 'say so' when the opportunity presents itself. Help me to be bold and brave declaring You to be my Rescuer and Savior so people will take notice and You receive the glory. Amen

YouTube Song Suggestion- *While You Were Sleeping*, by Casting Crowns: <https://youtu.be/ogS5n0QtSm0?si=vHX9sTHWLSQYaGns>

Day 16

And now the Lord speaks— the One who formed Me in My mother's womb to be His Servant, who commissioned Me to bring Israel back to Him. The Lord has honored Me, and My God has given Me strength. He says, "You will do more than restore the people of Israel to Me. I will make You a light to the Gentiles, and You will bring My salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:5-6 NLT

There are numerous people in the Bible who were singled out for a divine purpose from God: for example, Jeremiah, John the Baptizer, and Paul. They had a distinctive mission from God and Jesus is no different. He was to be the Servant of the LORD, doing what His Father asked Him to do: bring Israel back to Him and open the way for Gentiles to be saved. That's you and me unless you're Jewish.

That's quite a responsibility and yet He's promised supernatural strength to complete His assignment. Jesus was the prophesied Light to the world given to illuminate hearts to recognize their need for a Savior, repent, be forgiven, and finally to live a full and meaningful life until He returns and sets up the new Kingdom.

Advent is a time to reflect on your mission or purpose in life as God sees it. He not only has only good planned for you, He has the strength you need to cross the finish line. As God's Servant, Jesus continuously sought His Father's will, so should we.

Servant of the Lord, I want to find and complete Your mission for me as Your servant, but I admit I need Your help and strength. If Jesus needed it, how much more do I? Thank you in advance for answering my prayer. Amen

YouTube Song Suggestion- *Light of the World*, by We the Kingdom:
https://youtu.be/lZeJKsko14E?si=Yu_qt6foR8u59IMD

Day 17

My Servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about His appearance, nothing to attract us to Him. Isaiah 53:2 NLT

This entire chapter is the life of Christ in a nutshell. Beginning with His early life, He was nothing special on the outside, but inside He was God in human flesh. The chapter goes on to tell of His death in great detail, however, let's not miss this imagery referring to His childhood.

Jesus grew up just like any other Jewish boy, circumcised on the eighth day, observing all the feasts, undoubtedly making His *bar mitzvah*, and learning Torah: the Bible. And yet He was the Son of God sent to this world to save it; it seems strange and yet it's true.

We grow up as well, some in Christian homes and some not, we may not look like anything special on the outside, but God knows what He's put on the inside. He has a plan for you, it's not based on your IQ, sports ability, attractiveness, or even successes; it's what's in your heart. It's your desire to please Him, obey Him, trust Him, and not rely on anything outside of Him. He'll not be returning in the form of a Servant, but in the majesty of a King. As you 'grow up' in His Presence, spending time with the King, inquire about your destiny and watch as He unfolds it at just the right time and in just the right way.

King of kings, I humbly come asking for You to reveal my destiny as You've planned it. Whatever Your plan is, I want to fulfill it with all my heart not relying on anything other than You. Amen

YouTube Song Suggestion- *Strange Way to Save the World*, by 4HIM: https://youtu.be/YBCVIJBB7o4?si=ll4_zqLXPcWme6hQ

Day 18

I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' to a nation that was not called by My name. Isaiah 65:1 ESV

As we close this third week of Advent I hope you feel you've grown in understanding and appreciation of Bible prophecy. We've walked through several Isaiah passages and come to his last couple of messages from God. Apparently the LORD wants us to reflect again on Jesus, His only Son, coming the first time to earth to those who weren't asking, seeking, or calling on His name, and yet He's ready.

Jesus didn't give up His place in heaven because there was any good reason; He did it out of mercy and grace. Mercy is God *keeping* from us what we deserve: punishment for sin. Grace, on the other hand, is *giving* undeserved favor and we definitely don't deserve His salvation. There's nothing we can do that's good enough for a holy God, our sin kept us from His Presence, however, He still chose to descend to this earth for one reason: Love for us.

Allow this season of Advent to remind you of the reason He came to an undeserving people, why He was ready, as the passage says, to go to the cross on your behalf. He's returning to set up the final Kingdom of God; He's ready. His unique kind of love was richly poured out for the purpose of returning us to Eden to live with Him for eternity; I think He's still saying to His Father, "*Here I am.*"

Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me to the end, showing me mercy, and grace when I don't deserve it. Show me now how to demonstrate Your mercy, grace, and love to others, here I am, Lord. Amen

Youtube Song Suggestion- *We are the Reason*, by Avalon:
<https://youtu.be/cMhajmOBr0c?si=F5fOb6XKP7YuSf9E>

Day 19

I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to Me, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You. Psalm 2:7 ESV

We'll be spending this last week of Advent in the Psalms. They're written for a variety of reasons: worship, comfort, encouragement, warning, but also prophecy. This Psalmist received a message from the Lord and he must speak it. Remember, prophecy can be obscure, vague, and mysterious if you don't understand God's transcendence. He's quite different from us, in another realm we call the 'upper story', and yet He desires us to understand Him.

