

Twelve Days of Christmas: *Epiphany & December 25th*

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INTRODUCTION

When we think about the holiday season, most of us picture Christmas on December 25th: family gatherings, festive decorations, and the exchange of gifts. However, many people are unfamiliar with an equally significant Christian holiday, Epiphany, celebrated on January 6th. This day marks the visit of the Three Wise Men, Magi, to the baby Jesus and, in some traditions, also commemorates His baptism. Historically, Epiphany was the grand finale of the Twelve Days of Christmas—a time of joy and deep spiritual meaning. For a companion paper, see my study *The Magi, Jeremiah, and Daniel*.

WHAT IS ADVENT?

Before we even get to the Twelve Days of Christmas, it's important to talk about Advent. Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning or It begins four Sundays before Christmas and is a season of anticipation and preparation, both for Jesus' birth and His future return.

In the early Church, Advent was more than lighting candles or opening calendar doors. It was a time for serious spiritual reflection, much like Lent. For example, in AD 380, the Council of Saragossa in Spain urged Christians to attend church daily from December 17th to December 25th.¹ By the sixth century, St. Gregory of Tours described a

in Gaul, emphasizing the need for spiritual purification through fasting, prayer, and good deeds.²

Today, Advent traditions often include lighting candles on an Advent wreath, focusing on themes like hope, peace, joy, and love. Each week, believers can reflect on these themes as they prepare their hearts for the celebration of Jesus' birth and remember His promise to come again.

DAILY EXAMPLES FOR ADVENT REFLECTION AND PRAYER (DECEMBER 1–24)

Advent provides a meaningful way to prepare spiritually for Christmas. Here are some simple daily practices to engage in from December 1st to Christmas Eve:

1. **December 1:** Pray for the hope that comes through Christ. Meditate on Isaiah 9:2, which speaks of light breaking into darkness.
2. **December 2:** Reflect on God's promises. Read Jeremiah 33:14-16 and thank Him for His faithfulness.
3. **December 3:** Light a candle and contemplate Jesus as the Light of the World (John 8:12). Pray for His light to shine in your life.
4. **December 4:** Remember those in need. Perform an act of kindness or give to charity.
5. **December 5:** Reflect on the prophecy of the coming Messiah in Micah 5:2. Pray for God's purposes to be fulfilled.
6. **December 6 (St. Nicholas' Day):** Practice generosity in honor of St. Nicholas. Give anonymously to someone in need.
7. **December 7:** Pray for peace in your life and the world. Meditate on Philippians 4:7.

8. **December 8:** Reflect on Mary's obedience to God's will. Read Luke 1:26-38 and ask for a willing heart to serve Him.
9. **December 9:** Rejoice in the joy of salvation. Read Psalm 98 and praise God for His works.
10. **December 10:** Pray for God's kingdom to come. Reflect on the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10).
11. **December 11:** Light a second Advent candle and reflect on the hope of eternal life.
12. **December 12:** Remember the prophets who foretold Jesus' birth. Read Isaiah 7:14 and thank God for His plan.
13. **December 13:** Pray for courage to share your faith. Reflect on 1 Peter 3:15.
14. **December 14:** Contemplate God's love in sending His Son. Meditate on John 3:16.
15. **December 15:** Pray for those who are suffering. Read Psalm 34:18 and remember God's nearness to the brokenhearted.
16. **December 16:** Reflect on Zechariah's prophecy in Luke 1:68-79. Pray for God's mercy and guidance.
17. **December 17:** Focus on the names of Jesus, like and (Isaiah 9:6).
18. **December 18:** Pray for those who are lonely during the holidays. Ask God to comfort them.
19. **December 19:** Remember God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16. Pray for His faithfulness to be evident.
20. **December 20:** Reflect on the angel's message to Joseph in Matthew 1:18-25. Pray for trust in God's plans.

21. **December 21:** Celebrate the Winter Solstice as a reminder of Jesus as the Light overcoming darkness.
 22. **December 22:** Pray for expectant mothers and unborn children. Meditate on Psalm 139:13-16.
 23. **December 23:** Reflect on the journey to Bethlehem. Pray for travelers and those far from home.
 24. **December 24 (Christmas Eve):** Read Luke 2:1-20 and welcome the Savior into your heart. Attend a Christmas Eve service.
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WHAT ARE THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS?

The Twelve Days of Christmas aren't just a catchy song but a rich tradition that spans from Christmas Day (December 25th) to Epiphany (January 6th). These twelve days were a time of extended celebration and reflection on the significance of Jesus' birth. Each day holds a special meaning, and the song itself is said to have symbolic Christian references.

