

RE: Advent - how do Christians prepare for Christmas?

WHAT?

- Christians prepare for Christmas by celebrating Advent.
- They visit the themes of Advent—hope, peace, love and joy—and endeavour to follow these practices in everyday life.
- Advent means ‘coming’ and is a season of hope and anticipation.
- Christians hope and anticipate the second coming of Jesus Christ, who they believe is their messiah and who they believe promised He would return.
- In Judaism, there is a contrast in that they believe their messiah is yet to come.
- Jews expect a great warrior king to help to fight oppression from the Romans and to free them—they await their promised messiah.
- God’s salvation plan—‘the big story’ means that He sent a messiah to show people how to live their lives; to teach them about loving God and one another. This contrasts with the beliefs in Judaism.
- Some artefacts linked to Advent are Advent Wreaths and Advent Calendars.
- The Prophet Isaiah foretold events about the life of Jesus Christ.
- John the Baptist was a spokesperson for God and prepared the way for Jesus—in many ways he helped to plan for His arrival. He instantly recognised Him when He was resurrected.
- John the Baptist helped people to repent by baptising them in the River Jordan.
- Mary was Jesus’ mother and was alongside Him in various times during His life.
- There are similarities and differences between what Christian denominations believe about Mary (Roman Catholics vs Methodist / Baptists etc.) Mary is venerated by Catholics, but not by other Christians.
- Advent can be compared in many ways to other times of celebration in the liturgical year: Lent, Pentecost, Christmas.
- Not all Christian denominations celebrate Advent.
- Advent is also a time of repentance and humility. Christians believe it is a time to reflect upon their lives, who they are and what God has planned for them.

THEMES

Advent Wreath



The Advent Wreath is made of evergreen branches in the shape of a circle. It is a symbol used during Advent, which begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas.

Each candle has a special meaning and they are lit one at a time every week.

The candles represent the HOPE, PEACE, LOVE and JOY that Jesus brings to a room when they are lit. They help Christians to anticipate the second coming of Christ.

KEY VOCABULARY:

ADVENT: Meaning ‘coming’ or ‘arrival’, it is the period leading up to Christmas, when Christians prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

PROPHECY: A message believed to be communicated by a divine source, predicting future events.

PROPHET: A person who is chosen by God to convey divine messages.

THE SECOND COMING (PAROUSIA): The second arrival and the return to Earth of Jesus Christ, as believed by Christians.

REPENTANCE: The act of feeling regret or remorse for wrongdoing and a desire to change your behaviour or ways.

HUMILITY: The quality of being humble and modest.

MESSIAH: The saviour or a chosen one; often associated with religious prophecies and beliefs.

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What is Advent and when is it celebrated?
2. Why is Advent a time of preparation?
3. What is being prepared for during Advent?
4. Who is the messiah and what does Judaism teach about it instead?