

THE ADVENTURE OF ADVENT

A Bible Study on
Advent and
Christmas



WHAT IS THE SEASON OF “ADVENT?”

- Advent comes from the Latin word “adventus” = “arrive, prepare.”
- Begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas and is celebrated each successive Sunday until Christmas.
- The story of how we get to Advent and Christmas as we know it today intermingles theology, politics, and history.

HOW WE GOT “ADVENT”

- Difficult to track Advent’s beginning.
- The result of fixing December 25th as Christmas (Christ’s Birthday).
- The first written evidence of Advent as a Christian practice is found at the Council of Saragossa (AD 380).

A THEORY ON HOW WE GOT ADVENT

- Possible that Advent was created by early Church to answer a growing movement known as Priscillianism.
- Priscillianism – strict opposition/difference between light/dark, body/soul. Soul good; body (matter) bad. Problem for incarnation of Jesus.
- Advent was created to emphasize the meeting of soul and body in incarnate Christ. Jesus fully human/fully divine.

WHAT ADVENT DOES

- Advent has a **double meaning**:
 1. From Latin word "adventus" = Greek word "Parousia."
 2. "Parousia" used for both coming of God in Christ in flesh and the Second Coming
- Reminder of Christ's incarnation and return.

WHAT ADVENT DOES

- Like the rest of the Church Year, Advent is a re-enactment of God's redemptive work in scripture.
- Advent is about preparation; Christmas is about celebration.
- In "High Church" traditions, certain songs are for Advent while others for Christmas.

MUSIC FOR THE SEASON

Advent

- "O, Holy Night"
- "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus"
- "Sign Me Up"

Christmas

- "Joy to the World"
- "Silent Night"
- "Go Tell It On the Mountain"



SIGHTS AND
SYMBOLS OF THE
SEASON



THE ADVENT WREATH

WEEKS 1, 2, 3 = PURPLE

WEEK 4 = PINK

CHRISTMAS EVE =
WHITE (CHRIST
CANDLE)

WHY DOES ADVENT MOVE?

- Most Advent calendars start on December 1.
- The first day of Advent changes.
- There are four Sundays in Advent: the four Sundays before Christmas. Christmas Day can shift; therefore, Advent's start shifts.

SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF DECEMBER 25TH



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- Early Church placed little emphasis on date of Jesus Birth.
- Early Church emphasized Virgin Birth of Christ.
- 2nd century broad emergence of interest in specific date of Christ's birth.
- In 336 AD, Constantine established Dec. 25th as date for Christians to celebrate Jesus' birth.

WHY DECEMBER 25TH

- 3 Major Theories:
 1. Pagan Connection
 2. Christ's Crucifixion/Annunciation
 3. Based on John the Baptist's Birth

1. PAGAN (NON-MONOTHEISTIC) CONNECTION

Argument = The early church selected Dec. 25th as Jesus' birthday because of Pagan celebrations during same season.

Pros = Syncretism is part of religio-cultural development.

Cons = Theory not popular until 12th century.

2. CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION/ANNUNCIATION

- Tertullian the African, determined March 25th as date of Jesus' crucifixion based on Passover.
- Early Church tradition says crucifixion was on same date as annunciation.
- March 25th is exactly 9 months before December 25th.

3. BASED OFF JOHN THE BAPTIST'S BIRTH (LUKE 1)

- Zechariah, priest in line of Abijah. Offering incense in Temple when God promises a son.
- When Mary was pregnant, she visited her cousin Elizabeth, John's mother.
- Gabriel told Mary that Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant when Mary's conception was announced (Luke 1:36)

3. BASED OFF JOHN THE BAPTIST'S BIRTH (LUKE 1)

- As a priest of Abijah, Zechariah served in Temple twice/year. One during rainy season.
- Rainy season poses problems for travel. We know that Jesus was born during a census year.
- John the Baptist born February/March; Jesus born August/September --> What is marked is journey of the Magi to visit Jesus.

Q & A