Since God is outside of time He could speak as the Father. We could say, "The Father said to the Son." He decreed these words as if they were **today**, not our today, but His. Before time began the Trinity had fellowship in heaven deciding the Son would leave for a time, complete His assignment, and return to heaven. This forces us to think outside our box and realize the incarnation, God becoming flesh and blood, was decreed *before* He'd created the world.

What about you? Do you have a mission God has been dropping into your heart, but you haven't done anything about it yet? Maybe your 'today' has arrived and as the Son of God accepted His mission, will you accept yours? It may be a simple conversation, a commitment to serve in a ministry in or outside your church, or even develop a new ministry. During this season of Advent, remembering the first coming of Christ, maybe it's time to get serious about serving. Rev. 19:8 declares our clothing will be our righteous deeds so, let's get moving!

Son of God, thank You for accepting Your assignment to serve and now I desire to accept mine as well. Amen

YouTube Song Suggestion- *Breath of Heaven*, by Amy Grant with a compilation of scenes from *The Nativity Story*:

https://youtu.be/TOQRtYYERGo?si=2N_uzHVzXSHYIB-6

Day 20

*Yet You are He who took Me from the womb; You made Me **trust** You at My mother's breasts. On You was I cast from My birth, and from My mother's womb You have been My God. Psalm 22:9-10 ESV*

That's a lot of pronouns: you, he, me, my ... so, who's speaking and who's he speaking to? We know David wrote this Psalm, the family from whom the Messiah would come, and the Spirit breathed these words into his heart to prophesy this entire Psalm. It depicts the suffering of Jesus from beginning to end, and yet we find this vague reference to His birth.

When Jesus left His throne to come to earth, known as Christmas, it was in a natural or physical way. A woman becomes pregnant, the baby is delivered, and *trust* begins. It's no different for us, however, we have to develop our trust in God. In a spiritual way we learn to trust Him in the same way we learned to trust our mother to feed us; she was our provider and now God takes that role.

Jesus learned to trust his earthly parents and yet never lost sight of His mission: He was the Promised One. He who would defeat our enemy, crush his head or authority, and purchase our salvation with His own blood. You can trust Him to forgive you, to guide you, empower you, and to bring you into your final destiny in Him. You won't be sitting around playing a harp in heaven, but you'll have purpose in His eternal Kingdom. Let faith arise in your heart these last

few days before Christmas depending on Him to meet your every need; He's the only one who can.

Jesus, Promised One, breathe new life into my heart as I trust You to provide for me and also for my family. Amen

YouTube Song Suggestion- *Noel*, by Lauren Daigle:
<https://youtu.be/aBZ6Lqx1OHk?si=LHOBWNxtgsYPsLfk>

Day 21

*Then I said, "Behold, I have **come**; in the scroll of the book it is written of Me." Psalm 40:7 ESV*

Here we have King David again, writing God's words for us to learn and grow in our faith. Who's speaking? It's Jesus, before He actually came to earth, declaring that the Bible speaks about Him from beginning to end. His first coming, which we're celebrating this Advent, and His second coming that we're eagerly anticipating in that posture of waiting.

How do I know it's Jesus? Because in the book of Hebrews (10:7) the writer quotes this Psalm and reassures us that Christ said it and finishes the passage: *I delight to do Your will*. I love it when the Bible interprets itself. The Son of God and Son of Man came into the world to save it from God's wrath due to sin. It's not that you sin, it's that you were born into sin: it's your first nature. Thankfully, since Christ came you've been given the offer of forgiveness, creating a second nature; you are born a second time: *born again*.

The Bible foresees Jesus in every book, it's a Messianic thread, that's woven throughout and God's desire is that we see Him when we read it. It was God's will that His one and only Son suffer in our place and still be able to say, *"I delight to do Your will."* Only a passionate,

loving Lord would be able to say that about us, His Bride, as He waits for that final lifting of the veil in the heavens and returns to earth to gather us back to Himself.

