

# ADVENT, Pt. 1

## The purpose, problem, and promise - *Genesis 12:1-3*

Even though the gospels indicate Jesus' birth most likely occurred during the spring, many people around the world consider Christmas Jesus' birthday. Christmas has therefore become a time when people think about Jesus' birth and its meaning for their lives. Part of that focus on Jesus includes Advent, the religious season involving the Sundays in December and which focuses on the events leading up to Jesus' birth and concludes with the celebration of his arrival. While we understand that Christmas is not Jesus' actual birthdate and that the date has no intrinsic religious value, we do believe it is good to focus on the importance of Jesus' birth and its meaning for our lives. We will therefore take advantage of that focus this month to consider the biblical timeline leading to Jesus' birth.

We will begin by considering the beginning of the Bible's story, moving from the creation to the introduction of Abraham. That narrative section of the Bible introduces God's purposes for the creation, the sin problem that frustrated His intentions, and His promise to restore His creational purposes, a promise that would eventually find fulfillment in Jesus.

## The origins of Advent

- The Bible opens with a description of God's creative activity in a way that reveals two important insights:
  - God designed the creation around, and for, humanity (*Genesis 1-2*).
  - God's creation, with its focus on the garden He made to host His people and His relationship with them (*Genesis 2:8-15; cf. 3:8*), reveals that God's creation revolved not just around humanity, but around the special relationship He intended to have with the people He made in His image (*Genesis 1-2*).
- Even though God bestowed a great blessing on humanity by making them in His image and given them the opportunity to rule over His creation as His representatives (*Genesis 1:26-28*), Adam and Eve instead chose to rebel against His plan to selfishly pursue their own interests (*Genesis 3:1-7*).
- Humanity's rebellion did not, however, end with Adam and Eve's sin in the garden; the Bible traces sin's hostile takeover of God's creation (*Genesis 4:1-24; 6:5-6*), which motivated God to purify His creation through a deluge and to recreate it in an attempt to restore it to His intended purposes (*Genesis 6-9*).
- But rather than learning submission to God following His dramatic purification of the creation, humanity instead returned to its sinful practices (*Genesis 9:18-28; 11:1-9*).
- Confronted with humanity's renewed rebellion, God responded, not with another cataclysm, but with a promise to bring blessings rather than more punishments (*Genesis 12:1-3*).

- The promise, announced to Abram, involved God “blessing all the families of the earth” through Abram’s “seed” (*Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18*).
- While the promise would find immediate fulfillment through things like the Israelite nation God formed from Abram’s descendants, Paul looked back on God’s promise and declared Jesus was the “seed” God had in mind when He made His promise to Abram (*Galatians 3:16; Genesis 22:18*).
- Jesus’ birth, as the fulfillment of God’s plan to bless humanity, is therefore the reason the angels sang “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased” (*Luke 2:8-14*).

## Applications

The origins of Advent in the opening section of the Bible reveal a few important insights into God’s character. Consider:

- God focuses on blessing more than punishing (*Genesis 1-12; John 3:16-17; James 5:13*).
- The fulfillment of God’s promise in Jesus spanned more than 1500 years and dealt with many frustrations caused by the people and nations involved in its fulfillment. God’s willingness to undertake that promise should therefore impress on us the real and strong desire He has for a relationship with us - *He deeply and genuinely loves us (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8-10)*.
- While God is sovereign, He interacts with His us on the basis of a promise and not merely commands, which signals the value He places on us (*Genesis 9:8-17; 12:1-3*).

The insights the origins of the Advent offers us into God’s character should impress on us the character of life God created us to pursue as people made in His image. Those insights should motivate us to ask ourselves what the character of our lives reveal about our purpose.

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