

“What Is Advent?”

by Wayne Goff

I read an article on the internet which discussed a religious practice observed by many denominations, but with some confusion. Let's take a look and see what the Bible says about it.

“Advent”

The writer of the article, Justin Holcomb, mentions that many “Christians” are confused over the “liturgical year” and “the Advent season.” He explained that “Advent” referred to the “anticipation of Christ’s birth in the season leading up to Christmas.”

The History of Advent

Interestingly enough, Mr. Holcomb explains that the word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. During the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God’s incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matt. 2:1).

However, by the 6th century, “Roman Christians” had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. But the “coming” they had in mind was not Christ’s first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but His second coming in the cloud as the Judge of the world! “It was not until the Middle Ages that the Advent season was linked to Christ’s first coming at Christmas.”

Finally, according to Mr. Holcomb, Advent today is the season that lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. “At that time, the new Christian year begins with the twelve-day celebration of Christmastide, which lasts from Christmas Eve until Epiphany on January 6.”

Advent Practice

Mr. Holcomb explains that there are two elements to be observed in the Advent Season. (1) The first two Sundays in Advent look forward to Christ’s second coming; and (2) the last two Sundays look backward to remember Christ’s first coming.

The Bible Does Not Teach “Advent Season”!

I have been a Christian for over four decades now, and a preacher for a few years less than that, and I can tell you that in all of my reading of the Bible — both Old and New Testaments — that I know **nothing** of “Advent Season.” That is because the Bible does not teach the practice or observance of such! Men have made up a very elaborate, fanciful doctrine and practice which they now call “Advent,” but our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had nothing to do with it!

Unfortunately, some will argue that since it is a long-time practice which dates back to the 4th century, then who am I to argue that there is no place for such a religious observance? To that statement I would have to agree that I am “nobody.” But Jesus is a Somebody, and He said in Matthew 15:8-9, *“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”* So Jesus said man-made practices, like “Advent” are “*vain worship*”! Who are you and I to argue with Jesus?

Jesus authorized **five acts of worship** to be observed every Lord’s Day in His church: (1) Lord’s Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; (2) Bible teaching, Acts 2:42; (3) Prayer, Acts 2:42; (4) Christian giving, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; (5) Singing, Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16.

There is no authorization for the church’s observance of “*days and months and seasons and years*” (Galatians 4:10). When the Christians in the region of Galatia did so in conjunction with Old Testament Judaism, the apostle Paul rebuked them! That Law had been taken away, and to continue to observe these old relics was tantamount to falling from grace (Gal. 5:4)!

But some will still argue, “What’s wrong with it?” To which I must reply: “The real question is, ‘What’s right with it?’” Jesus condemns those who practice “*iniquity*” (Matt. 7:23, KJV) or “*lawlessness*” (Matt. 7:23, NKJV)! So it behooves us to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), and act accordingly. Good intentions by men is not good enough.

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