

A SEASON OF REFLECTION

A collection of various star and sparkle icons in shades of light blue and white, scattered around the main title.

# The Advents of Christ

A REVELATION OF HIS ARRIVAL AND RETURN

ASCEND CHURCH



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# P R E F A C E

Christmas is a joyous time celebrated by both believers and non-believers worldwide. While many elements of the season appear the same for all of the people celebrating, there is a key difference for believers: Christ.

What Christians celebrate on Christmas is missed by much of the unbelieving world. We celebrate Christ's arrival (the incarnation, the Son of God becoming man). His birth really can't be separated from the fullness of who He is. Jesus is God. He is the eternal Son who has always been, forever begotten of the Father, sent by the Father from above to fulfill the Scriptures. Through the Spirit, the Father caused the Son to be conceived in Mary. In love, God sent him. In full and willful obedience, He came. In the manger, we witness the greatest gift mankind has ever received.

In Christ, believers know there is true hope, true joy, true peace, and true love from God. We celebrate those this advent season through a sermon series and this home devotional. Join with the rest of Ascend Church each week as we celebrate the promised arrival revealed in the Old Testament and the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ unveiled in the New Testament.

May this devotional resource help all of us to delight in our great God and his Son. We pray expectantly during this time that our hope will be realized, our joy will be full, our peace will be eternal, and true love will flow out of our hearts like a stream of unhindered living water.

w e e k   o n e

# HOPE

MEDITATE ON  
CHRIST'S ARRIVAL

## ✦ GENESIS 3:14-15

The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

## ✦ LUKE 2:4-7

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

# REFLECTION



In the dimly lit reality of sacrificial systems, laws and regulations, and prophetic language, lay a built-in longing for fulfillment. A longing for light to be shed on a complete and comprehensive answer to the realities of sin initiated in the garden, the ongoing occurrence of strife, and ultimately the restoration of true hope. But as is often the case, there was a disconnect between what God's people experienced and what they longed for. In the shadows of their understanding, their longings led them to a Messiah who they thought would march in and rule with all authority and might. By his political power and kingship, he would trample the physical enemies of the Israelites under his feet. This Savior did come, but He came as a lowly and humble child, wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger (Luke 2:7). He came to be hope itself. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:1, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope." He came with a much bigger agenda than to free physical captives. He came to rescue us from being slaves to our own sin (Romans 6:18), to make us righteous (Romans 5:19), and to adopt us into His family (Ephesians 1:5). Not only does Jesus provide us with hope, Jesus Himself is our HOPE!

w e e k   o n e

# HOPE

MEDITATE ON  
CHRIST'S RETURN

## ✦ REVELATION 21:1-7

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son."

# REFLECTION



In a book that has much to say about the imminent and inevitable sufferings of God’s people, there is a constant thread pulled throughout the entire book of Revelation that leads to Christ Himself — His plans, His purposes, and His provision. There is a consistent call for the endurance of the saints through trial and tribulation. Amid all the intense imagery and confusing symbols and language lies the imperishable truth of a resurrected king. A king who speaks a promise of hope to make all things new (v5) and bring His sovereign plan to completion. A king who is victorious (1 Corinthians 15:57). A king who has conquered (Revelation 19:11-16). A king who comforts (Deuteronomy 31:8-9). A king who gives Himself (Titus 2:14). Jesus Christ is the source and substance of our glorious eternal perspective. To a thirsty people He has promised to give from the spring of water of life without payment (v6). In John 7:38 Jesus says, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” There is a river of hope given by Christ and the beautiful reality is that He Himself is that hope. Christ is our HOPE!



## APPLICATION

- ✦ What is the source of your hope this season?
- ✦ What truths about Christ's character and work provide a confident hope in trouble and good times?
- ✦ What practical responses reflect a confident hope in Christ to others?

