

“What Does It Mean to Wait?”

The Once and Future Coming of Jesus #1

INTRODUCTION

As we enter the season of Advent it is a good time to pause and reflect. The word Advent itself means “coming”. On the calendar it refers to the period of four Sundays leading up to Christmas. When Christians celebrate Advent, they share in the expectancy of the Messiah. For those born before Christ, it was an expectancy fulfilled by the birth of Jesus. But for those of us born after that first coming, it represents looking forward to His return. So regardless of which period of Advent we are reflecting on (BC or AD), Advent is a time of waiting.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Do you have any Advent traditions in your home?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. First Advent

Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7 NLT - 1 Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. 2 The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. ... 6 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

God first promised to send the Messiah, or Savior, after the time of Adam’s fall. (*Genesis 3:15*) Through many of His prophets the details of the Messiah’s appearing were revealed. He didn’t come immediate.

Revelation 21:1-5 NLT - 1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." 5 And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true."

What is something very important to you that you have had to wait a long time for- such as healing, or salvation of a loved one? Waiting is hardest when we do nothing. While we are waiting for Christ’s return, what are some things we can do to bring the Kingdom of God and its redemption and restoration here on earth?

WRAP-UP

God’s creation was perfect until sin entered the world. From that time on we have looked forward to the promise of redemption and restoration of all of creation. That redemption began when Jesus was born, the first Advent, and won’t be complete until His return. While we wait for the second Advent, we must love all we can, do all we can, and hope all we can as we participate with Christ to bring His kingdom to earth. All in the knowledge that such restoration isn’t dependent on us, but it is on the horizon.

Memory Verse

Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.
- Romans 8:18-25 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: _____

Challenge- What if Jesus returned to earth today? Is there anything you want to be certain you do before His return? Now is the time to do that.

But there were some who kept watch earnestly during those long years of waiting.

As you read through the above passage from Isaiah 9, what parts of the prophesy point you to the birth of Jesus? Likewise, from Micah and Zechariah below, what do you find that reveals Jesus hundreds of years before His birth?

Micah 5:2 NLT - 2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past.

Zechariah 9:9 NLT - 9 Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey-- riding on a donkey's colt.

There were many more prophecies in the Old Testament which Jesus fulfilled. So, how could the Jews have missed seeing their Messiah? For one thing, it is easy to lose sight of the future as the years turn into decades and then into centuries.

There were two faithful watchers who recognized the Messiah; Simeon and Anna.

Luke 2:25-26, 30-32, 36, 38 NLT - 25 At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him 26 and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ... 30 I have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared for all people. 32 He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!" ... 36 Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. 37 Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. 38 She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

Why do you think these two saw what others missed? What lesson do you think this teaches as we await Jesus's second coming?

2. Second Advent

Romans 8:18-25 NLT - 18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. 24 We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. 25 But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

We have not yet seen the second Advent of Christ. The promise of God's redemption is not fully complete.

What are some ways you see that nature (all creation) is out of balance? How does Romans 8:20-21 help explain why the world isn't how it should be and how does that affect us?

But we have a hope, because as bad as our problems may be in this world, there is a promise in Romans 8:18 that, compared to our current suffering, the glory God will reveal will eclipse it all.

3. Between the groaning and the redeeming

Now we are the ones who await the appearing of the Messiah. It is painful to see how death and decay affect the world today. Even though it has been a long time in coming, we hold on to our hope of the glorious restoration and redemption promised in Revelation 21.