

Gospel-Centered Advent Reading Christmas Eve: The Christ Candle

Since the moment Adam took a bite out of the forbidden fruit we've all been waiting for a Savior to come and put things right again (Gen 3:15). We waited during the time of Noah and the flood. We waited during the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We waited during the years of captivity in Egypt and the years of spiritual rebellion in Israel. We waited under the good but broken King David and the bad kings who followed. We waited in exile in Babylon. We waited and waited in the darkness of our sin. Then one night the angel Gabriel appeared to a young woman, a virgin named Mary.

Luke 1:30-33 (NIV) 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

The wait is over. The Savior has come. His name "Jesus" means "Yahweh is salvation." Yahweh is the God of Israel's special covenant name. Finally, Yahweh has sent a Savior to put things right again. Jesus is the Son of the Most High, a descendent of King David, and one of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's descendants. Salvation has arrived.

So then, if Jesus is the Savior, why did it seem like he failed so spectacularly? His birth was quite extraordinary. Angels sang and shepherds worshipped but a short life later his body hung still on a wood cross. God didn't save him. His death was final, or so we thought...

Three days later the earth shook, angels came down from heaven, the rock covering his tomb rolled away, and inside lay nothing but empty sheets (Matt 28:2; John 20:7). The wait was finally over. Salvation had come. Jesus took our death upon himself. He died so that we could live. These words from John's gospel offer hope to us all.

John 3:16 (NIV) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Now as we light the candle of Christ we thank God the wait for our salvation is over. Our Savior Jesus Christ has come. He came in the birth of a small baby boy, conceived in the virgin Mary, born in a manger, died on a cross, risen from the dead, ascended to God's throne in heaven. At Christmas we celebrate our Savior's first arrival and look forward to his second. Jesus will come soon and finally put all things right, but for now we wait. This time we wait not in the darkness of our sin, but in the light of Christ's salvation, full of hope as we wait our Savior's return. Merry Christmas.

Pastor Jonathan Romig wrote this gospel-centered advent readings to tell the big-story of the Bible. Please feel free to use these readings in your church to share the gospel. Find more advent readings at CornerstoneWestford.com.