



ADVENT PREACHING GUIDE
FOR PASTORS

OVERVIEW:

This five-week preaching guide is intended to help you teach your congregation to see and grasp the themes, promises, and implications of Christmas throughout the Scriptures. Each week corresponds with one section from the Advent devotional *Let Earth Receive Her King*, and the content progresses from Genesis to the Old Testament Writings and Prophets, the Gospels, the Epistles, and finally to Revelation. While many Advent sermon series conclude on or before Christmas, the final theme of “Awaiting a New Advent” and its focus on looking forward provides a fitting segue into the new year.

To achieve the richest experience as a church, we recommend that individuals and families read the twenty-four daily devotions from Alistair Begg’s *Let Earth Receive Her King*. Each Advent reading contains a central Bible verse (or verses), brief devotional teaching, a reflection question, and a classic hymn. We hope these resources will help you and those you shepherd grasp a greater understanding of and appreciation for God’s plan of redemption this Christmas.

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heav’n and nature sing.*





WEEK ONE

First Sunday of Advent

CHRISTMAS IN THE BEGINNING

PREACHING TEXTS

*What are the key texts for preaching this portion of Scripture, and what are their emphases?
(Select one or several based on your preferred approach.)*

Genesis 1:1–2. Creation, The Trinity, Worldview

Genesis 3:15. Effects of Sin, Prophecy, Promises of God, Evangelism

Genesis 6:8–9. Evangelism, Judgment, Mercy, Wrath of God

Genesis 12:2–3; 22:1–14. Promises of God, Propitiation

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Where are we in the unfolding story of redemption?

It is easy to look at the first Christmas as though the story starts on the first page of the New Testament, with an angel suddenly showing up to a girl in Galilee. But we must remind our people that the Bible is a two-act drama, and to start at the Gospels is to join at the interval.

In a sense, Christmas begins on the first pages of Scripture. God's preparations for the moment when this earth would receive its King started where John's Gospel does. With reference to Genesis 1, John begins not with angels and shepherds and wise men but "in the beginning"—in fact, from before the beginning. From eternity past, John reasons, God planned to send His Son so that we might have life with Him for eternity future.

The Advent season comes truly alive when we think about the Lord Jesus. In His humanity, the second person of the Trinity was delivered into the world like billions of other babies have been. Jesus laughed, wept, feasted, prayed, served, traveled, and more.

But John reminds us that Jesus was also divine, existing "in the beginning with God." Jesus was not created, for He is the very creator of the universe. The child in the manger was responsible for putting the stars in the sky—including the very star which led the wise men from the east to come and worship Him. He was "with God," yet He "was God." Both statements are true.

For this reason, we can rightly speak of *Christmas in the beginning*. We can see Jesus in the events Genesis describes. He is the Creator of Genesis 1, the Promised Deliverer of Genesis 3, the Divine Judge of Genesis 6, and the Covenant-Keeping God of Genesis 12.

KEY THEMES

What are the major themes in this portion of Scripture?

1. *Creation.* The eternal, triune God brought all things into existence.
2. *Human sinfulness.* Sin spoils what God made good and separates man from God.
3. *Judgment.* Man's rebellion against God brings divine, just consequences.
4. *Covenant.* God deals in history with His people according to His promises.
5. *Sacrifice.* God provides a substitute to bear the consequences of man's sin.



GOSPEL CONNECTIONS

How does this portion of Scripture anticipate, present, or reflect upon Jesus?

