

# LET GOD ARISE!

## The Wondrous Cross #1

Prayer Guide for the Season of Advent • Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis



### Prepare You the Way of the Lord

Luke 3.1-6

#### Joy to the World

*Isaac Watts*

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns;  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods,  
Rocks, hills, and plains,  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love, and wonders of His love,  
And wonders, and wonders of His love.

© Public Domain.



**Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis,**  
*(Ph.D., U of Iowa) is the  
Director of World  
Impact's Urban Ministry  
Institute. He also serves  
as World Impact's Vice  
President of Leadership  
Development.*

© 2009. The Urban Ministry  
Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or  
information on Let God Arise,  
please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of  
World Impact, Inc.

## ***The Season of Advent: Preparing the Way of the Lord***

### **John's Proclamation of a Baptism of Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins**

Luke 3.1-6 - In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, [2] during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. [3] And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [4] As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. [5] Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, [6] and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Matt. 3.1-11 - In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, [2] "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." [3] For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight." [4] Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. [5] Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, [6] and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. [7] But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? [8] Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. [9] And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. [10] Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [11] I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is



*Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV)*

© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.

coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

Mark 1.2-8 - As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, [3] the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” [4] John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [5] And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. [6] Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. [7] And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. [8] I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 13.24 - Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

### **The Prophets Foretold of the Need for Preparation before Messiah's Appearance**

Isa. 40.3-5 - A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. [4] Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. [5] And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

### **John Was Sent to Prepare the Hearts of the People for the Coming of Christ**

Mal. 4.6 - And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.



© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.

Luke 1.16-17 - And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, [17] and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

Luke 1.76-79 - And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, [77] to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, [78] because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high [79] to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

John 1.7 - He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

John 1.26-34 - John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, [27] even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” [28] These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. [29] The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! [30] This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ [31] I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” [32] And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. [33] I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ [34] And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”



© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.

### **John Knew Himself to Be Sent before Christ to Announce His Coming**

John 3.28-30 - You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' [29] The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. [30] He must increase, but I must decrease.

Matt. 3.11-12 - I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. [12] His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

Mark 1.8 - I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 3.16 - John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

Acts 1.5 - for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

Acts 19.4 - And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus."

### **The Coming of Messiah Will Be for the Broken and the Humble**

Isa. 2.11-17 - The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. [12] For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low; [13] against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan;



© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.

[14] against all the lofty mountains, and against all the uplifted hills; [15] against every high tower, and against every fortified wall; [16] against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft. [17] And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

Isa. 40.4 - Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

Isa. 61.1-3 - The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; [2] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; [3] to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

Luke 1.51-53 - He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; [52] he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; [53] he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. ■

### ***Baptism and Repentance: Preparing for Messiah's Coming***

THIS YEAR, we intend to follow the rhythm and themes of the Church Year, the Story of God's saving work in Christ which has stood at the center of the Church's theology, worship, spirituality, and mission from its beginning. For centuries, the Christian Church has employed the seasons of the Church Year as a means of focusing on the promise, incarnation, passion,



© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.

resurrection, and second coming of Jesus Christ. Following the Jewish tradition of celebration and festival rooted in Old Testament worship, Christians have used these seasons as a means of marking time, of establishing moments for remembrance, festivals, and holidays, as a way of worshipping God through the Story of Scripture, the hope of glory in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Used at least in part by virtually all traditions of the Church (including Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant traditions), the Christian Church Year highlights and follows the prophecy, manifestation, and ministry of Jesus. The unfolding events on the calendar become an opportunity for worshipers to hear the prophets herald his coming, to kneel at the manger, to worship Christ with the Magi, and to hear his teaching to the multitudes. Through these events we see our Lord triumphantly come to Jerusalem, stand accused in a sham trial before his foes, be crucified with thieves on Golgotha, and rise from the dead on the third day! From his ascension to the coming of the Holy Spirit, from his exaltation to the mission of his Church in the world, the Church Year reminds us of that Story which in fact is the Greatest Story Ever Told—the hope of salvation in Christ for the world.