## PRAYER

Pray for a deeper understanding of the hope provided in and through Christ. Ask God to grow you in your ability to extend that hope to others.



w o r s h i p  
w i t h H O P E



*We are waiting on  
the promise  
For the one who  
lights the darkness  
Bending low to be  
among us  
Bring Your glory in  
the highest  
Jesus*

---

“Hope for Everyone”  
Matt Maher



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w e e k   t w o

# JOY

MEDITATE ON  
CHRIST'S ARRIVAL

✦ ISAIAH 25: 8 - 9

He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. 9 It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

✦ LUKE 2: 10 - 11

And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

# REFLECTION



Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice always, and again I say rejoice.” How is that even possible? How could Paul pen these words as he found himself in the horrible conditions of a Roman prison? How could Isaiah speak of joy (Isaiah 25:9) as he witnessed a nation turn its back on God, offer meaningless sacrifices (Isaiah 1:13), and participate in numerous injustices (Isaiah 56:9-12)? It doesn’t seem like this should be possible. And yet, time and time again we see the biblical reality of an indescribable joy on display amid the most dismal circumstances. The lynchpin that holds the possibility of true joy together across all the pages of Scripture into each of our realities today is not better circumstances or just mustering up warm fuzzy feelings. The pinnacle of true joy is found only in the person and work of Christ Himself. Because of His arrival, His death, and His resurrection, James can confidently say, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds” (James 1:2). The news of His coming was not only good news of great joy (Luke 2:10), but He Himself is JOY!

w e e k   t w o

# JOY

MEDITATE ON  
CHRIST'S RETURN

## ✦ REVELATION 19:6-10A

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." 10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God."

# REFLECTION



We seem to be wired to experience longings in this life and to constantly look for things that bring us happiness and joy. However, when what we search for doesn't line up with our longings, it can feel like a fracture that pulls apart our pursuits and our purpose. Could it be that when worship becomes our pursuit, then our purpose becomes clearer, and consequently produces true joy? Unlike happiness that vanishes like a vapor, this is a true joy that is deeply embedded in our hearts and is there to stay. When we rejoice, exult, and give Christ the glory He deserves (v7), our true purpose will not only be discovered, but our joy will also be made full and complete (John 15:11). Seek to find joy in being the bride of Christ (v7) through the blood of Christ, and let His joy be your strength and shield (Psalm 28:7). What a joyous occasion it will be to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (v9). Imagine being fully reunited with Christ in perfect joy and harmony, enabled by Christ and brought to completion through Christ. Christ is our JOY!



## APPLICATION

- ✦ What is the difference between joy in Christ and happiness in the world?
- ✦ What does Scripture teach about the source, substance, and showing of true joy?
- ✦ What is a creative way to rejoice in the Lord this Christmas?

## PRAYER

Pray for a deeper understanding of the joy extended to us through the person and work of Christ. Ask God to grow you in living out the joy of the Lord that is your strength.

w o r s h i p  
w i t h J O Y



*Glory shining for all to see  
Hope alive, let the gospel ring  
God has made a way,  
He will have the praise  
Tell the world His name is  
Jesus*

---

“Sing We the Song of Emmanuel”  
Keith & Kristyn Getty, Matt Boswell, Matt Papa



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w e e k   t h r e e

# PEACE

MEDITATE ON  
CHRIST'S ARRIVAL

✦ ISAIAH 9:6-7A

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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.

✦ LUKE 2:14-15

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" 15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."



# REFLECTION



Bearing the weight of having to bring and establish peace in a situation seems like an impossible task. Think of the fragility of extended times of peace for the Israelites in the Old Testament. The constant reality of nations raging against each other (Psalm 21, 46) and people plotting against one another seems to suggest an inevitable lack of peace, not to mention the inner turmoil those throughout Scripture faced. David was troubled and battled deep despair. Elijah was discouraged, weary, and afraid. Jeremiah wrestled with great loneliness, feelings of defeat, and insecurity. But Jesus was prophesied as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). He would be the one to bear the full weight of the impossible task of peace. Not ultimate external peace, but, more importantly, internal peace with God initiated by His arrival and made possible by His blood spilled for the remission of our sins (Ephesians 1:7). The angels knew as they appeared to give worship, praise, and glory to God (Luke 2:14) that He was the fulfillment of the true peace needed for the inner turmoil and anguish living inside the hearts of man. Jesus came to bring peace and to BE that peace.

w e e k   t h r e e

# PEACE

MEDITATE ON  
CHRIST'S RETURN

## ✦ REVELATION 1:4-8

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

# REFLECTION



A quick glance through the pages of Scripture paired with an honest look at history would most certainly bring us to a conclusion that strife, war, and conflict are widespread throughout all time. The most recent display being the atrocities taking place between Hamas and Israel. Peace seems like a far-fetched idea, and yet we know Christ is revealed as the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9. Peace is a promise from God. However, peace does not mean a quiet and easy life in this world. Peace is harmony. Harmony with the Almighty and Eternal God that gives us an inward settled disposition. We can have peace, regardless of the circumstances and strife we find ourselves in, because of the one who freed us from our sins by His blood (v5). We also know that not only does peace come from Him (v1), but He is also the embodiment of peace itself (Eph. 2:14). The one who is the Alpha and the Omega, who was and is and is to come, Jesus Christ the faithful witness will return one day to establish true and final peace. Christ ushers in peace and is peace itself. Christ is our PEACE.