1. *The Gospel in creation (Gen. 1:1).* No matter how far back we consider the beginning of time to be and no matter what model we may have in our minds of how time began, there we will find the preincarnate Son of God already existing. The divine, authoritative Son to whom we are introduced in the Gospels is the very one who created and sustains the universe.
2. *The Gospel in promise (Gen. 3:15).* This passage provides us with what is often referred to as the *protoevangelium*—the first Gospel. Good news was needed because God's command, "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat," was broken, and the promised punishment for such disobedience was death. The baby in the manger at Christmas is the "he" of Genesis 3:15.
3. *The Gospel in judgment (Gen. 6:8–9).* Genesis 6 records humanity's unbounded corruption ten generations after humanity's fall. In His justice, God promised judgment—and in His mercy, He promised salvation from the impending floodwaters for Noah and his family, who trusted in His promise. Unlike Noah, we do not need a wooden boat to find refuge from God's judgment; we need a wooden cross—Calvary, where God's wrath was poured out on His Son in the place of sinners. At the first Christmas, we find a better Noah, rescuing us from a greater judgment.
4. *The Gospel in sacrifice (Gen. 12:2–3).* After promising Abraham a son through whom the nations of the world would enjoy blessing, God tested the patriarch's faith. He told Abraham to take Isaac, the son on whom rested the promise, and offer him as a sacrifice. Abraham obeyed, but God intervened, providing a ram for the offering and sparing Isaac. In a similar yet far greater manner, God would do with His Son what Abraham did not have to do with Isaac: He became the sacrifice in whom sinners can trust for salvation and through whom all the faithful will be blessed. This is God's doing, in fulfillment of His ancient promises to Abraham, and it is glorious in our sight.



WEEK TWO

Second Sunday of Advent

CHRISTMAS IN THE LAND

PREACHING TEXTS

*What are the key texts for preaching this portion of Scripture, and what are their emphases?
(Select one or several based on your preferred approach.)*

1 Samuel 1:19–20. Promises of God, Faithfulness of God, Prayer

2 Chronicles 6:18. Majesty of God, Worship, Incarnation of Christ

Isaiah 9:2. Sin, Salvation, Prophecy

Isaiah 9:6. Character of God, Deity of Christ, Prophecy

Isaiah 40:1–5. Evangelism, Sin and Repentance, Prophecy

Micah 2:2–5. Christ as King, Promises of God, Peace of Christ

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Where are we in the unfolding story of redemption?

Many Old Testament events occur in the promised land, the territory allocated to Abraham's family and settled under Joshua's leadership. But although God's people were in God's land, they were far from Him in heart. Because of their disobedience, Israel experienced instability and insecurity—and yet this period reveals the great faithfulness of God in keeping His promises.

In the promised land, God worked mightily in the lives of ordinary men and women. Consider Hannah, a woman to whom we're introduced in 1 Samuel. Unable to have children, Hannah was a microcosm of Israel's spiritual reality. She was a barren woman in a spiritually fruitless nation. But God remembered Hannah, drawing her into His plans—into the way He would keep His promises to Abraham. From Hannah came Samuel, the prophet who would anoint King David, from whose line Jesus Christ would later come.

It's also in this period that God raised up prophets, men who proclaimed God's future promises. Prophets like Isaiah and Micah foretold the coming of the Lord's salvation in a future, kingly Ruler. The promised Messiah would bring light to a people in deep darkness, tidings of comfort and joy to a distressed nation.

When we speak of *Christmas in the land*, we have occasion to remind our people of our great, promise-keeping God. He remembers His promises, and He remembers His people. We can be sure of this because of what God did in giving us His Son. The Lord Jesus' arrival in history is in fulfillment of God's word and His salvation plan. At Christmastime, we rejoice in knowing that God makes good on every promise He has made.

KEY THEMES

What are the major themes in this portion of Scripture?

1. *Revelation*. God makes Himself known in His creation, in His Word, and ultimately in His Son, who shows us what the Father is like.
2. *Prophecy*. God proclaims His message through human instruments, featuring elements of divine warning and future hope.
3. *Light*. The prophets use this metaphor to describe God's saving intervention on behalf of His rebellious, sinful people.

GOSPEL CONNECTIONS

How does this portion of Scripture anticipate, present, or reflect upon Jesus?

