

Advent: Clash of Two Kingdoms

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Advent: Clash of Two Kingdoms

Leader's Guide

Jesus Came to Overcome Darkness

Jesus' coming to earth revealed the great clash of two kingdoms.

Advent is an immensely important event. It's more than a nice tale about a baby being born in difficult circumstances. It is the strategy of God and the tactics of the Son. It's about life, death, blood, confrontation, darkness, light, and war. It's the clash of two kingdoms.



Scripture: [John 1](#)

Based on: [The sermon series "Clash of Two Kingdoms,"](#) by Brad Reardon



Jesus Came to Overcome Darkness

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to Leader: Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Blitzkrieg (German for “lightning war”) was an idea the Nazis of World War II used to try to overwhelm Europe and Russia. About the furthest thing on anyone’s mind during Advent is a word like blitzkrieg. Advent cards have words such as *peace* and *hope*, not military terms like blitzkrieg. You never see a card that says, “Wishing you a Merry Blitzkrieg,” or “May all your blitzkrieg dreams come true.” So why are we talking about it? It’s unavoidable if you read John 1:5, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Advent is an immensely important event. It’s more than a nice tale about a baby being born in difficult circumstances. It is the strategy of God and the tactics of the Son. It’s about life, death, blood, confrontation, darkness, light, and war. It’s the clash of two kingdoms. It’s the blitzkrieg of God.

The world may sneer at the tactics that Christ employs. The world has little wisdom—really no understanding of God’s wisdom. Christ comes with a set purpose that will not be stopped, and his enemies will be useful even when they think they are winning. Second Corinthians 2:11 says, “... we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”

Discussion Starters:

[Q] In what ways was the coming of Christ to earth more like a blitzkrieg than a Sunday school picnic?

[Q] Have you ever been in a physically dark place, such as a cave or a windowless room, with the lights out? If so, tell us what that experience was like.

Optional Activity: Collect as many different kinds of Christmas cards as you can find. Pass them out among your group and ask them what they think each card has to do with the true meaning of Christmas.



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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Advent is all about the eternal Christ.

Evangelist Luis Palau tells of a wealthy European family who decided to have their newborn baby baptized in their enormous mansion. Dozens of guests were invited to the elaborate affair, and they all arrived dressed to the nines. After depositing their elegant wraps on a bed in an upstairs room, the guests were entertained royally.

Soon the time came for the main purpose of their gathering: the infant's baptismal ceremony. But where was the baby? No one seemed to know. The child's governess ran upstairs and returned with a desperate look on her face. Everyone searched frantically for the baby. Then someone recalled having seen him asleep on one of the beds. The baby was on a bed all right—buried beneath a pile of coats, jackets, and furs. The object of that day's celebration had been forgotten, neglected, and nearly smothered.

That's the way it often is at this time of the year. We are distracted by so many things, yet only one person deserves our focus.

[Q] Read John 1:1–18. Discuss what you learn about Jesus Christ from these verses.

[Q] Read what Jesus said in his prayer in John 17:5. What does that tell you about Jesus?

The Incarnation (God coming to earth) cannot be redefined. People have been trying to dodge it, redefine it, and deny it for centuries. They try to diminish the glory of Jesus by denying and renouncing his deity. Many say Jesus was like God. Read what John 5:18 has to say about this.

[Q] What's wrong with simply saying Jesus was like God?

[Q] What about your Christmas traditions helps others see that God came to earth in the form of Jesus?

Teaching Point Two: Advent is about Christ coming to a dark world.

We only have to look around to realize we live in a dark world.

[Q] Read the following four verses and discuss what they tell us about the darkness: Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 11:14–15; 1 Peter 5:8.

But the good news is, as John 1:5 says, “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.” The victor is declared before the victor goes to work. So you could label this verse: Light Wins and Darkness Loses.



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Why does darkness not overcome the light? Look again at John 1:1–4. The Advent of Christ means the Creator of all things (including the dark powers) will win over darkness. The demoniacs in Matthew 8:29 cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” “Before the time!” They know a time is set for their destruction and their everlasting consignment to hell. They know the light will win.

“In him was life, and that life was the light of men.” Jesus is the light. The light that shines in the darkness that cannot be overcome is Jesus. And he says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

[Q] Name some ways Christ conquered the darkness when he first came to earth, as evidenced in Scripture.