## APPLICATION

- ✦ What is the difference between the spiritual peace God provides versus a peace that looks like quietness?
- ✦ How did Christ demonstrate peace amid the turmoil of His life?
- ✦ What Gospel truths can be preached to oneself that will help in having the peace that surpasses all understanding? (Phil. 4:7-9)

## PRAYER

Pray for a deeper understanding of the peace that passes all understanding offered to us in Christ. Ask God to give you a heart of true peace that can then be extended to those around you.

w o r s h i p  
w i t h P E A C E



*His name shall be  
Wonderful, Counselor  
His name shall be  
Everlasting Father  
His name shall be Prince  
of Peace, Mighty God  
His name shall be  
Emmanuel  
We'll praise Your name  
forever*

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“O Come All Ye Faithful (His Name Shall Be)”  
Passion featuring Melodie Malone



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w e e k   f o u r

# LOVE

MEDITATE ON  
CHRIST'S ARRIVAL

## ✦ ISAIAH 42:1-4

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

## ✦ PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

# REFLECTION



The fickle and faint-hearted love that man sets on each other is corrupted by selfishness and sin. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick.” In our feeble attempts to love each other, we inevitably sink in the quicksand of pursuing the flesh, what we want, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Even the most noble attempts at love are affected by the gravitational pull of self and orbit around our own definitions and desires. But God gives a perfect and amazing example of a love without blemish. A love that He sets on His chosen servant in whom He delights (Isaiah 42:1). His only begotten Son, Jesus, in whom He is well pleased (Matthew 3:17). Not only was this love resting on the Son, but this love was made manifest among His people (1 John 4:9) in the arrival of Christ Himself. A love with the ultimate aim of glorifying the Son who glorifies the Father (John 17:1). A love that enters a lost and broken world and aims to reconcile a people back to God (Colossians 1:20). A love that transforms a deceitful heart of stone into a beautiful heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). A love so sacrificial that it required the ultimate payment through the excruciating pain of death on a cross. Who would have thought the unassuming child born in Bethlehem, lying in a manger, would be love incarnate? Praise God for the ability to truly love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19)!

w e e k   f o u r

# LOVE

MEDITATE ON  
CHRIST'S RETURN

## ✦ REVELATION 2:2-7

“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”



# REFLECTION



Many of us know Galatians 6:9. Do not grow weary in doing good. We can easily take up that cause, knowing that we will reap if we do not give up. But if we are not diligent and discerning, the good works before us can become a badge of honor, or the thing that gets us a seat at the table. They become the destination instead of a privilege and part of the journey. Ephesus was known for their works and patient endurance (v1). They were stirring each other up to good works (Hebrews 10:24) but had forgotten their first love (v4). That love was first extended by Christ. “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). And He is also love Himself. “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8). Let your authentic love for Christ fuel your worship. Let your worship fuel your good works. Let your good works be a demonstration of your devotion to the one who is devoted to you. Repent where you have fallen and turn to Christ. Christ always initiates love, and Christ is LOVE!



## APPLICATION

- ✦ With the example of Christ's love, how would you assess your love for God and others during this season?
- ✦ From Scripture, what are examples of how God declares and shows His love to His children?
- ✦ Who can you sacrificially love this season, demonstrating worshipful love for God?

## PRAYER

Pray for a deeper understanding of the love demonstrated by the Father, through the incarnation of the Son, for the redemption of His people. Ask God to give you a heart to extend this true love of Christ to others.

w o r s h i p  
w i t h L O V E



*O come let us adore Him  
Come let us adore Him  
For He alone is worthy  
Christ the Lord  
Behold the Father's love  
Beyond all comprehension  
He gave His only Son  
To die in our place*

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“Behold”

Phil Wickham featuring Anne Wilson



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