1. *The Gospel in God's remembrance of Hannah* (1 Samuel 1:19–20). Hannah's barrenness should lead us to the New Testament—not only to Mary, a virgin, but also to one of her relatives, Elizabeth. Here was a godly woman who, like Hannah, was barren—until an angel told her husband, Zechariah (whose name means “the Lord remembers”), that she would fall pregnant. Samuel had anointed King David; and Elizabeth and Zechariah's son, John, would baptize King Jesus, David's greater descendant.
2. *The Gospel in the building of the temple* (2 Chronicles 6:18). Jesus Himself is God's eternal Word at work. The one who was “in the beginning” could not be fully contained in Solomon's temple, yet He chose to take on human form. Why? To dwell among us for a little while so that we might dwell with Him forever. Instead of saying, “Did God dwell on earth?” our knowledge of the New Testament allows us to confess, “God *did* dwell on earth.”
3. *The Gospel in the dawning light* (Isaiah 9:2). Not long after Isaiah had come and gone, foreign rulers had triumphed over Israel, and God's prophetic word fell silent. *Perhaps He's really done it this time*, the people may have thought; *maybe the Lord has finally had enough*. But we know better, for into this darkness a child was born. The good news of Christmas is that the God of the Bible, the Light of the World, came down and entered the darkness, and that darkness would not overcome Him. In Jesus, God has drawn near. In Him light has shone.
4. *The Gospel in the promised child* (Isaiah 9:6). Our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace has come. Without Jesus, if we possess everything, we really have nothing. We can joyfully submit to His plans, bow the knee to His rule, rely on His tender care, and let His peace dwell in our hearts. For to us this child, this King, has been born.
5. *The Gospel in Isaiah's message of comfort* (Isaiah 40:1–5). In Jesus is true comfort and real joy. God has spoken. Sin and suffering are not the end of the story. In Jesus is hope for the weariest heart and warmth for the coldest. God has broken into history in His Son, the one in whom we find unshakeable tidings of comfort and joy.
6. *The Gospel in the coming Shepherd-King* (Micah 5:2–5). Jerusalem was the royal city, the place from which kings came. But Bethlehem wouldn't have been on anyone's radar. Just as King David, the shepherd boy and leader of Israel, came from Bethlehem, so Micah announced that once more a Shepherd-King would arise from the small town. The New Testament knows this prophecy to be fulfilled in Jesus, the one on whom all God's prophetic promises rested. The King born in Bethlehem would eventually die a humiliating death on a cross, bearing our iniquities. In Him, Micah said, God's people would find lasting peace.



WEEK THREE
Third Sunday of Advent

CHRISTMAS IN THE GOSPELS

PREACHING TEXTS

*What are the key texts for preaching this portion of Scripture, and what are their emphases?
(Select one or several based on your preferred approach.)*

Matthew 1:1. Promises of God, Fulfillment, Old Testament Figures

Luke 1:31–35. Christ's Birth, Incarnation of Christ, Doctrine

Matthew 1:20–21. Salvation, Sin, Deity of Christ

Luke 2:1–6. Historicity of Jesus, Providence of God

Luke 2:15–17. The Nativity, Humility, Deity of Christ

Matthew 2:1–2, 9–11. The Nativity, Worship, The Power of God

John 1:5. Deity of Christ, Incarnation of Christ

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Where are we in the unfolding story of redemption?

The New Testament shows us that the means by which God's promises are fulfilled, and the entirety of the plan God worked out through the Old Testament age, can be summed up in two words: Jesus Christ. In preaching the Gospels this Advent, we must labor to show our people the continuity between the Old and New Testaments. If the former anticipates Christ, the latter presents Him to us.

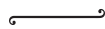
The four Gospels each begin by introducing us to Jesus, though in different ways. Matthew's Gospel starts with a list, exposing the thread from Abraham through David to Christ Jesus. Mark gets right to business, omitting the events of the first Christmas altogether and instead connecting Jesus to the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophetic promises. Luke provides a clarification of his approach and a dedication to his first reader. John begins in poetic form, reflecting upon the Christ child's deity and eternity.

Of course, Christmas in the Gospels confronts us with one of the great mysteries in Christianity: the incarnation, in which the holy Son of God took to Himself a true, human nature. The early Christians, studying the Scriptures carefully, encapsulated well this doctrine. It's worth reflecting on and delighting in:

*We believe in ... one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God,*

*Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the same essence as the Father.
Through Him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven;
He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.*

NICENE CREED, AD 325



KEY THEMES

What are the major themes in this portion of Scripture?

1. *Christology*. This is the study of Jesus' person, ministry, and redemptive work.
2. *Incarnation*. The eternal God takes on flesh, dwelling with man on earth in the person of His Son.
3. *Salvation*. Through the sacrificial death of our representative and substitute, Jesus delivers us from the guilt, penalty, and power of sin.



GOSPEL CONNECTIONS

How does this portion of Scripture anticipate, present, or reflect upon Jesus?

