

Are You Having New Advent Awakenings?

The word “advent” comes from Latin and means “arrival.” It has been used to refer to the arrival of Jesus Christ into our world. Advent celebrations in the Christian church traditionally begin on the Sunday closest to Nov. 30 and extend four weeks to the Sunday nearest to our traditional celebration of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth on Dec. 25.

Since Advent is not a biblical or ordained event like water baptism, not all Christian churches celebrate the season with the same emphasis. Still, many Christians look forward to this special Advent season each year. Its message and meaning can be as straightforward or as complex as you may desire to make it. As you read the Bible and pray during this Advent season, ask God for a fuller understanding so you can be awakened anew by its precepts, practices and personal applications.

Why Was Jesus’ Birth So Important?

The “reason for the season” is to tangibly and practically remind us of when God took on human flesh and became fully human in Jesus of Nazareth. Theologians call this the “incarnation,” which means “in the flesh.”

The Gospel of John repeatedly reveals our Creator-God, who stepped aside from the royalty of heaven to become one of His creations—a human being. John introduced Jesus as “the Word,” who was with God and was, in fact, God. This Word was the divine agent who made “all things” and “without Him, nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3b, NKJV).

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Verse 14 explicitly states the truth of the incarnation: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.” Jesus identified Himself with humanity by becoming one of us, and consequently, He “gets” us.

Perhaps you have read or heard the familiar verse of Scripture from the third chapter of John: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?

You may be familiar with the classic 1946 black-and-white film “It’s a Wonderful Life,” directed by Frank Capra and starring Jimmy Stewart. His character, George Bailey, led a relatively idyllic pre-World War II life in Bedford Falls, a small town in upper New York. As a young father, Bailey had an automobile accident and ended up in a coma, during which he wished he had never been born.

In the dream, an angel is sent to earth to make Bailey’s wish come true. Bailey began to realize how many lives he changed and touched for good and how people and circumstances would have been different if he had never been there. He awoke from the coma determined to make as big of an influence for good in everyone’s life who was near and dear to him.

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The film’s primary point is that each person’s life impacts everybody else’s. Had they never been born, their absence would leave gaping holes. This is certainly true of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, God incarnate. His life, death and resurrection have had an enormous impact—more than the life of anybody else—on human history and destiny!

What if Jesus had never been born, never died for our guilt nor rose again to prove our forgiveness and justification before a holy God? What if Christ and Christianity never existed?

The risen Christ Jesus is our only hope! Otherwise, the implications are almost unfathomable (1 Cor. 15:13-19). Paul summarized these negative implications when he hypothetically assumed in verse 17, "if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"

Advent Awakenings

Advent believers use this short liturgical season to reflect on a central theme for the four weeks leading up to Christmas Eve: hope, peace, joy and love. Many churches light a candle on a prominent wreath each Sunday of Advent, symbolizing one of these profound and transforming themes.

Paul taught Timothy that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). While Advent is a liturgical addition to biblical teaching, these themes of Scripture are profitable for us to consider, reflect on and obey as they awaken new insights and applications for us and our families.

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