[Q] How has Christ conquered the darkness in your life? Name some ways.

Teaching Point Three: Advent reveals the human condition.

Author and poet Carl Sandberg captured the truth of our human nature: “There is an eagle in me that wants to soar, and there is a hippopotamus in me that wants to wallow in the mud.” We can all relate to that.

In his book *Being the Body*, Charles Colson writes about meeting a businessman whom he calls Mr. Abercrombie. Mr. Abercrombie had invited Colson to speak at a Bible study he hosted. Nineteen other movers and shakers of the business world were in attendance. Colson writes about what transpired:

Mr. Abercrombie had asked me to speak at the luncheon and then allow time for questions. Somewhere in my talk I referred to our sinful nature. Actually, “total depravity” was the phrase I used. I noticed at the time that a few individuals shifted uncomfortably in their leather chairs, and, sure enough, it must have hit the mark. Because after I finished, the first question was on sin.

“You don’t really believe we are sinners, do you? I mean, you’re too sophisticated to be one of those hellfire-and-brimstone fellows,” one older gentleman said, eyeing my dark blue pinstripe suit just like his. “Intelligent people don’t go for that back-country preacher stuff,” he added.

“Yes, sir,” I replied. “I believe we are desperately sinful. What’s inside of each of us is really pretty ugly. In fact we deserve hell and would get it, but for the sacrifice of Christ for our sins.”



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Mr. Abercrombie himself looked distressed by now. “Well, I don’t know about that,” he said. “I’m a good person and have been all my life. I go to church, and I get exhausted spending all my time doing good works.”

The room seemed particularly quiet, and twenty pairs of eyes were trained on me. “If you believe that, Mr. Abercrombie—and I hate to say this, for you certainly won’t invite me back—you are, for all of your good works, further away from the kingdom than the people I work with in prison who are aware of their own sins.” Someone at the other end of the table coughed. Another rattled his coffee cup. And a flush quickly worked its way up from beneath Mr. Abercrombie’s starched white collar. “In fact, gentlemen,” I added, drawing on a favorite R. C. Sproul shocker, “If you think about it, we are all really more like Adolf Hitler than like Jesus Christ.”

Now there was stony silence ... until someone eased the pain and changed the subject.¹

[Q] Read John 2:23–25 and discuss what Jesus sees in the nature of man.

[Q] When did you first realize you were sinful—and stuck in that sin?

[Q] Have you ever been made more aware of your sinful nature as a result of celebrating Advent? If so, explain.

After the bad news in John 2, we immediately find hope in John 3 and learn what Jesus wanted us to understand: Without Christ we have no life of God in us. We are stuck in our flesh and separated from God (3:6). Religion is not the answer—the religious leaders of the day missed it (3:10). But we have a way to enter the kingdom of God (3:16).

[Q] Have you ever been filled with hope of conquering your old nature through celebrating Advent? Explain.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

While writing about the Nativity in his book *The Faces of Jesus*, author and pastor Frederick Buechner reflects on an early scene in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Three characters—Horatio, Marcellus, and Barnardo—are keeping watch at night, discussing the possibility of having seen a ghost. In the midst of their conversation, they briefly stumble into a discussion about the night of Christ’s birth. To help us navigate the difficulty of Shakespeare’s prose,

¹ Charles Colson and Ellen Vaughn, *Being the Body* (Nelson, 2003), pp. 190–191.



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Buechner offers a summary of the trio's conversation—a conversation that finds Marcellus offering a breathtaking thought about the power of the Advent of a Savior:

On the dark battlements of Elsinore, Marcellus speaks to his companions of the time of Jesus' birth. It is a hallowed time he says, a holy time, a time in which life grows still like the surface of a river so that we can look down into it and see glimmering there in its depth something timeless, precious, other. And a gracious time, Marcellus says—a time that we cannot bring about as we can bring about a happy time or a sad time but time that comes upon us as a grace, as a free and unbidden gift. Marcellus explains that Christmas is a time of such holiness that the cock crows the whole night through as though it is perpetually dawn, and thus for once, even the powers of darkness are powerless.²

Action Point: Take time this week to read the first three chapters of John. Jot down the main points and share them with someone. As you do, tie your thoughts into Advent.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon

² Frederick Buechner, *The Faces of Jesus* (Paraclete Press, 2006), p. 14.