1. *The Gospel in promises fulfilled* (Matthew 1:1). The coming of the Son of God breaks the boundaries of Old Testament categories. Christ is the perfect fulfillment of all God's promises, and He is the reality of all God's great assurances. We look back to a man born of Abraham and David's line, conceived of the Spirit, who was able to announce that the time of fulfillment had come and that the kingdom of God was at hand and who hung on the cross and rose from the grave to make it so.
2. *The Gospel in the mystery of the incarnation* (Luke 1:31–35). The first Christmas declares that God supernaturally intervenes in the affairs of this world to bring about His good purposes. The conversion of every Christian declares the same great truth. It takes the supernatural invasion of God into individuals' lives to bring them to saving faith, just as God sovereignly worked a miracle in Mary's womb to bring us to the Savior.
3. *The Gospel in Jesus' name* (Matthew 1:20–21). The name given to the incarnate Son of God was significant. Jesus was born in a manger in Bethlehem so that He could, as the angel told Joseph, "save his people from their sins," restoring them to peace with God and giving them the promise of eternal life with Him.

4. *The Gospel in Supernatural History* (Luke 2:1–6). Luke provides us with political, social, geographical, and historical observations. He shows us that these events took place in a real, historical time. Christianity is ultimately meaningless apart from the almighty, miraculous intervention of God in time. Jesus really lived, died, and rose, assuring those in Him by faith of their eternal hope.
5. *The Gospel in the nativity* (Matthew 2:1–2, 9–11; Luke 2:15–17). At the first Christmas, God took the initiative in grace, and the shepherds and wise men responded in faith. They eagerly began seeking the manger. The nativity reminds us that Christmas comes alive to the humble—to those who stoop, whose hearts assume a posture of bowing before God’s glory and adoring the one who first humbled Himself by coming to us as an infant King.
6. *The Gospel in Jesus’ light* (John 1:5). As Jesus came into the world as light that exposes darkness, so the Spirit of God comes into our lives and says, “It’s dark in here.” By nature, we don’t realize it’s dark. By and large, we think it’s fine, for it’s all we’ve known. But once we have realized it’s dark, we can reach for a light. And light is what Jesus brought and what the Spirit brings.



WEEK FOUR
Fourth Sunday of Advent

CHRISTMAS IN THE LETTERS

PREACHING TEXTS

*What are the key texts for preaching this portion of Scripture, and what are their emphases?
(Select one or several based on your preferred approach.)*

Hebrews 1:2–3. Revelation, Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King

Galatians 4:4–7. Adoption, God's Law, Incarnation of Christ

Philippians 2:5–8. Incarnation, Humanity of Christ, Service

Titus 2:11. Grace of God, Salvation, Evangelism

1 John 4:10. Atonement, Love of God, Evangelism

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Where are we in the unfolding story of redemption?

Genesis reminded us that our creator God is a promise-keeping God. It taught us to expect that He would send someone to restore this fallen world, that this someone is a Deliverer, and that in Him all the nations of the world will be blessed. The Writings and the Prophets provided for us a blurry image full of hope, expectation, and vague details about God's redemptive plan. And then the Gospels gave us a crystal-clear lens through which we can see that Jesus is the one in whom all our hopes, all God's promises, and all our longings are fulfilled.

The New Testament epistles expound upon the Jesus portrayed to us in the Gospels. Penned in the decades following Jesus' ascension, the writers, under the inspiration of the Spirit, thought deeply on Jesus' life and work. Their letters offer a theological interpretation of the Lord's ministry. In Philippians, for example, Paul raises and answers the question of what exactly it means for the divine, preincarnate Son to come to us, describing it as a self-emptying. And in Galatians, Paul describes the wonder of being adopted into God's family through Jesus.

In tracing the theme of *Christmas in the Letters*, we explore what are some of Christianity's most precious truths. The eternal God has come to us as a servant, living and dying that we might be welcomed into the household of faith. The highlight of Christmas for the Christian is that God loved us, sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).

KEY THEMES

What are the major themes in this portion of Scripture?

1. *Adoption*. God works to rescue, accept, and love men and women out of their sin and into His spiritual family.
2. *Grace*. God shows undeserved kindness to His people.
3. *Propitiation*. In Christ, God takes the punishment of sin upon Himself, averting His wrath against sinners.



