



THE JOURNEY

SUPPLEMENTAL STUDY

▼

ADVENT SERMON SERIES
STUDY RESOURCE

A 1-WEEK JOURNEY SECTION

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AN ADVENT SERIES

STUDY RESOURCE

This resource was developed by the Perimeter Discipleship team as an optional unit to go along with the Advent sermon series. This study, like the Journey curriculum, follows the T.E.A.M.S.© outline based upon the five essential ingredients that foster life change: Truth, Equipping, Accountability, Mission, and Supplication. Whether you are in a discipleship group or not, we hope this resource might bless you this season as we celebrate Him and long for His return.

TRUTH

► BY MEMORY

"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

ISAIAH 49:6 (ESV)

► IN BIBLE

Advent means "arrival." The season of Advent is one of expectation and longing. For the Jewish people of the first century, there was a longing for and expectation of the arrival of the Messiah—the One who would be their deliverer. For the Christian today, we are able to look back on the story of redemption and know that the Deliverer is Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of sinners. We also know that He has promised to come again to put an end to sin and death once and for all. For us, then, the season of Advent is one of both celebration

and expectation. We celebrate that Jesus has come while we long for Him to come again.

This week, we will spend our time focusing on a few sections of the book of Isaiah known as the "Servant Songs." These prophetic passages will help us understand what, or more accurately, whom God wanted the people of Israel to be longing for. Studying these songs will give us deeper insight into the person and role of Jesus as our Savior, encouraging us to celebrate Him and long for His return during this Advent season.

Consider studying one passage per day using PRAISE as you work through this unit.

PRAY FIRST : **READ THE TEXT** : **ASK QUESTIONS** : **INTERPRET IN CONTEXT** : **SUMMARIZE APPLICATIONS** : **ENGAGE WITH GOD**



MATTHEW 20:25-28 – Shortly before Jesus enters Jerusalem on the week of His crucifixion, He speaks candidly to His disciples about differences between His kingly reign and the lordship of typical governmental rulers of the day. Jesus refers to Himself using the title Son of Man which is a title from Daniel 7:13-14 that describes a king from God who has dominion over all peoples, nations and languages.

When comparing political leaders and world powers, we, like the Israelites, would have a lot of expectations for what a powerful leader looks like. How does Jesus describe power and rule in His kingdom? How do you think this might have challenged the disciples' expectations of a Messiah?

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The Servant Songs of Isaiah.

The book of Isaiah contains four "songs" that foretell the coming of a deliverer sent by God. In these songs, this deliverer is referred to as a servant. These songs reveal to us both the character and role of this coming servant. We will approach each song asking the same questions: what is the character of this Servant and what will He do? These passages are written as prophetic poetry which can be a bit complex to grasp initially. Don't worry if you don't understand everything as you study these passages. A study Bible may be a helpful resource.

ISAIAH 42:1-9 – The First Servant Song

As you read through this passage use the space below to write what you learn about the character of the Servant and what He will do.

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ISAIAH 49:1-6 – The Second Servant Song

As you read through this passage use the space below to write what you learn about the character of the Servant and what He will do.

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ISAIAH 50:4-9 – The Third Servant Song

As you read through this passage use the space below to write what you learn about the character of the Servant and what He will do.

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ISAIAH 52:13-53:12 – The Fourth Servant Song

As you read through this passage use the space below to write what you learn about the character of the Servant and what He will do.

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► TO SUMMARIZE

Hope can be a dangerous thing. Just ask any Atlanta sports fan. To have an eager expectation and longing for something is risky. Have you ever been in the market to buy a home? You begin looking for locations and prices that fit, then you scour—seemingly endlessly—through pictures online. You find the “perfect” forever home and begin imagining your family there, your grandkids, your retirement, and all of the wonderful memories you’ll make there over the years. At that point, you remind yourself that you’ve been staring at your phone for 30 minutes and should probably just get to bed. The next day, you take a tour of the home only to find out that the current owner of the home had a very talented photographer. The house is a disaster, the yard is much smaller than it seemed, and you’re not sure that the stench in your nostrils will ever go away. This was not what you expected.

Home buying is a little thing in comparison to some of the weightier “hopes” of our lives. We all know the fear that comes when we let our heart and emotions truly long for something. The disappointment of a lost hope can feel utterly crushing.

