

Hindsight

ADVENT 2020

Reading Guide for Individuals

At the start of this year, there were many leaders in the world who tried to inspire their followers by framing the year 2020 as one of great “vision.” Since perfect vision is 20/20, this was understandable, even if it may have been a little bit corny! But this year has shown us how little we know of the future, hasn’t it? No one anticipated COVID-19. No one could have guessed how dramatically our lives have changed over these past twelve months. So, as we approach the Christmas season, and the end of this difficult year, a cliché in our culture has taken on deeper significance: “HINDISGHT is 20/20.”

As we anticipate the unknowns of the future and live in trials of the present, we would be wise to look to the past. In the pages of Scripture and in the events of history, we can see with greater clarity who God is and what He is like. When we look back at His past promises and actions, we don’t have to wonder or guess what He will be like in the future.

Advent is a time that we look forward to the second coming of Christ. There are some things we know with certainty about His return, but between now and then, there are many things that remain hidden and mysterious. It’s as if we are walking through a deep fog, even though we know our ultimate destination. Yet behind us in time, the fog has lifted. So we can look back at all that God has done, and listen to all that He has promised, to help us press into the fog in faith.

What follows are recommended Scriptures for you to read and meditate on during this Advent season, under these headings:

- Week One (beginning November 29) – The Past *Actions* of God
- Week Two (beginning December 6) – The Past *Promises* of God
- Week Three (beginning December 13) – The *Personal Dealings* of God
- Week Four (beginning December 20) – The *Future Dealings* of God

The Past Actions of God

Starting November 29

As we look back into time, it is helpful for us to look at the ways God has acted—not merely the things He has *said* (though that would be enough), but the things that He has *done* for His people. Take time this week to revisit and meditate on these passages, noting how God has repeatedly proven His love for His people and His power to save.

- Genesis 8 (The Flood)
- Exodus 14 (The Exodus)
- 2 Chronicles 36:17-23 (The Return From Exile)
- Psalm 136
- Acts 13:26-39 (The Cross & Resurrection)

The Past Promises of God

Starting December 6

God has a proven record of keeping His promises—*all* of His promises. Whenever we look to the future and are tempted to wonder if He will keep the promises He has made in Scripture, we can look back at countless examples of how He has always kept His word. During Advent, one place we can look to see God's reliability is to remember the promises He made about the coming Messiah and see how they were fulfilled just as He said. Read these passages this week, and remember that God always keeps His promises.

- Isaiah 7:14 (cross-reference Matthew 1:22-23)
- Isaiah 9:1-2 (cross-reference Matthew 4:12-17)
- Isaiah 53:4-6 (cross-reference 1 Peter 2:24)
- Micah 5:2 (cross-reference Matthew 2:5-6)
- Romans 1:1-6, Titus 1:1-3, 1 Peter 1:10-12

The Personal Dealings of God

Starting December 13

While we can look at the events of history to see God's actions and promises, we can also look at the history of our own lives. God is not a God who merely deals at the level of nations and kingdoms, while ignoring individuals. He cares deeply for each and every one of His people, and we would be wise to remember the ways that He has engaged with us personally in the past to help deepen our trust in Him as we face the future. This week, take time to read these Scriptures that show individuals remembering God's dealings with them, and be encouraged to follow their example.

- Psalm 18:1-30
- Psalm 103:1-5
- Psalm 116
- Psalm 119:65-72
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

The Future Dealings of God

Starting December 20

Thus far, we have stressed looking backward in time to remember how God has worked in the past. But this is not merely to be sentimental; it's to help us trust God in the *present* and believe His promises for the *future*. Advent is not just a time to look backward, but to look forward. God kept His promise of sending Christ into our world, and He will keep His promise to have Him return once again. This week, take time to read and meditate on these passages of Scripture.

- John 14:1-6
- Acts 1:6-11
- 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
- 1 Peter 1:3-5
- Revelation 21:1-27