

# A GRAND MIRACLE

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT



INSPIRATION FROM

# C.S. LEWIS

# INTRODUCTION

*God became human.* Seldom do we stop to think of the meaning of those three words, but they should create in us a sense of awe. The infinite Creator of the universe came to be with us as a little child! It's awe-inspiring! C. S. Lewis held the Incarnation in such high regard that he called it "a Grand Miracle."

These devotions take many of the familiar Christmas and Advent texts of Scripture and put them together with quotations from C. S. Lewis. While Lewis' writings take some of the spotlight, this series of devotions is really about Jesus, the God who became man. He is at center stage, and that's how Lewis would have wanted it. Through these Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is our primary teacher, while Lewis, in his great imagination, leads us to contemplate this "Grand Miracle."

In the first week, we think of the miracle of the Incarnation. During the second week, we turn to the title of Jesus that most perfectly captures the idea of Incarnation: Immanuel, "God with Us." In week three, we travel to Narnia, where Aslan, the Christ-figure of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, is our guide. In the last week, Jesus, the Savior, speaks to us of his reasons for coming—to deliver us from sin, to enable us to become sons and daughters of God, to give us eternal life, to energize our lives through him as his new creations.

May you be blessed by God's "Grand Miracle" for us!

—Joel Heck

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

# ONE GRAND MIRACLE

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

**JOHN 1:14**

*The Christian story is precisely the story of one grand miracle, the Christian assertion being that what is beyond all space and time, what is uncreated, eternal, came into nature, into human nature, descended into His own universe, and rose again, bringing nature up with Him. It is precisely one great miracle. If you take that away there is nothing specifically Christian left. (C. S. Lewis, "The Grand Miracle," God in the Dock, 80)*

C. S. Lewis loved the story of the birth of Christ. In fact, he argued that the One Grand Miracle of Christianity is not the Crucifixion or the Resurrection but Christ's birth. He saw every other miracle of Scripture as preparing for, demonstrating or resulting from the Incarnation.

What exactly is a miracle? Lewis calls it "an interference with Nature by supernatural power." Thank God, he does interfere in our world! Left to our own instincts, we go our own way. God became one of us because he yearns to make us one with him. That's why God has been miraculously interfering for millennia. Just for starters, think of Abraham and Sarah becoming parents late in life, the Israelites crossing the Red Sea or the rescue of Daniel from the lions. Perhaps you have experienced a miracle in your own life. But none of these, remarkable though they are, is as important as the Incarnation.

We Christians believe that God is near—in Christ who is in us and the Holy Spirit who has been poured out upon us. But God remains hidden in these miracles. With the birth of Jesus, God became visible in a tiny body for a mother to hold, for shepherds to admire, for magi to worship. He himself was the miracle! Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The Word became flesh. He became one of us—God's Grand Miracle!

Let us—who recognize the Miracle—bow the knee.

**Lord, give us a new appreciation this Advent season of the Grand Miracle, your coming to earth at Christmas to save us. Amen.**



MONDAY, FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

## THE DISTANCE HE TRAVELED

...who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself...

**PHILIPPIANS 2:6-7**

*The Eternal Being, who knows everything and who created the whole universe, became not only a man but (before that) a baby, and before that a fetus inside a Woman's body. If you want to get the hang of it, think how you would like to become a slug or a crab. (C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, 179)*

**M**y longest trip took me from the Midwestern United States to the Southeast Asian city of Singapore, a distance of 9,290 miles as the crow flies. Astronauts have traveled almost a quarter of a million miles, the distance from Earth to the moon. Since 1977, Voyager 2 has traveled to four planets and their moons, passing Neptune in 1989 and moving beyond the solar system in 2018. As of 2025, it is more than 13 billion miles from Earth.

God traveled even further than that, although we're not measuring the distance in miles. The infinite Creator stepped inside an unborn baby, the weakest of humans. St. Paul says it this way, "...who though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself..." Now that's a long trip—from the majesty of heaven to the humility of earth, from God to God-man.

Try as we might, we cannot fully comprehend that distance. The best we can do is to make analogies. Lewis describes the Incarnation of God with the metaphor of becoming a slug or a crab. That brings a smile to our faces. That would be a huge distance to travel, a humbling of oneself. I can't really imagine it. Can you? What Jesus did is all the more remarkable.

**Jesus, Immanuel, thank you for going the distance to become one of us, God with us. Amen.**

TUESDAY, FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

## DOWN AND UP

Therefore God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth...

