

The word **advent** means “arrival, or presence.” For hundreds of years, believers have celebrated the advent, or arrival, of Jesus. We celebrate that He came as a baby in Bethlehem in order to take away the sins of mankind. We also look forward to the time He will come again in splendor to set up God’s kingdom on Earth.

The advent celebration begins four Sundays before Christmas Day. Each week, believers focus on a different characteristic of the Christian life. They are things that every heart longs for, but that can only be gained through faith in Jesus.



Day #1: Hope

When we use the word hope, we usually mean that we are wishing for something. We might say, “I hope you win your basketball game,” or “I hope I get that for Christmas.” These are things we would like, but they may or may not happen. When we open our Bible, we find a very different kind of hope.

When sin entered the world, all people were separated from God. But in grace and mercy, God promised that He would send a Savior (1 Peter 1:10-11). He would save people from the punishment of their sins (1 Peter 1:9). God’s people eagerly looked forward to the day that the Savior, or Messiah, would come. God instructed them to put their hope in Him.

+ *Israel, put your hope in the Lord, because the Lord's love never fails. He sets His people completely free. - Psalm 130:7*

This hope was not just a wish. It was **being sure** that this **WOULD** happen. The people who put their hope in the Lord knew **for certain** that God ALWAYS keeps His promises.

When the time was perfect, God kept His incredible promise by sending Jesus:

The Savior - yes, the Messiah, the Lord - has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! - Luke 2:11 NLT

God sent the Savior just as He promised. God’s people who hoped in His promise were not disappointed. Now, all people who believe in Jesus set their hope, their confidence, in His ability to take away their sin and give them new life. We know **for certain** that God will give new and everlasting life to everyone who believes in Jesus (John 3:16).

***** Is your hope in Jesus? If you have placed your trust in Jesus to take away your sins, you can **be sure** that your sins have been forgiven. You have been given new life in God’s eternal kingdom (Colossians 1:13, 1 John 5:13). Remember, our hope is **certain** because our hope is in a God that never fails!

Day #2: Peace

What is peace? There is peace that is the opposite of war. In our own homes, there is peace and quiet when no one is arguing. But there is even more to peace than the absence of conflict.

One definition of peace is harmony, agreement, or friendship between two people. When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, they had peace with God. They walked with Him and spent time with Him (Genesis 3:8a). But when Adam and Eve chose to sin by trusting Satan instead of God, the peace that they had with God was broken (Genesis 3:10). The Bible says every person has sinned (Romans 3:23), and every person has lost the peace that God wanted to have with him or her (Isaiah 57:21).

But, God promised to send a Savior to restore the peace between Himself and sinful people (Genesis 3:15). God fulfilled this promise when He sent His Son, Jesus. The prophet Isaiah called Jesus the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6). Everyone who puts their trust in Jesus is made right with God. Belief in Jesus is the only way for us to have peace with God.

+ *There is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. - Acts 10:36b NLT*

In addition, when Jesus was about to leave the Earth, He told His followers, “I am leaving you with a gift - peace of mind and heart.” (John 14:27a NLT) This peace is rest, harmony, safety, lack of fear, and unity with other believers (John 14: 27b, Ephesians 2:14).

***** Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” (Matthew 5:9) Everyone who follows Jesus should try to live at peace with those around them, and encourage other people to live peacefully. Discuss some situations you might face in which you can choose to be a peacemaker. The peace we show in our lives will point others to Jesus.

Day #3: Joy

List some things that make you happy. Your list may include playing with a puppy, getting a great grade at school, and opening presents on Christmas morning. These things are great! There is nothing wrong with them. But being **happy** is not the same as having true **joy**. Let’s look at the difference between the two.

Happiness easily comes and goes, depending on what is **happening** in our day. But joy is deep and lasting. Joy is gladness deep inside your heart - gladness way down in your soul that doesn’t go away. God’s word says the greatest joy comes from being with God. There is no greater delight than being with the almighty, loving Creator.

