

ADVENT

A GUIDE





ADVENT IS...

Living in the "already but not yet".

Trusting Yahweh always keeps His promises.

Crying out to Yahweh: "How long?"

Longing with every fiber of our being to see wrong made right.

Holding our hurt and disappointment together with our joy and anticipation of celebration.

Waiting for the return of Jesus when He makes all things new.

Remembering that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Looking toward the cross even as we bow before the manger.

WHAT WE DO...

We stop the rush and frenzy and remember.

We strike a match and light a candle.

We remember that we are like this tiny flame, easily blown out and tossed by every breath of wind, yet we are told to put our light high on a stand.

We bring to Yahweh our questions and uncertainties and fears because we trust the promise He's already fulfilled.

We remember the history into which we've been grafted as Gentiles.

We worship.





Day 1 - Creation (Prep: Read Genesis 1 & 2)

In the beginning, there was the Father, Son and the Spirit. In perfect unity, they created our incredible world with all of its intricate detail. How long they took absolutely does not matter, but what matters is their final creation. Out of everything they made, the whales, trees, dinosaurs and even the little bees, it was the only moment where they deemed their creation "very good".

The forms of dust with the Breath of God walking around--those two beings Man and Woman--are the foremost in their Mind. They declared that both together reflect their Image. Both. Man and Woman. One was not made to be subservient to the other.

Each walks around this earth with the ability to create, feel, think, understand. Man and Woman were made for perfect relationship with each other, but more than that, we were made to be in perfect union with the perfect God who created us.

Day 2 - Adam & Eve (Prep: Read Genesis 3)

These two people lived in the perfect environment in the perfect world without sin. They perfectly understood each other. They worked in perfect harmony. They loved perfectly. And most importantly, they loved Yahweh and spoke with Him face to face.

And then it all fell apart.

One moment of wondering if God had withheld something from them that they needed. One moment of thinking God wasn't good - ultimately deciding they could be like God. That moment ballooned into sin and loss and lies and blame and pain and hurt and all the rest of what we know today.

But Yahweh wasn't done yet.

He made the first promise. Someday there would be a descendant of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent and clear the way back to relationship with Yahweh again.

In the meantime, they would have to live in the world they'd broken. Adam worked continuously providing food from the cursed ground. Eve kept looking for the promise to be fulfilled from one of her children as she gave birth in pain.



Day 3 - Seth (Prep: Read Genesis 4-5)

You probably know that Moses wrote Genesis, but we often gloss over the fact that he likely wrote it while the nation wandered for forty years--just before they went into the Promised Land, which so happened to be full of pagan idols and their disgusting worship practices.

This book was meant to anchor them and give them a foundation of what Yahweh wanted from them and how they were supposed to live differently from those around them. It served as a reminder that Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel and Seth had deep implications for the choices they made every day.

As you read Genesis 4-5, pay attention to the pattern. This guy lived this long, he had this son... "and he died." Moses wants us to hear the pattern. It would've been like a gavel slamming down over and over to the nation of Israel that they were not meant to live like this. Creation sets up this now unattainable goal of desiring a relationship with Yahweh.

Like Eve named her son Seth (which sounds like the Hebrew word appointed), we're meant to long and wait for the coming of the Messiah.

Day 4 - Noah (Prep: Read Genesis 6-9, Hebrews 11:7)

Noah was clearly not sinless, but he had a father and grandfather who taught him to follow Yahweh. In a culture of people "whose every intention of their thoughts was only evil continually", Noah found grace in the eyes of Yahweh.

It was his own faith, not the faith of his fathers. It was also a faith he "preached" through his life. His actions shouted more than his words as he built a boat in a world that had never seen rain. Noah waited but his waiting wasn't empty. It was filled with obedience.

After the Flood, aside from giving them meat to eat, Yahweh covenanted with Noah that He would never again destroy the earth because of man's wickedness and that Noah's task would be to repopulate the earth.

Shem, Ham and Japheth completed that task and we have the people groups we have today. They fulfilled their covenant with Yahweh, even as they waited for Him to crush that serpent.



Day 1 - Abraham (Prep: Read Genesis 12-25, Hebrews 11)

A descendant of Shem, Abraham leaves the ultra modern city of Ur--they had running hot and cold water and a sophisticated way of life--and followed Yahweh to the nether reaches of the wilderness.

He had a on-again off-again relationship with the truth of Sarah being his wife, but his relationship with Yahweh never faltered—even bargaining over and over for Lot's life.

The Abrahamic Covenant was made with One who could never break a promise. So the smoking pot and fire (reminiscent of the pillar of smoke and fire to the nation of Israel) passed through the broken animals to seal the deal that this land would be theirs and his descendants would rival the stars in the sky.

He died with only a burial plot to his name and two sons, believing Yahweh would keep His word.

