

### Advent

Every year as a child, I waited for the advent of Christmas. For me, Christmas was the high water mark of the calendar year. I loved the lights, music, the anticipation of Christmas, and especially the gifts. The word Advent comes from the Latin *adventus*, simply meaning, “coming.” Advent began just outside the Garden of Eden, and from the moment Adam and Eve stepped out of perfection and walked into the darkness of the world we know, they needed a Savior. Advent is laced with rich overtones of waiting. We who are alive today await the Second Advent, when Christ will return and set things straight, but what about those who were waiting for the first advent (the coming of Messiah)? What would they have been waiting for? What would they have been anticipating? This week, we look together at what it was like to wait for the advent of Christ.

#### Monday – Simeon’s Song

1. Please read Luke 2:25-32. Put yourself in Simeon’s shoes. What thoughts and feelings are going through you as you take the Christ child, Jesus, into your arms?
2. Read his song again. Why do you suppose that Simeon erupted in song as opposed to some other form of expression?
3. What kind of song is this? How would you describe the song to someone else?

**Making it Personal** – If you are willing, try putting Simeon’s song to a tune and sing it to God.

#### Tuesday – Prepare the Way

*“The magnificence of Christ’s coming is matched only by the squalor of the broken world into which he chooses to be born: a lowly stable’s harsh textures, sounds, and smells.”* Paul Beckingham

1. Read Isaiah 40:1-11; a Messianic passage that those who were waiting would have been familiar with. How does Isaiah’s message of comfort relate to the coming of Messiah?
2. What kind of preparation was needed for the advent (coming) of Messiah?

**Digging Deeper** - Read Luke 3:1-6. How did John the Baptist help prepare people who had been waiting for Jesus’ coming?

#### Wednesday – I Am He

*“The Messiah has come, and he will bring freedom to long-imprisoned spirits, recovery of sight to sin-blinded eyes, release and pardon to sin-oppressed souls. The King has come, and in his kingdom the poor and those who mourn are blessed.”* Doris Evanson

1. Please read Isaiah 61:1-2; yet another passage, that those waiting, would have been familiar with. Now, read Luke 4:16-21. What were the emotions and thoughts of those who heard Jesus that day?
2. What is Jesus saying by reading from Isaiah 61? What benefits did Jesus the Messiah bring?

**Making it Personal** – In what ways have you benefited from the blessings that Jesus announced in Luke 4?

#### Thursday – Nations and Jesus

1. Please read Psalm 2:1-7 and Matthew 2:7-13. In what ways does Matthew help us to understand Ps. 2? Throughout history, since the time of Christ, kings and government leaders have opposed Christ or the message of Christ. What are some modern day examples?
2. Why is opposing Christ a losing proposition? How has history born this truth?

**Putting it into Practice** – Pray today for a part of the world that is opposing Christ by persecuting his church. For more information, visit Voice of the Martyrs at [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com).

#### Friday – A Christmas Song

*“...can we sing joyfully this Christmas as we are bombarded with news of violence? Nations are at the brink of war; travelers are at risk of terrorist attacks; our schools have been scenes of senseless violence. The psalmist, as it turns out is not unacquainted with violence. Ancient Israel was surrounded by enemies, was at times conquered and even taken captive into slavery. What particular, wonderful thing can the psalmist help us sing about this Christmas? None other than the revelation of God’s salvation, gained by his holy arm.”* Wan Phek How, speaking about Psalm 98

1. Please read Psalm 98.
2. Knowing that this Psalm refers to Messiah, how does its meaning change for you?

**Making it Personal** – As a response to the advent (coming) of Christ, rewrite all or part of Psalm 98 in your own words. If you are willing, sing it to the Lord.