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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Advent is all about the eternal Christ.

Teaching Point Two: Advent is about Christ coming to a dark world.

Teaching Point Three: Advent reveals the human condition.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

While writing about the Nativity in his book *The Faces of Jesus*, author and pastor Frederick Buechner reflects on an early scene in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Three characters—Horatio, Marcellus, and Barnardo—are keeping watch at night, discussing the possibility of having seen a ghost. In the midst of their conversation, they briefly stumble into a discussion about the night of Christ’s birth. To help us navigate the difficulty of Shakespeare’s prose, Buechner offers a summary of the trio’s conversation—a conversation that finds Marcellus offering a breathtaking thought about the power of the Advent of a Savior:



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Jesus Came to Overcome Blindness

There are at least four ways that show Jesus has overcome the darkness and given sight to the blind.

Advent is a clash of two kingdoms—darkness and light. Christ is the only way that darkness can be overcome and through him we can receive sight. His power over nature and death, his understanding of human nature, and his zeal for God conquer all that is dark.



Scripture: [2 Corinthians 4:4](#)

Based on: [The sermon series "Clash of Two Kingdoms,"](#) by Brad Reardon



Jesus Came to Overcome Blindness

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to Leader: Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

English author H. G. Wells—famous for science fiction novels like *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The War of the Worlds*—once wrote a short story called “The Country of the Blind.” It’s about an inaccessible, luxurious valley in Ecuador where, due to a strange disease, everyone is blind. After 15 generations of this blindness there was no recollection of sight or color or the outside world at all. Finally a man from the outside—a man who could see—literally fell into their midst. He had fallen off a high cliff and survived, only to stumble into their forgotten country.

When he realized that everyone else was blind, he remembered the old adage: “In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.” Wells writes:

He tried at first on several occasions to tell them of sight. “Look you here, you people,” he said. “There are things you do not understand in me.” Once or twice one or two of them attended to him; they sat with faces downcast and ears turned intelligently towards him, and he did his best to tell them what it was to see.

But they never believed him. They thought he was crazy. The man fell in love with a girl there and the girl’s father, Yacob, went to talk to a doctor about him. A conversation ensued:

[The doctor said]: “I think I may say with reasonable certainty that, in order to cure him complete, all that we need to do is a simple and easy surgical operation—namely, to remove these irritant bodies [his eyes!].”

“And then he will be sane?” [they asked].

“Then he will be perfectly sane, and a quite admirable citizen.”

“Thank Heaven for science!” said old Yacob.

Wells goes on to point out that the man would not be allowed to marry Yacob’s daughter unless he submitted to an operation that would blind him. So what would the man do? Wells writes:

He had fully meant to go to a lonely place where the meadows were beautiful with white narcissus, and there remain until the hour of his sacrifice should come, but



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as he walked he lifted up his eyes and saw the morning, the morning like an angel in golden armour, marching down the steeps...

It seemed to him that before this splendour, he and this blind world in the valley, and his love and all, were no more than a pit of sin. And the man who could see escaped the country of the blind with his life.

Discussion Starters:

[Q] How is this story an analogy of our own lives in this world?

That is where we live—in the country of the blind that is proud of its science, sure of its health, oblivious to the light. It is not only pitiful; it is deadly. Jesus said, “Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.” Jesus had his own name for “the country of the blind.” He called it “the world.” In his last words to his disciples before going to the cross, Jesus warned them of the hostility they would face—just as he had—in this blind world. Yet rather than pulling his beloved followers out of this blind and hostile world, Jesus sent his own Spirit into his people to convince this world of its blindness.¹

[Q] Read Matthew 4:16, Luke 1:79, John 3:19, 8:12, and 12:46. Explain how these verses talk about our blindness and Jesus' ability to restore our sight.

Optional Activity: *Ask everyone ahead of time to bring a baby picture to class. Mix them up and see if your class members can match the baby with the adult. Ask each of the members how they were already defined at birth (sexual identity, racial heritage, ethnic heritage, physical characteristics, etc.).*

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Jesus' authority over nature shows why he can bring light to the blind.

