



# THE PROMISED ONE

*Advent Readings from Christianity Today*

2022

THE  
❧ PROMISED ❧  
ONE



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**CT**



*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.

## *Ideas for Families*

### THROUGHOUT ADVENT

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- With teens or preteens, read and discuss the devotions together each evening. With younger kids, focus on just the Scripture passages and reflection prompts.
- Begin a family journal for Advent. At the top of each page, write, “Jesus is . . .” After reading and discussing the day’s passage, invite family members to write a phrase or sentence or doodle an image to record their ideas about Jesus.

### ANY TIME DURING ADVENT

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- Put a simple puzzle together as a family *without* using a picture of the puzzle’s completed image. Afterward, discuss how seeing parts of the puzzle come together helped you see the big picture more clearly. Discuss how the Bible’s promises help us develop a fuller picture of who Jesus is.
- Play Who Am I? (also called 20 Questions) as a family. Discuss how the more we learn, the easier it is to identify or recognize someone. Talk about how Scripture’s promises about Jesus help us understand his identity.

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### WEEK 1: MIGHTY GOD

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- Look together at baby pictures of each family member. Discuss the limitations and abilities of a human newborn. Explore how amazing it is that Jesus—the Mighty God—was born as a human infant.
- Use Legos, building blocks, or other craft supplies to create a castle. Talk together about the eternal kingdom and reign of God using ideas in Revelation 21:1–4.

### WEEK 2: PRINCE OF PEACE

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- Create placemats to use during Advent by coloring maps of the world. Discuss the idea that Jesus' peace and the salvation he offers are for the whole world—for people of all nations, languages, and cultures.
- Invite everyone to name injustices, wrongs, sorrows, fears, or instances of violence in the world today that they long for Jesus to put right. Write them on pieces of construction paper. Together, tear those papers up, then glue the pieces together (text side down) in the shape of a cross to represent the ultimate peace Jesus will bring.

### WEEK 3: LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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- Go stargazing or look online at pictures from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope. Discuss how light breaks through darkness—and how Jesus is like a light to us, shining even during dark times.
- Talk together about sharing the light of Jesus with others. Purchase glowsticks together and create tags with a simple message your children want to share, like “Jesus is the Light of the World. Jesus loves you!” Then walk or drive to nearby homes to give them to friends and neighbors.

### WEEK 4: IMMANUEL

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- As you walk through the stories and experiences of people in the Nativity, bring their experiences to life by discussing these questions together: What do you imagine this person felt, thought, or wondered? How do you imagine you'd react if you were in their place? Why?
- Make simple yarn or bead bracelets together and wear them daily during the week. Encourage your kids to remember this truth every time they see it: *God is with us*, right here, right now.

## Ideas for Groups

### THROUGHOUT ADVENT

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- To use this resource with your Bible study group, encourage members to read the daily Scripture passages, devotions, and reflection prompts. When you gather, select several of the week's Scripture passages and reflection questions to guide your discussion.
- Print out the libretto of Handel's *Messiah*. Select portions to read aloud and listen to parts of the music that emphasize the week's theme.

### WEEK 1: MIGHTY GOD

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- Play an identity game: Have everyone anonymously write down a little-known fact about themselves. Collect and read the answers, then take turns guessing who said what. Keep going until everyone has been guessed. Discuss the goal of coming to know Jesus—whom you already know and love—even more deeply during Advent.

### WEEK 2: PRINCE OF PEACE

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- Compare and contrast our common, often-limited understanding of peace with the expansive vision of shalom in Isaiah's promises and other parts of Scripture. Optional: Create a collage together by writing words and pasting images from magazines onto a posterboard to represent the holistic nature of shalom.

### WEEK 3: LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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- Darken the room, then have each person light a candle as you each read aloud a key passage or verse from this week's assigned Scripture passages. As you read and listen, focus on prayerfully contemplating Jesus' identity as the Light of the World.

### WEEK 4: IMMANUEL

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- Think through all the different people involved in the Nativity events, then invite everyone in the group to share who they relate to most and why. Prompt group members to focus primarily on how their spiritual journey may resonate with one of the scenes or experiences in Scripture.

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ISAIAH 9:6

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*Print Managing Editor* Kelli B. Trujillo  
*Creative Director* Sarah Gordon  
*Senior Designer* Jared Boggess  
*Copy Editor* Alexandra Mellen

*Illustration by* Stephen Crotts

## CONTRIBUTORS

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**ALICIA AKINS** is a graduate student in biblical studies at Reformed Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, and the author of *Invitations to Abundance*.



**KRISTIE ANYABWILE** is the author of *Literarily: How Understanding Bible Genres Transforms Bible Study* and the editor of *His Testimonies, My Heritage*.



**CAROLYN ARENDS** is a recording artist, an author, and the director of education for Renovaré. Her most recent album is *In the Morning*.



**RASOOL BERRY** serves as teaching pastor at The Bridge Church in Brooklyn, New York. He is also the host of the *Where Ya From?* podcast.



**CRAIG L. BLOMBERG** is distinguished professor emeritus of New Testament at Denver Seminary and the author of numerous books, including his *Matthew* commentary and *Interpreting the Parables*.



**MARLENA GRAVES** is professor of spiritual formation at Northeastern Seminary. She is the author of several books, including *The Way Up Is Down*.



**KELLY M. KAPIC** is a theologian at Covenant College and the author or editor of numerous books, including *Embodied Hope* and *You're Only Human*.



**JAY Y. KIM** serves as lead pastor at WestGate Church. He's the author of *Analog Church* and *Analog Christian* and lives in Silicon Valley with his family.



**GLENN PACKIAM** is the lead pastor of Rockharbor Church in Costa Mesa, California. He's the author of *The Resilient Pastor* and coauthor of *The Intentional Year*.



**J. D. PEABODY** pastors New Day Church in Federal Way, Washington, and is the author of *Perfectly Suited: The Armor of God for the Anxious Mind*.



**MADISON N. PIERCE** is associate professor of New Testament at Western Theological Seminary. Her books include *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews*.



**ADRIEL SANCHEZ** is pastor of North Park Presbyterian Church in San Diego and the host of *Core Christianity*, a Q&A radio broadcast and podcast.



**SARAH SHIN** is a doctoral student in systematic theology at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. She is the author of *Beyond Colorblind: Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey*.



**BETH STOVELL** teaches Old Testament at Ambrose Seminary. She is the coeditor of *Theodicy and Hope in the Book of the Twelve* and the author of the forthcoming commentaries *Minor Prophets I* and *II*.



**JEREMY TREAT** is a pastor at Reality LA and an adjunct professor at Biola University. He is the author of *Seek First* and *The Crucified King*.



**DORENA WILLIAMSON** is a church planter, speaker, and the author of *ColorFull*, *The Celebration Place*, *Crowned with Glory*, and *Brown Baby Jesus*.