**PHILIPPIANS 2:9-10**

*He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him. One has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get himself underneath some great complicated burden. He must stoop in order to lift, he must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders. (C. S. Lewis, Miracles, 148)*

God came down in the person of Jesus to bring the world up. Abraham was humbled when asked to sacrifice his son Isaac and, in the process, learned to trust God fully. Peter refused to have his feet washed by Jesus but changed his mind when Jesus said, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me” (John 13:8). Perhaps that’s why Peter later wrote, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:6). Where did he get that idea? From Jesus, the one who humbled himself and was later exalted, but in his case without sin. Jesus told a dinner host, “For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Luke 14:11).

God the Son came down to live among us, and then he went up. He enjoyed the glory and majesty of heaven but decided, for our benefit, to humble himself. In doing that, Jesus set a pattern that works for everyone. Lift yourself up, and you will be put down. Lower yourself, and you will be lifted up.

Jesus didn’t do this just to set an example for us to follow. He did it to save us. By coming down, he became a man, born to die. By going up, he overcame everything he met when he went down, including whatever problems you face at this very moment. Hold on to his hand! In that going up, God has exalted him to the highest place and promises to bring you up in the same way.

**Jesus, help me down so that you can bring me up to you. Amen.**

WEDNESDAY, FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

## ALL MIRACLES ARE CONNECTED TO THE INCARNATION

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

**JOHN 2:11**

*Just as every natural event is the manifestation at a particular place and moment of Nature's total character, so every particular Christian miracle manifests at a particular place and moment the character and significance of the Incarnation. (C. S. Lewis, Miracles, 143)*

**I**n his book *Miracles*, Lewis writes that the miracle of turning water into wine (which John 2:11 calls the first of the signs of Jesus) is doing instantaneously what happens in Nature on a regular basis over a period of time. It happens in Nature much more slowly, but God is still doing a miracle.

Lewis suggests not only that natural events are related to Nature (that's what "natural" means!), but that all miracles are connected to the Grand Miracle, the birth of Christ. How is this so?

In every miracle, God breaks into Nature with a new sequence of events. In the Incarnation, God also broke into Nature, but there he did it most impressively of all. That's why it's a Grand Miracle. The normal manner of conception and birth was set aside for the Virgin Mary to deliver the Christ Child. "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14. ESV). That's the new sequence of events.

Every miracle shows the power of God, and every miracle is a "sign." Jesus' purpose in doing miracles was to point to his true nature and mission. While he cared about the lack of wine at the wedding in Cana, he cares much more that we see him as the one with power over Nature. And he cared about us enough to become one of us and, in that becoming, participated in another part of Nature, human nature.

**Remind us, Lord, that your coming shows us both our need and your solution. Amen.**

THURSDAY, FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

## DYING AND RISING

...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit.

**JOHN 12:24**

*In this descent and reascent everyone will recognise a familiar pattern: a thing written all over the world. It is the pattern of all vegetable life. It must belittle itself into something hard, small and deathlike, it must fall into the ground: thence the new life reascends. It is the pattern of all animal generation too. (C. S. Lewis, Miracles, 148)*

**T**he Gospel writers remind us that the arc of Jesus' life on earth began at the Incarnation and ended with his death. The first humbling was his birth in a manger, but the final humbling was death on a cross. Yet, this death was not an end. The resurrection of Jesus bore the fruit of salvation.

The same is true by analogy, as John writes in today's Scripture, in the world of plants. It is no surprise that we see the death of plants every fall and their resurrection in the spring. Again, we see the "death" of a seed when it is planted and the "resurrection" of that seed when it springs forth and produces many other seeds. Why? Because this is a divine pattern, say Jesus and Lewis, set into the fabric of the universe, reflecting the nature of God. Sometimes a person dies, and an organ transplant from that person saves the life of another. Lewis calls it "a familiar pattern." The point is that dying and rising, including Jesus' descent in the Incarnation and his reascent in the Ascension, are common, so common that we shouldn't wonder that God redeemed us with dying and rising.

**Jesus, you came down to us for our salvation. Thank you for dying and rising for us. Amen.**



# A GRAND MIRACLE

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT

Quotes for C. S. Lewis serve as our guide through these daily devotions for Advent. Each day, Lewis' words point to the saving, life-changing aspects of Christ's birth, which he calls "a Grand Miracle." You will then be blessed with reflections by Lewis scholar Joel Heck on the concepts of the incarnation, Immanuel (God with Us), the Christ-figure of Narnia (from *The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe*), and Jesus' mission to make us his new creation.

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