The vastness of our universe allows us a glimpse of the might and majesty of our Creator. Philip Yancey gives the following description to help us appreciate the scale of that universe:

If the Milky Way galaxy were the size of the entire continent of North America, our solar system would fit in a coffee cup. Even now, two Voyager spacecraft are hurtling toward the edge of the solar system at a rate of 100,000 miles per hour. For almost three

¹ Lee Eclow, PreachingToday.com; source: www.online-literature.com/wellshg/3.



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decades they have been speeding away from Earth, approaching a distance of 9 billion miles. When engineers beam a command to the spacecraft at the speed of light, it takes 13 hours to arrive. Yet this vast neighborhood of our sun—in truth, the size of a coffee cup—fits along with several hundred billion other stars and their minions in the Milky Way, one of perhaps 100 billion such galaxies in the universe. To send a light-speed message to the edge of that universe would take 15 billion years.²

And yet, Jesus had authority over this vast creation. Read Matthew 8:23–27.

[Q] Can you think of any other instances in Scripture that show Jesus' power over nature?

[Q] Read Colossians 1:15–20. What does this passage tell you about Jesus?

Teaching Point Two: Jesus' zeal for God shows why he can bring light to the blind.

Jesus has no tolerance for irreverence among the self-justified. Read John 2:12–17.

Jesus was righteously angry. But Jesus doesn't always react this way against sin. Even though he has plenty of reason to be angry with sin, we usually see him reach out to those in sin. Here he is angry because those who purport to worship God approach him without reverence. He prays in John 17, "glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you" (17:1) and "I have glorified you by accomplishing all the work which you have given me to do" (17:4).

The whole story of the Bible is God's attempt to get man to see his glory. He revealed in his law. He revealed it in his miracles. He finally revealed it in Christ.

[Q] Have you ever felt zeal for God? If so, tell us about it.

[Q] What about a time that you should have felt zealous for God but failed?

[Q] How was Jesus' zeal different than our zeal?

Teaching Point Three: Jesus' power to rise from the dead shows why he can bring light to the blind.

Read John 2:18–22.

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." So, when they heard this, of course they didn't understand what he was talking about. But in hindsight, everyone knew what he was talking about.

² Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* (Zondervan, 2006), p. 20.



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[Q] Why do you think Jesus used veiled references such as this when talking about his resurrection?

[Q] How important is Jesus resurrection to your faith? Explain.

Leader's Note: See 1 Corinthians 15:12–14.

Teaching Point Four: Jesus' perfect understanding of human nature shows why he can bring light to the blind.

Read John 2:23–25.

Self-sacrifice, surrender, repentance, a cross, death, bearing a cross—they would have been gone, fair-weather followers.

[Q] What first drew you to Christ? Was it something he could do for you? Explain.

[Q] How has your faith matured beyond that reason to now keep on following him?

[Q] How can Advent be a good time to reexamine your reasons for following Christ?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

We are not on home court, which is why we have been sent to a dark world and should not be silent. Jesus had his own name for this place of the blind. He called it the “world.” It will take his gospel to open its eyes and cure the blindness.

Action Point: Take time this week to read 2 Corinthians 4. Jot down the main points and share it with someone else. As you do, tie it into Advent.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon



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Scripture: [2 Corinthians 4:4](#)

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Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Jesus' authority over nature shows why he can bring light to the blind.

Teaching Point Two: Jesus' zeal for God shows why he can bring light to the blind.

Teaching Point Three: Jesus' power to rise from the dead shows why he can bring light to the blind.

Teaching Point Four: Jesus' perfect understanding of human nature shows why he can bring light to the blind.

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Leader's Guide

Jesus Came to Deliver Us

Christ is the gate and the good shepherd.

Advent does not celebrate the birth of mildness and passiveness. Advent is world-altering and life challenging. It is power beyond anything we can imagine, coming with humble tactics that strip human nature of self-sufficiency, self-justification, and self-enthronement.



Scripture: [Isaiah 40:11](#); [Ezekiel 34:1-6, 23-24](#);
[John 10:1-21](#)

Based on: The sermon series "Clash of Two Kingdoms," by Brad Reardon



Jesus Came to Deliver Us

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

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Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple to be dedicated, and while they were there an old man named Simeon recognized that this baby was the deliverer. While he was holding the child he said to Mary and Joseph, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34). Christ, the powerful deliverer, challenges darkness and will not be overcome.

