

## Lesson 11: Advent

*Please click twice to watch the video*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksHKrIaO1pI&t=30s>

The word *advent* which means “arrival” or “coming.” Beginning four Sundays before Christmas, Advent is celebrated as “both a commemoration of Christ’s first coming and an anticipation of His second coming”

When Jesus first came to earth as a baby in Bethlehem, it meant the Savior of the world had finally come. The God of the universe was taking the form of a flesh-and-blood person who would grow up to die on the cross for our sins.

The day Jesus was born was the initiation of God’s plan to save the world from sin. And when Jesus comes back again someday, He will defeat sin, death, and Satan once and for all. It’s this First Coming/Second Coming power-combo all rolled into one grand story that we celebrate during Advent Season!

Advent is a period of spiritual preparation in which many Christians make themselves ready for the coming, or birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Celebrating Advent typically involves a season of prayer, fasting, and repentance, followed by anticipation, hope, and joy.

Many Christians celebrate Advent not only by thanking God for Christ's first coming to Earth as a baby, but also for his presence among us today through the Holy Spirit, and in preparation and anticipation of his final coming at the end of the age.

Advent marks the beginning of the Church year.

Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, or the Sunday which falls closest to November 30, and lasts through Christmas Eve, or December 24. When Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday, it is the last or fourth Sunday of Advent. Thus, the actual season of Advent can last anywhere from 22-28 days.

Advent began sometime after the 4th century as a time of fasting and preparation for Epiphany, rather than in anticipation of Christmas. Epiphany celebrates the manifestation of Christ by remembering the visit of the wise men and, in some traditions, the Baptism of Jesus.

Later, in the 6th century, St. Gregory the Great was the first to associate this season of Advent with the coming of Christ. Originally it was not the coming of the Christ-child that was anticipated, but the Second Coming of Christ.

By the Middle Ages, four Sundays had become the standard length of the Advent season, with fasting and repentance during that time. The Church also extended the meaning of Advent to include the coming of Christ through his birth in Bethlehem, his future coming at the end of time, and his presence among us through the promised Holy Spirit.

## Themes of the Weeks of Advent

Each week of Advent represents our growing faith that Jesus is coming. It takes us on a journey from hope to celebration.

The **First Week of Advent** focuses on hope, with a special Sunday church service and prayers that fill our spirit with the hope that Christ will come to us.

The **Second Week of Advent** focuses on preparation; we are called to prepare for the coming of the Lord.

The **Third Week of Advent** is all about joy. It's known as Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete means "rejoice" in Latin.

The **Fourth Week of Advent** is focused on God's love as we prepare for the Good news.

## Symbols of Advent



### Advent Wreaths and Candles

The wreath is one of the first symbols of Advent that was brought into the home. Every aspect of the wreath has meaning:

Evergreens represent eternal life.

Laurel mean persecution and suffering.

Pine signifies immortality.

Cedar means strength and healing.

Holly's prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns.

Pine cones signify death and resurrection.

The circular construction represents the eternity of God, for He has no beginning or end.





The **Jesse tree** symbolizes Christ's family tree. It tells about Christ's ancestry through illustrations that represent the people, prophecy and events leading up to His birth. The Jesse tree is named after the father of King David and references Isaiah 11:1: "*A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse, a new shoot will grow from his roots.*"



**Nativity scenes** are beautiful depictions of Christ's birth, and can range from simple and homemade to priceless masterpieces. Nativities may honor the intimacy of just Mary, Jesus and Joseph at the manger, or depict a glorious celebration replete with angels, wise men, children and animals.