Day #3 continued:



*In Your presence there is **fullness of joy**.* - Psalm 16:11b ESV

Do you remember what the angel told the shepherds on the night Jesus was born?

*I bring you good news of **great joy**. It is for **all the people**.* - Luke 2:10b

Jesus came to bring joy to ALL people. One name for Jesus is Emmanuel, which means, "God with us." The very fact that Jesus, who is fully God, came to be with people brought joy to all who believed in Him.

And, even moreso, Jesus came to take away peoples' sin so they could be with God forever. Without Jesus' sacrifice, we would be separated from God, and without joy, forever. But when a person believes in Jesus, he is made right with God. He can experience the joy of being in God's kingdom, and God's presence, forever!



Sing the first verse of the familiar song, *Joy to the World*, remembering that the greatest joy is being with God. Thank Jesus that He made this joy possible for all people who believe in Him.

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.*

Day #4: Love

During the Christmas season, we celebrate God sending His Son to Earth. We decorate our homes and display nativity sets showing this amazing scene. This is a beautiful thing to celebrate, but sometimes we lose sight of WHY God sent Jesus. The familiar verse, John 3:16, gives us the reason clearly.



***God loved the world so much** that He gave His one and only Son. Anyone who believes in Him will not die but will have eternal life.* - John 3:16

When we read "God loved the **world**," this does not mean He loved planet Earth! God loved each and every **person** in the Earth so much that He was willing to give up His perfect, beloved Son. Have you ever thought about how much God loves you? He loves you enough to give up the one thing that was most precious to Him - His Son.

And when Jesus grew up, He had this to say: *No one has greater love than the one who gives his life for his friends.* - John 15:13

When the time was right, Jesus willingly laid down His life for you, because of His incredible love for you. Even before you were born, He knew you would one day need a Savior. He was willing to die for you.

Day #4 continued:

You may have seen a movie about a person who was willing to make a big sacrifice for another person. Perhaps the hero was even willing to die for another person. When we see a hero like that, something stirs inside of us. Secretly, we may even wish we could live such an exciting adventure.

Here is the amazing truth: The **REAL** King of kings and Lord of lords laid down His life for you! There is NO greater hero and there is NO greater love!



The Bible says that we are able to love others because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Is there someone whom you find difficult to love? Discuss one thing you can do to show love to that person this week. (Examples might be: offer to help him, say something kind to him.)

Day #5: Christ

We have seen that Jesus brought hope, peace, joy and love when He willingly stepped down from heaven, to come as a Baby in a manger. As believers, we also look forward to the time when Jesus will *return*. At that time, we will see that Jesus will once again show that He is the fulfillment of these four wonderful attributes:

HOPE God has promised that when Jesus comes again, all people who have put their faith in Him will be blessed and will live forever in God's presence (Daniel 12:1-13). This is the hope, the certainty, which all believers look forward to.



Put your hope completely in the grace that will be given to you when Jesus Christ returns. - 1 Peter 1:13b

PEACE When Jesus returns to Earth, He will set up an everlasting kingdom of peace (Isaiah 11:1-10).

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. - Isaiah 9:7a NLT

JOY God promised that when Jesus returns, all those who have lived for Him will be filled to overflowing with joy (1 Peter 4:13). We will even forget all the things that have ever made us sad (Isaiah 64:17-25).

Joy that lasts forever will be like beautiful crowns on their heads. They will be filled with gladness and joy. Sorrow and sighing will be gone. - Isaiah 35:10b

LOVE When Jesus returns, many things will pass away, but love will always remain (1 Corinthians 13:8-13).

Give thanks to the Lord, because He is good. His faithful love continues forever. - 1 Chronicles 16:34



The Christmas season is a time to celebrate the first time Jesus came to earth. Let it remind you that He is coming again! As we begin a new year, pray for the hope, peace, joy and love of Jesus to fill you, and overflow to others, so they will be drawn to God.