Advent does not celebrate the birth of mildness and passiveness. Advent is world altering. Advent is life challenging. It is power beyond anything we can imagine, coming with humble tactics that strip human nature of self-sufficiency, self-justification, and self-enthronement.

Advent is about Jesus being the light of a dark world. It is a world that is darker than we realize and more lost than we imagine. Jesus' light has now been burning for two thousand years. Despite all the schemes of his enemies, Christ is still here, still delivering, still overpowering darkness. And he is not delivering people to mild, dim, bland lives of ethereal bliss.

Discussion Starters:

[Q] What have you been delivered from in Christ? Name as many things as you can think of.

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis says,

Christ says: "Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work. I want you. I've not come to torment your natural self but to kill it. No half measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth or crown it or stop it but have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires that you think are innocent as well as the ones you think are wicked—the whole outfit. And I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours."

[Q] What half measures do you drift toward in life?

[Q] What one area of your life do you want to be ripped out and made new?



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Optional Activity: Assign each of the following verses to a different person in your group. Ask them to read silently, then share what kind of schemes the Prince of Darkness has against us according to these verses: Matthew 16:23; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:3; Ephesians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 3:5; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8–9.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Jesus is the gate.

Read John 10:1–10.

Verse 7 is one of the great “I am” statements of Jesus in the Book of John. Shepherds would bring their sheep in for the evening to protect them from wild animals, thieves, and the natural elements. One shepherd would stay overnight with the flock. There was only one way in and out of the pen, and the shepherd would be the doorkeeper. He placed his body in the opening so that no sheep could go out and nothing could come in without going through him. The next day the shepherds would sort the sheep partly by voice, since the sheep would recognize their shepherd’s voice.

[Q] When did you first recognize Jesus as the gatekeeper?

Among Jesus’ audience were the religious authorities. They saw themselves as the shepherds of Israel. They knew about false messiahs in the past, and about spiritual apostasy in the history of Israel. They knew if there was an invader in the land who did not share their history or God. They were concerned about protecting their position and Israel. But when they refused to rejoice for the man born blind, they showed they did not love the sheep. They were about protecting themselves.

[Q] In what ways did Jesus surpass the religious leaders of his day in caring for his people?

Jesus’ tactics in the clash between kingdoms are a surprise to many. By saying he is the gate, he’s saying all other ways are illegitimate.

Everyone who hears Jesus is challenged. No one is left out or immune. The kingdom clash challenges our loyalty to everything, including our own agendas. There is only one door into the life of Jesus’ way, and he is it.

[Q] Why are so many offended by Jesus’ claim that he is the only way to God?



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Optional Activity: Assign each of the following verses from the Book of John to a different person in your group. Ask them to read silently, then share the “I am” statement of Jesus from their verse: John 6:35; 8:12, 24, 57–58; 10:9, 11, 36; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1.

Teaching Point Two: Jesus is the good shepherd.

Jesus is the good shepherd, and all others are illegitimate failures. Read John 10:11–21.

[Q] Who do the “hired hands” represent in this account?

Leader's Note: Jesus previously contrasted himself with the Pharisees. He is a genuine shepherd with legitimate access to the sheep; they are thieves and robbers. Jesus now makes another contrast. As the messianic good shepherd, he is going to lay down his life to save his sheep. The Pharisees are hired hands. They will not risk anything to save the sheep of Israel. They are doing the work of spiritual shepherds not for the sheep but for their own selfish gain. Their concern is not the sheep but their wages.

Jesus also calls the Pharisees strangers (v. 5). A stranger is someone the sheep do not know. In ancient Israel, a shepherd would leave his sheep overnight in a large sheepfold. His sheep would be mixed with the sheep of other shepherds. In the morning, the shepherd would come to the fold and call each of his sheep individually. His sheep would recognize the voice of their shepherd, and they would come to him. A stranger could dress in the shepherd's clothes and imitate the shepherd's voice, but the sheep never responded to the call of a stranger. Instead they would flee from the stranger's voice.

[Q] Who do the “other sheep that are not of this sheep pen” represent (v. 16)?

[Q] So was (is) there hope for the Jewish people?