Day 2 - Isaac (Prep: Read Genesis 25-26)

Laughter in the old age of his parents, he grew up the promised child of the covenant.

As a young man, Isaac willingly followed his father up a mountain carrying the wood for a sacrifice reflecting his descendent one day carrying a cross to redeem the world.

But as a married man and father, he struggled. His blatant favoritism laid the groundwork for so many future problems with his grandsons. Abraham was faithful in passing on his love for Yahweh and teaching his son, yet Isaac mirrored Abraham's struggle with the truth about his wife.

Isaac and Rebekah struggled as their first parents did and their family bore the scars. They died looking forward to when they could be brought near to Yahweh again.



Day 3 - Jacob (Prep: Read Genesis 26-35)

Deceiver. Liar. His mother loved him more than his twin Esau and believed God's promise of the two nations in her womb and that the older would serve the younger.

Jacob's identity is something that flip-flops throughout his story. When he's acting in self-serving ways, he's referred to as Jacob. Yet, in other places when he's living in true relationship with God, he is referred to as Israel.

One of his great struggles was waffling when he should act. His sons took vengeful action, misusing the sacred sign of covenant, when he refused to act after his daughter was raped.

Yet Jacob loved Yahweh through his indecision and is immortalized in the way Yahweh describes Himself--the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He died waiting for the promise.

Day 4 - Moses (Prep: Read Exodus 1-20)

The author of Genesis had a good 40 years to write down the history of the nation of Israel. I hope you caught the patterns as you read through the account of creation. Moses made it very easy for the cultural oral tradition to be carried out.

Yahweh made it clear that His people were to live differently and gave them very specific rules--most we know today are connected to our health and safety.

Moses was an amazing leader and considered the giver of the Law. Even still, Moses struggled with his anger. While leading 2 million cantankerous people would be enough to send anyone over the edge, it eventually cost Moses entrance into the Promised Land.

He died outside the Promised Land, looking toward the day when the serpent would be crushed and Yahweh could be approached without fear of judgement.



Day 1 - Ruth (Prep: Read Ruth 1-4)

In the middle of the desolate time of the Judges, a man and his wife and sons leave Bethlehem (ironically, known as the House of Bread) to live in pagan Moab where there is food. Their sons marry Moabite women.

Ten years later, Naomi is left with only the two Moabite women. One of whom forsakes her family's idols and declares her love for Yahweh. Ruth follows a very bitter Naomi back to the House of Bread to live as a foreigner in Israel. Her faithfulness to both Naomi and Yahweh eventually lead to a risky threshing floor situation.

In the end, Naomi finds that Yahweh is the ultimate Redeemer and hope for the bereft. Only He could write such a story: Boaz the son of Rahab the prostitute marries Ruth the Moabite and together they join the line of the Messiah.

Day 2 - Samuel (Prep: Read 1 Samuel 1-25)

Scripture calls Eli's sons worthless men. These were the men Samuel grew up watching in Eli's house.

1 Sam. 2:35 relays words to Eli from an unnamed man of God. "I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever." A reference to Christ and His Faithful Priesthood.

Samuel fulfilled his duties in the Tabernacle in the presence of God. As the prophet and Judge of Israel, he cautioned the nation of Israel as they demanded a king like the other nations. King Saul looked great on the outside but proved to be a terrible leader. When he anointed the second king of Israel, Samuel saw first hand how crucial it was to trust that Yahweh saw beyond the outward appearance.

He never got to see King David on the throne. Like those who came before him, he looked to the day when Yahweh's promise would be fulfilled.



Day 3 - David (Prep: Read 1 Samuel 16 - 1 Kings 2 & 1 Chronicles 9-29)

That young shepherd boy who became king of Israel was a mighty man of war.

David was an incredible man who did incredible things for Yahweh, but he was a hot mess: murder, adultery, absent father... yet Yahweh still calls him a man after His own heart. Why? David's love of Yahweh and hatred of his sin. Ironically, he'd be refused for most church leadership positions nowadays.

Later as an old man, David is told "one of his sons will build Him a house and Yahweh will establish his throne forever." A reference both Solomon's temple and Christ's throne established through him. David and Solomon both died waiting for the promise.

Day 4 - Isaiah (Prep: Read 2 Chronicles 26, Isaiah 7:14, 9:1-7)

Isaiah is well-known for his prophecies, yet often we forget there is context to prophecy. Chapter 8 ends with the people being "thrust into thick darkness" and 9:2 opens with "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone."

The nation of Israel has gotten herself in a bad way again. Yahweh is bringing about judgement and punishment, yet His mercy comes "for unto us a child is born and unto us a son is given" and finishes with "the zeal of Yahweh will do this". Yahweh is abounding in mercy and his lovingkindness endures forever. Even as His judgement falls.

