

What Is Advent?

The term *Advent* is derived from a Latin word meaning *to come*. Who comes? Jesus, of course! But Advent is about more than Jesus coming into the world on that first Christmas. He will also come again, bringing the mercy and justice of God to full measure for all creation. Thus Advent reflects the original, centuries-long yearning for a Savior who was to enter the world. But now, long after His first appearance, it also reflects our yearning now for His return to consummate the purposes of creation. Thus, during Advent we are to reflect on and marvel at the miracle of His first coming and express our longing for Jesus' return to wrap up human history as we know it and propel us into a new heaven and earth.

This double nature of Advent is captured well in the Christmas hymn, *Come Thou Long-expected Jesus*, in which Charles Wesley writes (verse 2):

Born thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a king
Born to reign in us forever,
Now thy gracious kingdom bring.

Advent includes the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, ending on Christmas Eve. Because Christmas Day itself may fall on any day of the week following that fourth Sunday, Advent can run anywhere from 22 to 28 days. Thus we will include 28 days of devotions, not all of which may be strictly necessary in any given year – though it probably wouldn't hurt to read all 28 devotions!