

# The Four words of Christmas

## Advent

There are themes of Christmas. Our society has changed over the centuries. What was tradition in the first century has evolved. In years gone by, the Jewish nation held Passover and several other feasts. Each one was to commemorate something God did. Christmas is traditionally to commemorate the birth of Jesus called the Christ. So often we associate Jesus and Christ together as if its his last name. To the Jewish people that Christ was their promised messiah, savior, and redeemer from captivity. To Christians, he has taken on deeper meaning.

This current generation does not know the traditions of the past. We have gone too far in time. Wars are distant just as the birth of Jesus was over 2000 years ago. People struggle to put significance into poppies and crosses. To be far, history and tradition are becoming a far distant thought. It just been too long. Yet, at times we hear words like Advent, Lent, Nativity, and Noel. What are they to us here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

Advent is an interesting word. It basically means arrival of someone. At times you may have heard of an advent calendar or wreath. Why do they exist? Advent is a Christian term that symbolizes the four weeks prior to Christmas. This word is used to bring on the Christmas season. Further to that, it is a path towards the (arrival) birth of Jesus who Christians call the Christ. Jesus was Jewish. The Christian community recognized this by adopting him as their long-awaited messiah. Although many people are not Jewish, Christians believe that Jesus is their Christ who will save the whole world, not just the Jewish nation.

Advent usually begins four or five Sundays prior to Christmas. The tradition is all over the map. Scholars believe it began somewhere near 500 A.D. A German tradition has been added with the lighting of candles to symbolize the four Sundays and a fifth to recognize the birth of Jesus. They call this the Advent wreath. Have you ever wondered about the advent calendar? You know those little boxes we open every day till Christmas. They usually have a chocolate in each one. Although we don't use the term Advent much anymore, we still use the four Sundays to mark the coming of Christmas.

There are some interesting points to mark Christmas. One is shopping. You could make a case for the wise men that brought Jesus gifts. Do we give gifts to our loved ones in that tradition? St Nicholas was a man who (by tradition) gave to the poor. Many of us (by tradition) shop from Black Friday to New Year's Day. We give to ourselves and others. Generally speaking, Jesus was not born on this day, the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. Yet, the church decided to mark this day in line with the beginning of the Roman winter solace calendar. It is also considered the shortest day of the year.

Advent begins with the reading of the Bible. Usually they tell of the prophesy and foretelling of this Christ. On consecutive Sundays leading to Christmas churches read about John the Baptist, Jesus birth, and the Nativity story. Though the centuries this tradition of Advent has changed and developed. This is not a Jewish tradition adopted by Christians. Things like Santa, trees, and stockings have been added to the Christmas tradition. Advent is just the oldest mark of the beginning of Christmas. To remind us all of what Christmas really is: the gift of Jesus (by God the Father) to the world.