GOSPEL CONNECTIONS

How does this portion of Scripture anticipate, present, or reflect upon Jesus?

1. *The Gospel in God's revelation (Hebrews 1:2–3)*. Hebrews reminds us that God's Son has spoken to us through His Word, is the agent of all creation, inherits everything from the Father, is the perfect expression of God's glory, and upholds the universe by His powerful word. As Prophet, He not only speaks God's words; He is God's Word. As Priest, He not only offers a sacrifice for sins but also is Himself the sacrifice. As King, He not only rules His people for a period of time but also reigns everywhere, forever. And it is He who lay in the manger that first Christmas.
2. *The Gospel in adoption (Galatians 4:4–7)*. Christ came in the fullness of time that He might live, die, and rise. On the basis of His work, we may become God's children. If we are Christ's by faith, we are adopted; if we are adopted, then we can be sure that we are loved with a divine love so deep that eternity is too short to plumb it.
3. *The Gospel in Jesus' humiliation (Philippians 2:5–8)*. At the very heart of this passage is a call to humility. Christ taking on flesh is the pinnacle of humility, in that He didn't hold on to His own uninterrupted glory; He chose to set it aside, coming to our fallen, helpless world on our behalf. Jesus didn't approach the incarnation asking, "What's in it for Me?" so much as "What do they need Me to do for them?" Indeed, He humbled Himself in laying down His life.
4. *The Gospel in God's grace (Titus 2:11)*. God's grace—His undeserved kindness—appeared when Jesus was born as a Savior because this is a world in need of salvation. No one will understand the joy of Christmas until they understand the necessity of Christmas. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people.
5. *The Gospel in God's love (1 John 4:10)*. Christmastime reminds us that God demonstrates His love for us not simply by sending Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem so that He could grow up and show us how to live a good life; rather, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).



WEEK FIVE
Last Sunday of the Year

AWAITING A NEW ADVENT

PREACHING TEXTS

*What are the key texts for preaching this portion of Scripture, and what are their emphases?
(Select one or several based on your preferred approach.)*

Revelation 11:15. Kingdom of God, Christ as King, Salvation

Revelation 21:1–4. New Creation, Return of Christ, Evangelism

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Where are we in the unfolding story of redemption?

The whole of Scripture is both a lesson in history and a promise for the future. We see this especially in the wonder of the Lord's coming to us. Jesus' first advent saw the coming of the King to display the kingdom and open the kingdom; His second advent will see the final arrival of His kingdom in all its fullness and glory. It is to *that* advent that the book of Revelation looks.

In terms of biblical theology, we know (and ought to remind our people!) that God's kingdom has several dimensions. The establishment of Jesus' kingdom takes place in three ways: the kingdom *has come* already in the person and work of Jesus, who announced, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15); it *is coming* as the Holy Spirit awakens men and women to believe the Gospel; and it *will come* at some God-ordained, undisclosed time, when He will make all things new.

In this sense, Christmastime spurs us to look back *and* to look forward so we might look more like Jesus today. We reflect on the wonder of the nativity, in which the eternal Son of God came to us as a lowly infant. But we also anticipate the future day when the resurrected Christ will come again, inaugurating the new creation. The God who came down at the first Christmas is surely, gloriously coming back again.

KEY THEMES

What are the major themes in this portion of Scripture?

1. *The kingdom of God.* The Son of God brings His heavenly reign to earth, transferring men and women from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light through the Gospel.
2. *New creation.* God in Christ will return to make this world brand-new, restoring paradise and housing the redeemed.



GOSPEL CONNECTIONS

How does this portion of Scripture anticipate, present, or reflect upon Jesus?

1. *The Gospel in the coming kingdom (Rev. 11:15).* When we think about Jesus' advent, we do our hearts and minds a disservice if we think only of the first and not the second. The King came down to earth to save us from sin; He came also to save us for eternal life with Him in His perfected kingdom.
2. *The Gospel in the new creation (Rev. 21:1–4).* Christians anticipate what is to come. We take seriously the challenge of living a life that is pure before God's gaze—that is ready for His return. God purifies men and women through the power of the Gospel, transforming those who believe into His likeness. We foster a passionate concern to see others come to know and love our God, Jesus Christ, that they may be fit for inhabiting the new creation.

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