

THE CAST OF *Christmas*



THE
PROPHETS



THE
ANGELS



THE
SHEPHERDS



THE
MAGI



AND
US

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS
DEVOTIONS TO PREPARE
OUR HEARTS FOR THE
REASON FOR THE SEASON



The Cast of Christmas: Advent and Christmas Devotions to Prepare Our
Hearts for the Reason for the Season

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UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

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INTRODUCTION

In just twenty verses and 390 words, Luke shares most of what we know about the event of Jesus's birth. While Luke is direct and succinct, the second chapter of his Gospel is packed with anticipation, intrigue, wonder, and the greatest news ever given to humankind. While it only takes up a column of most Bibles or about six paragraphs to relay, the more than one thousand pages that make up the rest of the Bible point to and hinge upon this moment. It is the day when God's great plan of salvation and redemption for our great problem of sin was irrevocably launched. As John summarizes in the first chapter of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (verses 1, 14).

God sent His Son, Jesus, born into the world, so that those in the world may be saved through His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. The Advent of Jesus brought us salvation and forgiveness, but it brought so much more than that. As John explains, "To those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). Because of Jesus's birth and work, we can have a relationship with God! What better season than

Advent to focus on this amazing work and wonderful relationship that we have with God through Jesus?

We can look to the cast of characters God gathered together, touched, and transformed through this amazing event to find insight and wisdom for our response, focus, and growth in the Christmas season.

The anticipation and longing of the prophets, who for hundreds and even thousands of years knew by the Spirit that the Messiah would one day come, teach us how to prepare our hearts in the season. They remind us that Advent can be a season of reflection and repentance as we remember why Jesus came to earth. They teach us to faithfully endure as we await Jesus's Second Coming.

The angel's joyful proclamation reminds us to share the good news of Jesus's arrival with everyone we know, however we can. It reminds us that the arrival of Jesus is just too wonderful and powerful to keep to ourselves. This Christmas, may our words and actions proclaim the arrival of the King.

When the shepherds heard the angel's announcement, their terror transformed to a wonderful hope and joy that drove them to hurry off to Bethlehem so they could see for themselves what God had done. Advent is the perfect time to contemplate the hope we have in God's grace, presence, and redemption. As we begin to understand what Jesus has really done,

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may our questions or doubts be transformed into the joy that comes with receiving the truth of Christ!

In the book of Matthew, we are introduced to other members of the cast—the Magi from the east. These scholars and astronomers traveled hundreds of miles to offer gifts to the King of Kings. May our Christmas be filled with the same adoration and worship. Their eagerness to honor Jesus challenges us to use this season to give Him our very best as well.

This book contains devotions for each of the four weeks before Christmas. Based around some of the major characters in the cast of Christmas, these brief daily devotions will help you stay focused during the Christmas season and prepare your heart for the real reason of the season. As you take a moment out of each day of Advent to prepare and ponder, may God meet you with the reason for Christmas: that you may believe in Him, grow closer to Him as His child, and dwell with Him richly both now and forevermore!



THE PROPHETS' PREPARATION

ISAIAH 7:14 SAYS, “THEREFORE THE LORD himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” These words were written more than six hundred years before Jesus was born. Even though the prophets had never seen the Messiah, they knew He was coming. From Moses to John the Baptist, the prophets earnestly awaited His arrival and prepared their hearts to receive Him. How appropriate for us to begin our Advent season by preparing our hearts for the King of Kings.



READ

“As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

‘A voice of one calling in the wilderness,

“Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.

Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill made low.

The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.

And all people will see God’s salvation.””

—Luke 3:4–6

“But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.” —Matthew 13:16–17



MEMORIZE

“For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

—2 Peter 1:21



ANSWER

What does it mean to you to spiritually prepare for Christmas? What can you do in the coming weeks to be spiritually prepared?



SING

“Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”



1

Preparing Through Waiting

The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

—Lamentations 3:25–26

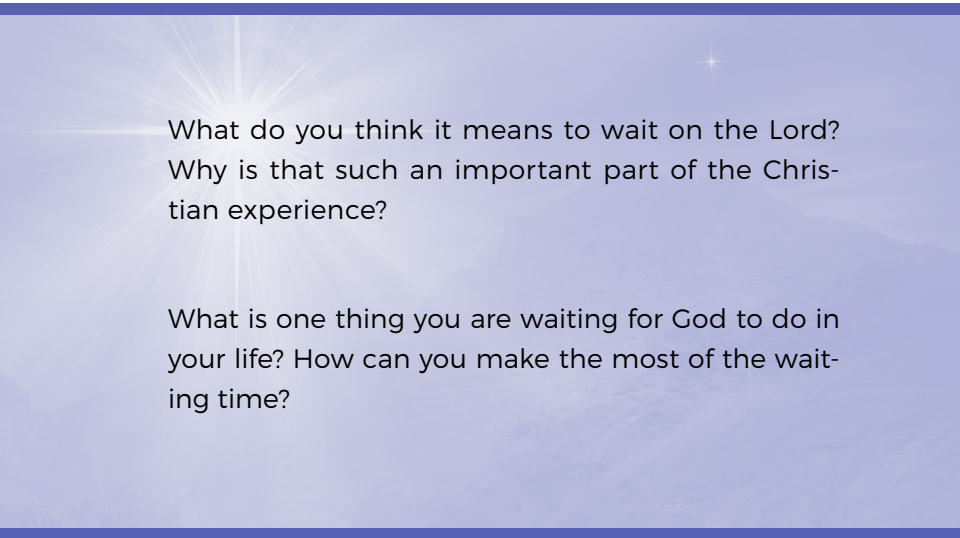
“I can’t wait.” Even after they arrive, the most exciting and memorable moments of our lives are full of waiting. If you’ve ever been to Disneyland, you know that the majority of your time there is spent waiting in line. A trip to the beach is often preceded by a morning in traffic. The ride to the top of a ski slope begins with the line to the chairlift. Most of the time, those experiences are worth the wait.

As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, it’s important to remember that waiting is, in itself, preparation. Isaiah 40:31 encourages us, “Those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength” (NKJV).

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There are so many lessons in waiting that just can't be learned anywhere else. Waiting teaches us about control and how little of it we actually possess. It teaches humility as our desires and inclinations to be attended to are put on hold. Waiting also helps us understand the value of the object or event for which we wait.

Jesus tells us that “many prophets and righteous people longed to see [his arrival]” (Matthew 13:17). In the same way, many of His followers long to see His Second Coming as well. As we wait, let's remember our waiting is necessary preparation in becoming the people He is forming and transforming us to be.



What do you think it means to wait on the Lord? Why is that such an important part of the Christian experience?

What is one thing you are waiting for God to do in your life? How can you make the most of the waiting time?