

# ADVENTIDE

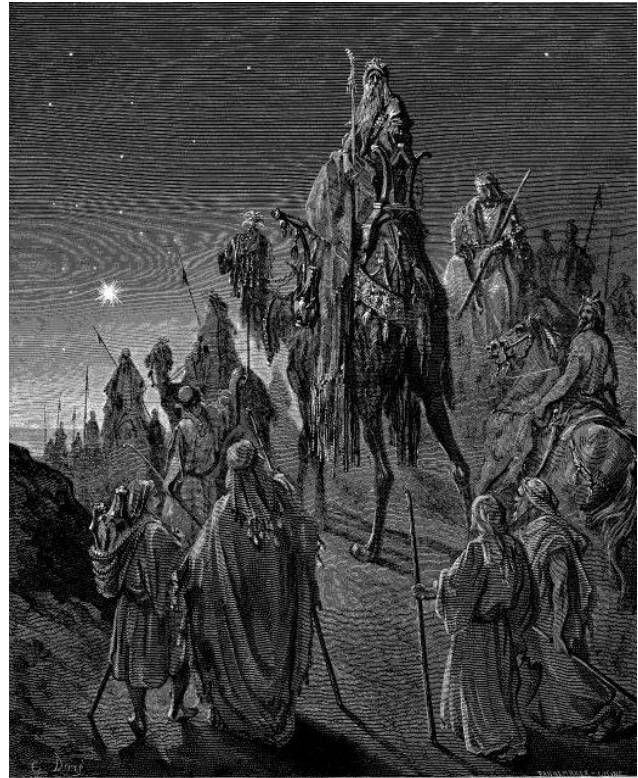
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**A**dvent is the season for God's people to reflect on the Person of Christ Jesus, and especially the mystery of His Incarnation that He is both fully God and fully man, as summarized in the Nicene Creed. This reflection looks both backward and forward. We look back to His First Coming and the precedents of His kingship anticipated from the patriarchs onward. He is Israel's long-anticipated Messiah. At the same time, since His ascension to the right hand of God the Father, we look forward to His return in the Second Coming to usher in the Final Judgment and the fullness of His Kingdom in consummating glory.

**A**dvent as a season did not come into being until the Church began regularly observing the Feasts of the Nativity (i.e., Christmas, December 25) and Epiphany (January 6), and there is little evidence that either of those feasts were observed before AD 380. The first clear observance of a Feast of the Nativity was in AD 380, when Gregory Nazianzus (329-390), a prominent theologian and defender of the Nicene Creed, presided over the Feast in Constantinople.

Shortly thereafter, an all-Church council in Constantinople definitively reaffirmed the truth of the Nicene Creed, officially ending the Arian conflict which for 55 years had brought strife to the Church by questioning Jesus's full divinity and full humanity. A few years later, another defender of Nicene orthodoxy, John Chrysostom (349-407), referenced the existence a Feast of the Nativity in 386. Still, it does not appear that either the Feast of the Nativity or the Feast of the Epiphany were regularly observed across the Roman Empire for quite some time. For example, in Alexandria, Egypt, a major center for the ancient Church, the Feast of the Nativity was not adopted until about 430. What may have boosted observance of Christmas was a series of sermons in the 440s and 450s that Pope Leo the Great (400-461) gave on the occasion of the Feast of the Nativity to defend the orthodox understanding of the Nicene Creed, as well as the orthodox position on debates at that time in which the Church grappled with how to define the relationship between Christ's human and divine natures.

**I**n the ancient Church, the Western Church observed the Nativity (Christmas) on December 25, while the Eastern Church (Asia Minor, the Levant, and Egypt) observed the Epiphany (Holy Theophany) on January 6. Substantively, both East and West celebrated Christ's Incarnation and manifestation among His people. The difference in dates probably was due in part to the Eastern Church's continued use of the Julian Calendar after the Western Church moved to adopt the Gregorian calendar. It is because of these two dates that we have the "Twelve Days of Christmas." As the Eastern Church adopted Christmas, it began to distinguish the commemoration of Christ's birth from the commemoration of His baptism (the Presentation of the Lord, celebrated on February 2). The exact origins of Advent are obscure, but it probably began as a preparatory period since the Church would welcome new communicants into fellowship on Christmas or Epiphany. The length of Adventive varied, from as short as three weeks to as long as eight. It was only during the pontificate of Gregory the Great (r. 590-604) that the Advent was set at the four Sundays prior to Christmas.



# READINGS FOR ADVENTIDE 2020

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## First Week of Advent

### *Anticipations of the Messiah in the Pentateuch*

November 29	Genesis 3:13-15	The Protoevangelion
November 30	Romans 5:12-21	The First Adam and Second Adam
December 1	Genesis 22:16-18	The Seed of Abraham
December 2	Genesis 49:8-12	The Shiloh Prophecy
December 3	Numbers 25:10-13	A Perpetual Priesthood
December 4	Deuteronomy 17:14-20	A King Who Would Come
December 5	Deuteronomy 18:15-18	A Prophet Greater Than Moses

## Second Week of Advent

### *Anticipations of the Messiah in the Kingship Period*

December 6	Joshua 5:13-15	The Captain of the LORD's Host
December 7	Judges 21:25	No King in Israel
December 8	Ruth 4:16-22	The Blessing of Naomi and Coming of David
December 9	2 Samuel 7:8-17	The Davidic Covenant
December 10	Psalms 2	The Son Who Rules Over All
December 11	Psalms 23	The Good Shepherd
December 12	Psalms 110	David's Lord

## Third Week of Advent

### *Anticipations of the Messiah in the Pre-Exilic Prophets*

December 13	Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7	The Virgin Bears the Child Immanuel
December 14	Isaiah 11:1-10	The Rod from the Stem of Jesse
December 15	Isaiah 19:18-25	A Savior and Mighty One
December 16	Isaiah 42:1-4	The Servant of the LORD
December 17	Isaiah 53:1-12	The Suffering Servant
December 18	Isaiah 61:1-3; Micah 5:2	The Messiah Arrives, from Bethlehem
December 19	Jeremiah 23:5, 31:31-34	Branch of Righteousness, The New Covenant

## Fourth Week of Advent

### *Anticipations of the Messiah in the Exilic and Post-Exilic Prophets*

December 20	Daniel 7:13-14	One Like a Son of Man
December 21	Daniel 9:22-25	Messiah the Prince
December 22	Zechariah 3:1-8, 9:9-10	The Branch, the Coming of the King
December 23	Zechariah 11:12-13, 12:10	The Betrayed One, the Pierced One
December 24	Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6	The Coming of the Messenger

## The Nativity of Christ Observed

December 25	Matthew chs. 1-2	The Son of Joseph
December 26	Luke 1:1-2:39	The Son of Mary