Lord Jesus, thank You for the privilege of receiving Your forgiveness and experiencing new life in You. I'm eagerly waiting to be reunited with You at Your return. Amen

YouTube Song Suggestion- *All is Well*, by Carrie Underwood and Michael W. Smith: <https://youtu.be/66kZYVVzjow?si=gSjt-tLR4eHqqX2c>

Day 22

*He shall cry to Me, You are My Father, My God, and the Rock of My salvation. 'And I will make Him the **firstborn**, the highest of the kings of the earth. Psalm 89:26-27 ESV*

Ethan, a worshipper and songwriter of the Bible, pens an amazing message from God. This prophecy shows us that Jesus the Messiah, is the Son of David, but also, and more importantly, the Son of God. The prophecy declares that Jesus will cry to His Father and the Father will make Him the firstborn. We know Jesus spoke to His Father in John 17:5 when He asked for the same glory He possessed in His presence that He had before the world existed. He also cried to His Father from the cross asking for forgiveness for those who tortured Him and then committed His Spirit at His death.

It should be obvious by now that Jesus was the firstborn, of the Father and of the dead; He said so Himself as John relates in Rev. 1:5. This passage is one of the few times in Scripture where the connection is made between the first coming and the second since He isn't inaugurated as the highest of kings until His return. This

Advent we use our 'prophetic telescope' and look into the future when Jesus will be crowned The King of Glory.

It was for love that God endured our sinful ways as recorded throughout history and His steadfast or enduring love keeping the Plan moving forward. Our King is patiently waiting in heaven, spiritually alongside of His Bride, for **That Day** when the trumpet sounds and He's released.

My Father, My God, and My Rock help me today to continue renewing my faith as I wait for Your return.

YouTube Song Suggestion- *To See the King*, by Joyce Martin:
<https://youtu.be/JYJNi0aroYI?si=veNE-NsWtKI6MEBz>

Day 23

*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.
Psalm 90:2 ESV*

Moses is the author of this Psalm and apparently he's been reflecting on God's *eternal* character. In verse one he began with God's name, **Lord**; he's addressing this to Jesus. Moses led the people out of slavery, spent time in God's Presence for forty days on a mountain, and received the ability to write the first five books of the Old Testament: the **Torah**. He allowed his mind to travel back in time to receive the revelation that God is actually outside of time.

Jesus also prayed before going to the cross, "*Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.*" My hope is that your understanding and faith have increased this Advent season as you've read the ancient words God gave us in Scripture. Jesus, second Person of the Trinity, was in

heaven as *The Plan* was developed to create a world and a people as target for their love.

What will eternity be like? Well, we can be sure of one thing; it'll be fabulously good. Eternity past was good, eternity present is good, and eternity future will also be good ... very, very good. Many parables give us sneak preview of the Kingdom of God now, He considers us a treasure and an expensive pearl, a returning, wayward child He loves, and also, a bride. Later, a great banquet that He's prepared is ready and attendance is by invitation only; if you're a believer then you're invited (Luke 14:12-24). His second coming, unlike the first, will be an extravagant celebration!

Lord, You are my God; thank you for the invitation to the spend eternity with You. Amen

YouTube Song Suggestion- *Sweet Christmas Birth*, by Brian Barrett:
<https://youtu.be/h506CQExvcc?si=NEmx6PKwfy8g2fE6>

Day 24

Let this be recorded for future generations, so that a people not yet born will praise the Lord. Psalms 102:18 NLT

That's you, that's me, that's our family, and our future families that will celebrate the first coming of Christ and also the second. When the psalmist wrote these anointed words he was apparently thinking of all the people that are loved by God and will love Him in the future generations who experience His mercy and grace.

Many churches have Advent wreaths on display during this season encircled with evergreens and four candles reminding us of the circular aspect of faith: continuous life. We close this devotional today, Christmas Eve, remembering that from God's perspective eternal life is like a circular timeline; He began with us in a garden and He'll close out this current age in the same way (Rev. 22).

Our traditions are valuable to our families so let's be sure we understand them as they're passed along to the future generations. Jesus Christ came to this earth to rescue us and He's returning to close the circle and put us back on track for eternity. We're eternally grateful for this incredible plan we're privileged to participate in and celebrate our Savior's birth. At the same time, we're eternally grateful for the trustworthy words of Scripture written hundreds or thousands of years ago to give us the blessed assurance of Jesus leaving heaven once again to restore the dominion and rule we had with Him in the beginning.

Returning King, give me the opportunities to share with my family and friends the promise of eternal life with You. We eagerly await Your return to enjoy eternity together. Amen

YouTube Song Selection- *He Shall Reign Forevermore*, by Chris Tomlin: <https://youtu.be/NVN2bnjBICU?si=rEMIZ5fya0xRLUv>