Day 5 - Habakkuk (Prep: Read Habakkuk 1-3)

Habakkuk opens with "Yahweh, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?" Yahweh responds with "I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe"

To be fair to our friend Habakkuk, his world is falling apart. He's struggling to see Yahweh's hand in all of it. I can't blame him. He's observing chaos and violence. Wicked men are prospering yet, he continues to bring his concerns to Yahweh waiting expectantly.

Eventually he lands here: "though the fig tree not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the field and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in Yahweh; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." Even if there's complete and total economic collapse, Yahweh hasn't stopped being in control.

Habakkuk stands watch even as he waits.



Day 1 - Zechariah (Prep: Read Luke 1:1-25, 57-80)

It was his priestly division that was on duty and he was chosen by lot, as was their tradition, to enter the temple and burn incense. That's why he's standing in the Holy of Holies when Gabriel tells him that the one thing he and his wife have wanted for their entire long lives is finally going to happen.

His response? Doubt. For that, he's got nine months to think about his choice of words.

No wonder his first words were "Blessed be Yahweh God of Israel for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David... to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant the oath that he swore to our father Abraham... because of the tender mercy of our God..."

Indeed.

Day 2 - Mary (Prep: Read Luke 1:26-56)

Here we have the contrast to Zechariah's response.

She still asks a question of Gabriel though it's not from a place of doubt but wonder. Mary's open-handed response to the announcement speaks to her deep belief and wonder that Yahweh's promise has finally come to be and she is "the virgin who will conceive and bear a son".

After all this time!

As she put it so well: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation... He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever."



Day 3 - Joseph (Prep: Read Matthew 1:18-25)

This is a regular guy just going about his business as he gets ready for his betrothed.

Then she comes to tell him she's pregnant. Betrayal and hurt rock Joseph's world until an angel fills him in on the details.

Instead of his plan to quietly divorce her, he fulfills his promise to her even as Yahweh is using his wife to fulfill his long-ago promise to crush the serpent's head.

Day 4 - Shepherds (Prep: Read Luke 2:8-20)

Shepherds have a dubious history.

The Egyptians viewed them as an abomination. Most of Israel believe them to be of lower class as some were thieves. These particular shepherds could've been watching the sacrificial flock, no one knows.

But Yahweh chose the least and the lowly to reveal His glory. As always, He does the very opposite of what we expect. No kingly reception or political emissaries for His Son, but genuine worship from the lowliest of society.

Day 5 - Wisemen (Prep: Read Matthew 2)

Let's remember that the wisemen were a couple years late to the party. Jesus was about two years old when they entered the house.

Mystery and legend surround the origins of the wisemen. While that's interesting, the point is they were Gentiles that Yahweh was drawing to Himself. They'd studied and paid attention. They knew the alignment of history and the way it often writes itself in the heavens and they went in search.

While Herod is grasping for power and revenge at the idea of another king, those incredibly intelligent men quietly leave another way after worshiping the King of Kings they waited and searched so long to find.



CHRISTMAS!

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this." **Isaiah 9:6-7**

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." **John 1:1-5**

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." **John 1:14**

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." **Colossians 1:15-20**

Can you hear it?

The covenants kept. The promise fulfilled.

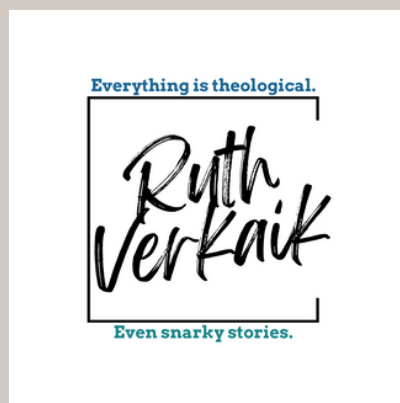
For all the heroes in the Hall of Faith:
whose faith had been counted as righteousness,
who had died staking their claim on the faithfulness of Yahweh,
the time had finally come and the mystery of the Incarnation was now reality.

Yet, He wasn't what His disciples expected. They'd been looking for a Rome-smashing warrior to take back their nation and reestablish their righteous law and order. But Jesus offered something far more precious: freedom from sin forever.

He was the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, the living-breathing proof of every prophecy. He made the once-for-all sacrifice effectively shutting down the entire sacrificial system forever. It is his blood that enables us to stand in the presence of Yahweh and once again have relationship with our Creator.

Let's bow before Him. There's no one else who deserves our worship.





This booklet is copyrighted by Ruth Verkaik.
All text and pictures are original to author unless otherwise noted below.

Scripture text is from the ESV and used with permission.
Booklet design used with permission from Canva.
pg 2-3: photos and graphic used with permission from Canva
pg 4-11: header graphic used with permission from Canva
p 12-13: photo used with permission from Canva
p 13: text graphic purchased from Phylcia Masonheimer