Here's a fun breakdown of the Twelve Days and how you might celebrate them in a way that keeps the focus on Jesus:

1. **December 25 (Christmas Day):** Celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Word made flesh. Attend a church service and reflect on the miracle of God becoming human.
 - **Song Meaning:** represents Jesus, who gave His life for us.
2. **December 26 (Feast of St. Stephen):** Honor the first Christian martyr by doing something kind for someone in need.

- **Song Meaning:** symbolize the Old and New Testaments, reminding us of God's promises.
3. **December 27 (Feast of St. John the Evangelist):** Read the Gospel of John and think about Jesus as the Light of the World.
 - **Song Meaning:** stand for faith, hope, and love.
 4. **December 28 (Feast of the Holy Innocents):** Remember the children who died because of King Herod's cruelty. Pray for children suffering around the world.
 - **Song Meaning:** are the four Gospels spreading the good news.
 5. **December 29:** Reflect on God's faithfulness and the protection He provides.
 - **Song Meaning:** represent the first five books of the Bible, which lay the foundation of our faith.
 6. **December 30:** Honor heroes of faith and read stories of courage from the Bible.
 - **Song Meaning:** recall the six days of creation.
 7. **December 31 (New Year's Eve):** Think about the past year and the ways God has blessed you. Join a prayer service or journal about your hopes for the future.
 - **Song Meaning:** symbolize the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.
 8. **January 1:** While some honor Mary, focus on how God brings new things from the humble and lowly.
 - **Song Meaning:** are the eight Beatitudes, guiding us to live a blessed life.
 9. **January 2:** Seek wisdom for the new year by reading the book of Proverbs.
 - **Song Meaning:** signify the nine fruits of the Spirit.
 10. **January 3:** Celebrate the holiness of God's name and His commandments.
 - **Song Meaning:** represent the Ten Commandments.

11. **January 4:** Pray for the Church around the world and for unity among Christians.

- **Song Meaning:** are the eleven faithful apostles who spread the gospel.

12. **January 5:** Prepare for Epiphany by praying for mission work and that Jesus' light would reach all nations.

- **Song Meaning:** represent the twelve points of the Apostles' Creed.
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THE MEANING OF EPIPHANY

Epiphany is all about Jesus being revealed to the world, starting with the Wise Men from the East. These Magi traveled a long way, guided by a star, to honor Jesus as the King of Kings. In a way, their journey symbolizes that Jesus came for everyone—not just for the Jewish people but for all nations.

WHY DECEMBER 25TH FOR CHRISTMAS?

Interestingly, the Bible doesn't tell us when Jesus was born. So, why do we celebrate on December 25th? One theory is that early Christians chose this date to align with Roman festivals, like Sol Invictus (), to emphasize Jesus as the true Light of the World. Another theory, called the Annunciation Theory, suggests that early believers thought Jesus was conceived on March 25th, making December 25th exactly nine months later.

WHY HAS EPIPHANY BEEN FORGOTTEN?

Over time, as our culture has become more commercialized, the spiritual significance of Epiphany and even the Twelve Days of Christmas has faded. The focus

has shifted almost entirely to Christmas Day. By reclaiming these traditions, we can bring back the deep meaning of the holiday season and remind ourselves of the incredible gift of Jesus' coming.

CONCLUSION: BRINGING IT BACK TO JESUS

Imagine if we used the Twelve Days of Christmas to celebrate not just with gifts and fun but with intentional time spent reflecting on Jesus. By honoring each day with meaning, we can deepen our faith and make the season more about Christ and less about consumerism. As Christians, this approach offers a powerful, countercultural way to celebrate: one that brings joy, meaning, and a renewed sense of God's love.

**APPENDIX A: EPIPHANY AND THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS: A
CELEBRATION OF DIVINE REVELATION**



This image captures the profound theological and spiritual themes of Epiphany and the Twelve Days of Christmas. At the heart of the scene, the Magi present their gifts to the infant Jesus under the radiant light of a guiding star, symbolizing the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Surrounding the manger are symbolic elements: an Advent wreath with glowing candles, an open Bible, and a crown, highlighting the kingship and divine nature of Jesus.

The serene backdrop includes subtle references to Jesus' baptism at the Jordan River and the seasonal beauty of a winter night. Candles and festive decor evoke the joy and reverence of the season, tying together the celebration of Christ's birth and the revelation of His mission to all nations. This evocative composition invites reflection on the interconnectedness of Christmas and Epiphany, inspiring worship and deeper engagement with the gospel narrative.

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