Leader's Note: The Old Testament prophets spoke of a righteous remnant within Israel, those Jews who were Jews not only outwardly but also inwardly. These were the true sheep of Israel, the sheep who belonged to Israel's Messiah. Jesus says that one proof that he is the messianic good shepherd is that this remnant within Israel would accept him even if many others would not. The righteous remnant, the sheep of the true little flock, are going to hear the voice of his teaching. They are going to recognize him in faith as the Messiah. They are going to follow him in the paths of obedience. The true sheep in Israel will have a love relationship with Jesus patterned after the love between God the Son and God the Father within the triune Godhead. The true sheep are going to follow Jesus.

[Q] Read Isaiah 40:11 and Ezekiel 34:1–6, 23–24, and discuss what a shepherd can be for us.



Jesus Came to Deliver Us

Leader's Guide

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Leith Anderson shared this in a sermon:

I own a marvelous little book written nearly a quarter of a century ago by a former shepherd, Philip Keller. He titled the book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*. He tells about his experience as a shepherd in east Africa. The land adjacent to his was rented out to a tenant shepherd who didn't take very good care of his sheep: his land was overgrazed, eaten down to the ground; the sheep were thin, diseased by parasites, and attacked by wild animals. Keller especially remembered how the neighbor's sheep would line up at the fence and blankly stare in the direction of his green grass and his healthy sheep, almost as if they yearned to be delivered from their abusive shepherd. They longed to come to the other side of the fence and belong to him.

Christians understand that the identity of the shepherd is everything. It is wonderful to be able to say, "The Lord is my shepherd."

There is a great clash of kingdoms as we realize that Jesus came to deliver us by being our gate and good shepherd. Make sure you are part of Jesus' kingdom and working for his cause.

Action Point: On your own, read Isaiah 40 and jot down all the things Jesus did to fulfill this portion of Scripture. Also, note any evidence you see of a clash of two kingdoms. Share your findings with someone else. As you do, tie your thoughts into Advent.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon



Advent: Clash of Two Kingdoms

Participant's Guide

Jesus Came to Deliver Us

Christ is the gate and the good shepherd.

Advent does not celebrate the birth of mildness and passiveness. Advent is world-altering and life challenging. It is power beyond anything we can imagine, coming with humble tactics that strip human nature of self-sufficiency, self-justification, and self-enthronement.



Scripture: [Isaiah 40:11](#); [Ezekiel 34:1–6, 23–24](#);
[John 10:1–21](#)

Based on: The sermon series “Clash of Two Kingdoms,” by Brad Reardon



Jesus Came to Deliver Us

Participant's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple to be dedicated, and while they were there an old man named Simeon recognized that this baby was the deliverer. While he was holding the child he said to Mary and Joseph, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34). Christ, the powerful deliverer, challenges darkness and will not be overcome.

Advent does not celebrate the birth of mildness and passiveness. Advent is world altering. Advent is life challenging. It is power beyond anything we can imagine, coming with humble tactics that strip human nature of self-sufficiency, self-justification, and self-enthronement.

Advent is about Jesus being the light of a dark world. It is a world that is darker than we realize and more lost than we imagine. Jesus' light has now been burning for two thousand years. Despite all the schemes of his enemies, Christ is still here, still delivering, still overpowering darkness. And he is not delivering people to mild, dim, bland lives of ethereal bliss.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Jesus is the gate.

Teaching Point Two: Jesus is the good shepherd.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

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Advent: Clash of Two Kingdoms

Leader's Guide

Jesus Came to Reveal His Glory

Jesus was Almighty God who came to earth for our benefit.

John gives us an advantage when we read his book—he tells us exactly why he wrote it and what he wants us to get out of it, and lets us know what the Advent season is all about. John 20:31 says, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”



Scripture: **John 17:1–5**

Based on: **The sermon series “Clash of Two Kingdoms,” by Brad Reardon**



Jesus Came to Reveal His Glory

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to Leader: *Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.*

Reading, listening, meditating, and worshiping over the Bible is not like sipping coffee over a magazine. With the Bible, expect to be challenged.

The Word of God compels the heart to celebrate, rejoice, submit, weep, repent, encourage, love, and even die. Sometimes it is like food, sometimes like a hammer to my stubborn head, other times soothing, and sometimes like being poked with a stick.

Through all this the heart grows in respect and reverence for the Word of God. As we grow, we learn to enjoy the harmony and consistency of the Bible. It fits together not by my will or whims, but because it is consistent and all its parts work together.