### **The Story's Beginning: The Advent of Messiah**

This remarkable story begins with a four-week remembrance and anticipation during the season of Advent. Advent faces backward and looks forward simultaneously, both remembering the events leading to the incarnation of Christ during the First Coming and anticipating with reverence and expectation the Second Coming of Christ. The dual focus means that Advent both begins and ends the Christian Year, (Isa. 9.1-7, 11.1-16; Mark 1.1-8). This dual focus is reflected in our lectionary readings of the Bible during this season. God's prophets foretold his Coming through the Old Testament prophets, with angels announcing his birth to Mary and the shepherds, all experiencing God's promise with the arrival of Messiah in Bethlehem.



© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.

The Advent Season covers a four-week period, each with its own unique focus and emphasis:

- **Anticipation: 1st Week** – The Advent wreath reminds us of God’s eternal love, without a beginning, without an end. The Candles remind us of Christ’s light coming into the world. We light the first candle looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, Emmanuel, God-with-us.
- **Annunciation: 2nd Week** – We light the second candle to announce the birth of the Savior King, as the angel Gabriel announced to Mary, and the angels announced to the shepherds.
- **Affirmation: 3rd Week** – We light the third candle recognizing the fulfillment of God’s promise of our salvation.
- **Arrival: 4th Week** – We light the fourth candle in celebration of the arrival of the baby, born in a stable at Bethlehem, whose name is Immanuel, God-with-us.

In order to enter into this season, and frankly, to enter into the proper spirit of intercessory prayer for the city throughout it we must understand how critical heart preparation is for experiencing the coming of Messiah into our lives and churches.

### **Prepare You the Way of the Lord**

Luke begins his introduction of John’s proclamation and ministry with historical context: John begins his message in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (around 29 CE), who reigned roughly from 14-37 CE. Luke tells us that in the same period when Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruled as tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, with Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene. During this same period Luke further explains that Annas and Caiaphas served in the office of the high priesthood, and that it was at this time when John began to declare the coming of the Messiah to Israel (Luke 3.1-2).



© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.



A little study of this unique period in Israel's history shows this to be a politically volatile and nationally tenuous period. It was in the midst of this tension and tenderness that the word of God comes to John, Luke tells us, and came to him in the desert in the wilderness. John's message of baptism and repentance is neither easy to receive nor easy to give. John will remain in the desert until he appears publicly, and shortly after that, be imprisoned for his message and his testimony regarding the Son who is to come. Luke tells us that the core of John's word was transparent: he delivered with boldness and clarity a proclamation of a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. What was this baptism, and why was it so important on the very dawn of the Messiah's appearing?

To begin with, the baptism and message of John was connected intimately with *preparation*, of getting the nation ready for the coming of the Lord's Servant, the Messiah. His water baptism was meant to be accompanied by an inner repentance. In other words, to hear John's message and to submit to its power was to acknowledge within one's own heart the need for change, preparation, and readiness. The entire event of hearing and being baptized was to declare without equivocation the need to be healed, to be cleansed, to be changed, to be prepared. To be baptized with John's baptism was to admit your vulnerability, your culpability, your need.

John's ministry was to get the people ready for the appearing of Messiah. He was the forerunner, the preparer, the one who would come before the Messiah to get the nation ready for his baptism, not with water, but with the Holy Spirit and with fire. John, in fulfillment of the prophetic proclamation of Isaiah 40.3-5, comes to smooth the way, to plow the ground, to prepare the way for the Lord. He was the voice, crying in the wilderness, in the desert, to smooth the Messiah's way. Like a bulldozer, like a plow, John's message of repentance and transformation was to clear out all the stones, debris, and any other stuff which would mess up the road the Messiah would take into the nation.



© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.

John's ministry was derived, not ultimate. He knew that his role was not to draw attention to himself but to clear the path, to make the way smooth for the One who was to come. His selflessness, his intensity and clarity, did in fact prepare the way for the Messiah; many in Israel, after hearing his message, prepared room in their hearts for the Messiah to dwell.