The Servant Songs of Isaiah set up tremendous expectations of deliverance for the people of God. A bit of historical context will help us understand these expectations better. The book of Isaiah was written between 700 and 681 BC. God’s people have been divided into two nations: Israel and Judah. Israel’s wickedness led to their being conquered and exiled away from their land. The people of Judah are now being warned that their wickedness will lead to a similar fate. Isaiah accurately predicts the Babylonian conquest of Judah, and he speaks to the hope of their deliverance. The Servant Songs are written to the people of Judah as though they are already exiles in Babylon.

If you were to read through the chapters of Isaiah 41-66, you would see that God is promising that His people will be delivered. But delivered from what? How? For people who are already exiles in Babylon, who’ve been taken away from their homeland, their expected deliverance would obviously be from their Babylonian captors. And in these chapters, Isaiah accurately predicts how this will happen through “one from the north” (41:25), “the Lord’s anointed” (45:1) Cyrus the Great, King of Persia who will conquer Babylon and decree the reconstruction of the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:22). The people were expecting a real, political

and military deliverance through a pagan king whom the Lord would use to rescue them. And it happened. If we fast-forward about 600 years to the first century, the Jewish people are back in their homeland, but they are again ruled by a foreign power, Rome. They look to the book of Isaiah to find hope for deliverance. They see what happened historically before, and it begins to shape their hope for what God might do again: deliver them from another foreign power with military and political might.

But the Servant Songs in these chapters don’t seem to be talking about deliverance from Babylon, and they certainly don’t sound like they are describing the pagan King Cyrus as the deliverer. God through Isaiah is weaving together two stories of deliverance. First in the sixth century BC through Cyrus the Great, God’s people are delivered from exile. And second, they are delivered from the oppression and reign of sin through the Servant who will come not with political or military might, but one “*who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*” (Philippians 2:6-8)

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So, who is this Servant of the Songs of Isaiah? We know that it is Jesus. But what should have been expected of Him when He did come? What does it really mean when we sing, “come Thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free?”

SONG 1: ISAIAH 42:1-9

We see this Servant is the One in whom God delights who will bring justice to the nations yet be so gentle that “a bruised reed he will not break.” In this Servant, there is a union of gentleness and power that invites the weakest of us and yet can stand against the most powerful foe. He will be God’s covenant to His people. He will be a light to the nations. He will open eyes that are blind and release prisoners.

In Jesus, we see a Savior who came to the lowly places of society to bring healing. Shortly after Jesus heals a man with a withered hand, Matthew explains the healing by saying it was done to fulfill Isaiah’s first servant song (Matthew 12:15-21). This song is again fulfilled in the Passover meal that Jesus has with the 12. As he raises the cup, He declares “*this cup is the new covenant in my blood.*” Jesus himself has become God’s covenant for His people. Jesus is the Servant of Isaiah 42.

SONG 2: ISAIAH 49:1-6

The Servant of this second song is One who brings glory to God and whose mouth is sharp as a sword—that is His words of judgment have authority. Yet He comes not only to judge, but to be a light far beyond Israel so that the salvation of the Lord would reach the end of the earth.

John chapter 1 introduces us to Jesus as the Word who has become flesh, full of grace and truth. He is the light of the world; a light that darkness cannot overcome and shines far beyond the borders of Israel (see also Acts 13:47). Jesus is the Servant of Isaiah 49.

SONG 3: ISAIAH 50:4-9

The Servant we see in this song brings a gentle word to sustain those who are weary. He is a Servant who has never rebelled against God, but who received the punishment and shaming of a rebel. He takes on this punishment with an unwavering trust in God, knowing that though he will endure the most unjust suffering, He trusts that His vindication will come.

In Jesus, we see One who offers himself to the weary and heavy laden to bring them

rest because He is gentle and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:28-29). He was tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). And He is the founder and perfecter of our faith because for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God, despite enduring hostility from the very sinners He came to save (Hebrews 12:2-3). Jesus is the Servant of Isaiah 50.

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SONG 4: ISAIAH 52:13-53:12

This Servant is high and lifted up, exalted. These are titles which are only ascribed to God. Yet this Servant will suffer unimaginably. Despised, rejected, tortured, beaten. He will be called a man of sorrows, well acquainted with grief. He will carry our sorrows and griefs while we continue to give Him no esteem. He will be crushed for our iniquities and His chastisement will bring us peace. He will silently be led to His death, though He will be completely innocent. Yet somehow, *"he shall see his offspring prolong their days"* (v.10). This is something that can only be done by one who is alive, not one who has died.