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Discussion Starters:

- [Q] Share about a time when reading something in the Bible felt like a hammer.
- [Q] Share about a time when reading something in the Bible felt like food.
- [Q] What does it mean for your everyday life that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?

Optional Activity: *Pass around a packet of seeds. As each person takes the packet, ask them to briefly tell us about one person who planted the seed of faith in Christ in their life.*

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Advent leads to Christ's hour.

The first three days of the D-Day invasion included 6,000 ships, 5,000 planes, 13,000 vehicles, and 3 million men in 47 divisions. The plan also included the movement of an artificial harbor so that people and materials could be landed with more ease once the beaches had been secured. It was all done in secret—the Germans did not know the when (the day or hour), the where, or the how. It all depended on the time being right.



Jesus Came to Reveal His Glory

Leader's Guide

So it was with Christ's hour of accomplishing what he was sent to earth to do.

Read John 17:1–5.

[Q] What was Christ accomplishing according to this prayer?

[Q] What evidence do you see in this prayer that the one who is blinding eyes, who has schemes to bend minds from God, and who prowls about looking for ones to devour is losing?

[Q] During his time on earth, Jesus did not look like the Son of man prophesied in Daniel 7:14, with authority, glory, sovereign power, and an everlasting kingdom of all peoples, nations, and languages that will never be destroyed. Why was that?

Teaching Point Two: Advent revealed Christ's eternal glory.

Eternity is essential in understanding who Christ is. He, as God, sees the end and the beginning in one view.

[Q] John 17:1 says that the Father will glorify his Son and Christ will then glorify his Father. What evidence was there of that happening? How do verses 2 and 4 help explain it?

Leader's Note: *Jesus was talking about eternal life as he gives it, with all the quality God intended life to have, filled with his grace and flooded with his glory. If it comes from him, it is enjoyed only in relationship with him.*

[Q] Knowing God became the Christian norm according to John 17:3. What does it mean to know God? How do we go about getting to know him?

Leader's Note: *Since God is infinite—infinately wise, loving, gracious, and so on—we will never come to know him fully in this life. It will take all eternity to get to know him better. This is why we are not only called to faith, but also to discipleship. We must trust him for our salvation, and we must follow him as his disciples. We are getting to know him now, that we might grow to be like him. But we will also be getting to know and understand him through all eternity.*

[Q] What does John 17:5 tell you about the eternal nature of Jesus? And what does that mean for how you live now?

Leader's Note: *Jesus returned to his glory, a glory which was restrained on the earth. When he ascended to heaven, his glory was restored. He is God. He always was God. And he always will be God. This is the glory that has always been, it is the glory of a mission accomplished, it is the glory of perfect communion between the Father and eternal Son.*



Jesus Came to Reveal His Glory

Leader's Guide

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

God is the Almighty One. But he is also Immanuel. If you want a balanced picture of God, you've got to juxtapose those two names. He is God Most High and God With Us. He exists beyond the limits of time and space, but he's also Immanuel—God with us.

This is illustrated well by a story A. C. Dixon shares:

A friend of mine who was quite a lover of the hunt told me the following story.

Rising early one morning, he said, "I heard the barking of a number of dogs chasing a deer. Looking at a large open field in front of me, I saw a young fawn making its way across the field and giving signs that its race was almost run. It leaped over the rails of the enclosed place and crouched within ten feet of where I stood. A moment later two of the hounds came over, and the fawn ran in my direction and pushed its head between my legs. I lifted the little thing to my breast, and, swinging round and round, fought off the dogs. Just then I felt that all the dogs in the West could not and would not capture that fawn after its weakness had appealed to my strength."

So is it when human helplessness appeals to Almighty God. I remember well when the hounds of sin were after my soul that at last I ran into the arms of Almighty God.¹

God entered space and time 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem. He is knowable.

Action Point: On your own this week, read Psalm 80 and jot down ways you see both sides of God in this chapter—the fact that he is both *Almighty* and *Immanuel*. Share your findings with someone else. As you do, tie your thoughts into Advent.

—Study by Brad Reardon, with JoHannah Reardon

¹ A. C. Dixon, quoted in *E. M. Bounds On Prayer*, by E. M. Bounds (Whitaker House, p. 107).



Advent: Clash of Two Kingdoms

Participant's Guide

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