### **How Long Will We Protest Our Innocence?**

As long as we protest our innocence, pretend that we have everything together, that we have no need of anything, God simply can't reveal his best and richest to us. It is as if pride, arrogance, and self-assurance limit the revelation of God to us, as if only those who recognize their need, who welcome their own vulnerability, who no longer protest their own innocence in the face of their of guilt—only the broken and the contrite will see the Lord. To prepare the way of the Lord is to admit your need for God. Only in humility, in transparency, in brokenness can we experience the visitation of the Lord with us—and for us.

This entire year we hope to learn what it means to live a life conformed to the image of the Cross, that wondrous mystery where the Son of God reveals the Father's love for creation and humankind. The Cross is the epitome of selfless sacrifice, of brokenness, of submission, of yielding fully to the will of God, regardless of the price. The Spirit of God wants to conform us to this life, to reproduce this life within us as we behold and participate in the humility of the Son (2 Cor. 3.18). Here is power, here is fruit, and here is life—preparing the way before the Lord in order that he might work through us and act on behalf of his Kingdom with power and love.

When a ruler had to travel through the desert or rough country, his entourage would go before him, clearing the path of stones, debris, and various obstacles in order that the king's path would be smooth, more level, easier to traverse to his destination. Advent is our opportunity to affirm that both the First and Second Comings demand a heart preparation, a rigorous



© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.

clearing of the path of everything that might cause us to stumble, that might slow the Messiah from coming. If we want him to come, we must prepare ourselves for his arrival, preparing within our hearts room for him to come, space for him to dwell. He dwells with those who are of a broken and contrite spirit.

### **Make Messiah's Way Smooth before Him**

As we begin this Church Year season, informed by the vision of the wondrous Cross, let us yield ourselves afresh to the Holy Spirit in order that he might act within us, and reveal in a deeper way to us the glory of Christ. Although the idea of our leveling the land is a metaphor, it can be more than language if we truly are ready to receive the Messiah in a new way in our hearts and lives. Let us humble ourselves before the Lord, let us admit our need for the Savior, let us yield to the Spirit in order that the way of the Messiah's coming would be smooth and level in our lives.

Only if we will clear the way for the Lord can we then see the salvation of God. Tell me, what debris and brush needs to be cleared before the Messiah arrives to dwell with you where you live and work?

Prepare you the way of the Lord, and make his coming swift to your life today. ■

### **The Season of Advent: Prepare You the Way of the Lord**

As we enter into this new Church Year season, let us yield to the message of baptism and repentance which heralded the wonder and power of the incarnation of Messiah to his people, the nation of Israel. Without equivocation, with full assurance of faith, let us surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit in order that we might humble ourselves before him who desires to come to us—to enter into our lives for healing, for cleansing, for transformation, and for grace. He will come if we will only prepare the way before him.



© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.

*Luke 3.2-5 - During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. [3] And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [4] As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. [5] Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, [6] and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."*

**Biblical Principle of the Season:  
Make Level and Smooth the Path of the Lord**

With the specter and awe-inspiring wonder of the Cross, let us humble ourselves during this season of Advent, a season that simultaneously beckons us to prepare ourselves for the coming of Messiah. With both honesty and extreme joy, let us welcome the Son of God into our worlds, into our homes, into our lives, and into our hearts. The more open we are to him, the more open and manifest he can be to and with us.

*Luke 1.16-17 - And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, [17] and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.*

*Luke 1.76-79 - And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, [77] to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, [78] because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high [79] to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*



© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.

**An Example of this Season's Teaching: The Penitents at John's Baptism**

*Luke 3.7-14 - He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? [8] Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. [9] Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." [10] And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" [11] And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." [12] Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" [13] And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." [14] Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."*



**LET  
GOD  
ARISE!**

© 2009. The Urban Ministry Institute. All Rights Reserved.

For more prayer resources or information on Let God Arise, please visit [www.tumi.org](http://www.tumi.org)

TUMI is a ministry of World Impact, Inc.