Jesus is God in flesh, yet He was born a man in poverty. He healed the sick. Matthew 8:17 describes His healing ministry as a fulfillment of this Servant Song. He went to the cross to bear our sins on Himself; being condemned by God so that we would receive the peace of God instead of His judgement. But that was not the end of the story, He rose from the grave, conquering sin and death, to see us enjoy the inheritance of God that He has secured for us.

Certainly, we could plumb the depths of these passages even further, but at this point it is clear that Jesus is the Servant of Isaiah. And that brings us back to the question of expectations. In a strange way, Jesus disappointed the expectations of the first century Jews. If they were looking for another king like Cyrus to deliver them from the Romans, they did not find it when they looked at Jesus. Instead, He speaks directly to their faulty expectations in Matthew 20:25-28 when he tells the disciples that the Son of Man—the King and Ruler of all things—will not come to rule like the Gentiles do. He came not to be served,

but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. He is identifying Himself as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. But when we hear Jesus' words of "disappointment" to the disciples, we begin to feel that maybe their expectations and longings were misplaced. What Jesus actually came to do was better than their expectations.

That's probably true for us, too. Our expectations of Jesus' deliverance in our own lives may be too low or misplaced entirely. Maybe we're expecting His financial blessing, while instead He's delivering us from a heart of greed that's far more destructive in our lives than we realized. Maybe we expect His healing, while instead He's offering us His comforting presence more deeply than we would have ever known without the pain. We can put our entire hope on Jesus, our Servant-King. He will never extinguish a flickering flame when our faith seems weak, He has and always will meet our deepest longings. Because He created those longings in us to be satisfied in Him alone.

The season of Advent is about longing and expectation. Are our expectations aligned with God's Word? Or are they shaped more by the world around us so that we—like those in the first century—miss Him when He's right in front of us? We serve a Servant-King who came to us lowly, born in a manger, conquering sin and death in a most unexpected way. He reigns right now, bringing His kingdom on earth in often unexpected ways. But He is coming again in power to bring His Kingdom on earth once and for all, putting death to death and destroying sin completely. It is His kingdom that we can long for with a confident and joyful expectation.

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EQUIPPING

Review the passages that you read in Isaiah. What phrases from the Servant Songs bring you the most comfort? Write them below.

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Because of faulty expectations of who the Messiah would be, many people of Jesus' day—even those who knew the Scriptures—didn't recognize Him to be their promised Rescuer. From your study this week, what aspects of Jesus' character and actions do you think might have been surprising for the Jewish people in the first century?

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Advent is a season of both celebration and longing for our Savior. Use the space below to write things about who Christ is and what He's done that you want to celebrate and some of the things you most long for about His return.

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ACCOUNTABILITY

Before your Journey Group meeting, think about the questions below. You may be asked any of these questions and you may be asking them of another group member. These questions will help you to examine your life in light of the truth you explored this week. They also give other group members an opportunity to encourage you to live fully for Christ. Space is provided below so you can jot down notes during the accountability discussions in your group meeting.

Are there any areas of your life that you might have misplaced expectations or longings?

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Do you find this season to be filled with longing for Jesus? Why or why not?

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What temptations do you tend to face with more intensity in this season than the rest of the year? How can your group help you?

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What ways can your personal worship thrive rather than diminish during this season? If it is helpful, write a few specific action steps you want to take.

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Describe your faithfulness as an ambassador for Christ this week.

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MISSION

► PERSPECTIVE

Take some time to pray and review the ADVENT SERVE GUIDE perimeter.org/ServeGuide. As you review the guide, think through the following:

What are some of my gifts, talents or passions?

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Where has God placed me in the season? (Think through where you live, where you work, and where you play—hobbies, kids' activities, etc.)

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Based on the serve guide and how God has made you and where He's placed you, list three opportunities from the serve guide that you would consider being a part of.

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3.

Who do you want to talk to about possibly doing one or all of these with you? (Family, group, friends, etc.)

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What steps do you need to take in the next week to move forward with this opportunity?

Use this space below to write a prayer about how you hope to see God use you through serving.

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SUPPLICATION

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

MARK 10:45

My prayer request regarding the truth for this week:

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My prayer request regarding a situation in my life:

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My prayer request regarding living a missional life:

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