

Isaiah 9:2-7 *The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; They will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, and cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire. For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.*

I Thessalonians 5: 1-11 *Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.*

These scriptures refer to a coming King and a returning King. Both the Old and the New Testaments are full of references to the Messiah. Advent means "the coming" and the anticipation of what is to come. At Christmas, we focus mainly on what already was accomplished in Jesus coming to Earth as a baby but it is also about a King who is coming to claim His Kingdom. We need to balance these truths so that we are a people prepared and our hope remains in what is still yet to come. Advent is a season of preparation for Christ's second coming - His return.

If we view our lives today as a gift that can never be earned but is a result of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who loves us and desires to come to us and take us back to eternity with Him, then we can live differently.

Advent is similar to Israel at the end of the Old Testament. After the fall and the brokenness of sin, God gave hope to Israel in Genesis 3 - hope was in the seed to come. For thousands of years, Israel lived in this place of expectation - the hope of a coming Messiah. We live in that place today - in the expectation of Jesus' return to this Earth. We stand between these 2 promises: the first of Jesus' coming fulfilled and the promise not yet experienced in His return.

Advent is a season to prepare. What must we do to be prepared? We must get ready. Advent is about turning our expectations to our coming King to be ready for when He comes back.

Matthew 24:3 *As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"* Do you wonder what it will look like? **Matthew 24** continues His explanation. Some try to predict when - but we must not set a date! (**Verse 24**) But we should prepare so we are ready. **Matthew 25** continues with a parable of ten bridesmaids... where Jesus was telling the disciples to be prepared. All were invited but not all were prepared. Will we be prepared for His coming? And then the parable of the ten talents... with the lesson of doing something with what He gives you. Don't fall into the comparison trap. Invest into what God gives each of us. Don't let our past define us. Don't let our pain become our identity. God wants to give a return on our investment of what He has given us. Don't shrink back because of our own fears and insignificance. Faith requires us to put it in His hand and trust His output. Jesus wants us to be ready, letting the Holy Spirit fill us, investing what He has given us.

Matthew 25:31-40 *But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'*

We are not justified by our works but our works should be evident from the gift we have received. How can we prepare for the end? Advent is about preparation. Our Advent celebration ends on December 25. If you knew you would meet Jesus on December 25... would anything change? Would you do anything different? repair a relationship? give some resources away? have a difficult conversation?

Ask the Father for a new vision of being prepared and then listen for His answer.

How would you explain Advent from the perspective of the Israelites and as it is today?

What would you do differently if you knew December 25 would be your meeting Jesus day?

If Advent is about preparation, what do you need to do to prepare for the end?