



# THE PROMISED ONE

*Advent Readings from Christianity Today*

2022

*For to us a child is born . . .*

ISAIAH 9:6



**D**uring Advent, we prepare our hearts to celebrate the arrival of this child—the infant Jesus, laid in a manger, loved by Mary and Joseph, worshiped by shepherds and wise men. But Advent—which means “arrival”—invites us to prepare for much more than the holy night of his birth.

Throughout church history, Advent has been a season of anticipation. It began in the early centuries of Christianity as a penitential period in preparation for Epiphany—the celebration of Jesus’ appearance and the manifestation of his identity, which was also a day set aside for the baptism of new believers. Soon Advent began to focus on the anticipation of another appearance: the second coming of Christ. By the Middle Ages, the themes we tend to associate with Advent today had become part of the church’s observance, as Christians included celebratory anticipation of Christmas alongside their contemplation of Jesus’ return.

Each of these historical themes interweaves throughout Advent’s traditional Scripture readings, as the Bible’s promises and prophecies speak expansively about Jesus’ identity and purpose. As we delve deep into these truths, our worship of the babe in the manger is enriched, for we kneel before the one who would make his identity manifest through miracles of great power. We bow before the one who will one day come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

The Book of Isaiah contains some of the most compelling prophecies pointing to Jesus. We read of a promised son who would be called Immanuel—God with us (7:14). We learn of a light that will dawn upon people living in darkness (9:2). And we encounter this resounding promise:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting

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## THE MIGHTY GOD

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Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. (9:6-7)

Scripture's prophecies of the Promised One often have layers of meaning and multiple fulfillments. They frequently point toward a fulfillment in the prophet's own time but also direct our gaze toward the Messiah and his first coming as well as the Second Advent we await.

In this CT devotional resource, we explore what Scripture tells us about the Promised One, deepening our faith in the Savior we know and love. The daily reflections delve into key passages that help us understand more about who Jesus is. And each weekly theme centers around a core aspect of Jesus' identity drawn from Isaiah's prophecies.

The traditional first readings of Advent can feel jarringly at odds with our Christmastime expectations. Rather than holly and candlelight, we read of end-times horrors. Instead of rejoicing angels, we begin with a prophet calling loudly for repentance. These passages shock us out of our cozy mindset to remind us that Jesus is the Mighty God. The Savior whose birth we are preparing to celebrate is the very Son of Man who will one day return to judge the living and the dead. He is the one for whom God sent a messenger to prepare the way: John the Baptist, who cried out in the wilderness, testifying to Jesus' power and glory. The child in the manger is the Mighty God whose kingdom will never end.

## THE PRINCE OF PEACE

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Many of Advent's Old Testament passages prompt us to reflect on the personal peace we can experience with God and to envision the ultimate peace the Promised One will one day bring. War, violence, and pain will come to an end. Nations and people groups who have long been divided will worship together as one. But Scripture pushes us beyond our



tendency toward a sentimentalized vision of peace, challenging us to see that the peace Christ brings is robust and comprehensive. This peace comes not only through Jesus' love, but also through his mighty power—for his peace is tied in directly with his justice. His peace is connected to his righteous judgment. And the peace he brings was bought at a price.

#### THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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From the beginning to the end of Scripture, we see light used as a metaphor to help us understand God's presence, salvation, the life of faith, and Jesus himself. We read promises of a light that would brightly shine, unhindered by darkness. When Jesus walked upon the earth, he identified himself as this promised light—the same light whose very presence will one day illuminate the city of God (Rev. 21:23). And, crucially, Jesus is the light not just for you and for me, but *for the world*. As Scripture makes plain over and over, he is the Promised One for all nations, ushering in his global, multiethnic kingdom.

#### IMMANUEL

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This final week of Advent, we focus on the events surrounding the Nativity when the Promised One—the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Light of the World—entered into humanity as a newborn child. Here was Immanuel, *God with us*. Here was the Word made flesh, dwelling among us (John 1:14). The centuries-old promises spoken about him reverberate in the acclamation of angels, the message of the shepherds, the prophetic praise of an elderly man and woman, and the joyful worship of Gentiles who'd journeyed from afar to bow before the King of Kings.

#### HE IS THE PROMISED ONE

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This Advent, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, may we deeply contemplate Scripture's promises of *who he is* and *what he came to do*. As we worship at the manger, may we marvel that this very child *is* the Mighty God, he *is* the Prince of Peace, and he *is* the Light of the World. He is the one who came to die. He is the one who rose triumphant, who ascended, and who will keep his promise to come again in glory. He will enact justice and bring to culmination his kingdom of peace. He is Immanuel, God with us.



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