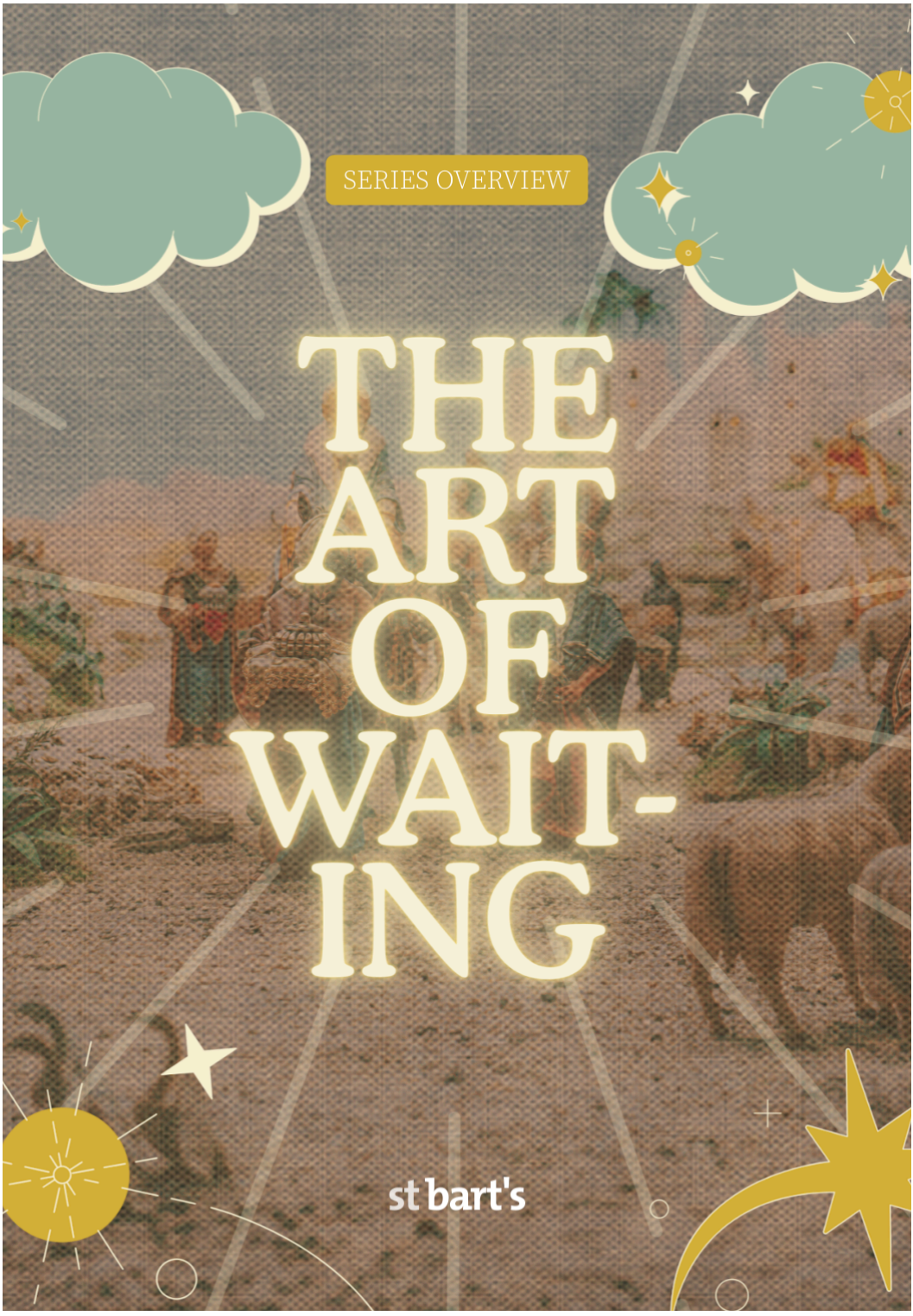

SERIES OVERVIEW
THE ART OF WAIT-ING
st bart's

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overview

When Netflix first added the 'skip intro' button, it instantly became one of their most loved features with users pressing it more than 130 million times *every day!*[1] The streaming service claims that it cumulatively saves their users some 195 years. We love not to wait and will do almost anything to skip ahead, shorten the wait where we can, or — if everything else fails — distract ourselves whilst we wait. But the Gospel reframes waiting not as something to be avoided but something to be done faithfully. Advent reminds us that we are set between two great arrivals. We look back to the *first* arrival of Jesus some 2000 years ago and look forward to when Jesus will arrive *again*. Followers of Jesus must not only know *what it is that we are waiting for*, but *how to live faithfully whilst we wait*.[2]

In the lead-up to Christmas, we're taking a whirlwind tour through the Bible (from the garden to the city) to help us discover what it looks like to wait patiently. God has faithfully and generously revealed himself to us over and over again: beginning with creation, through his redemptive actions, culminating in his Son, and will be consummated with his return. As Chris Wright attests:

> The Bible presents itself to us, in its grand structure, as one whole story. Not just any story, but *The Story* of the universe. It has a beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth. And it has an ending, when God will bring about the renewal of all creation. And in between tells the story of what went wrong, and what God has done in history to put things right.[3]

The coming of Christ is the great 'eucatastrophe' of human history. It is the ultimate joyful and sudden turn of events from imminent disaster to joyful victory.[4] The Gospel alone is what can satisfy humanity's greatest needs, and give us confident hope that shapes our lives and our eternity.

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[1] Although, that's a drop in the bucket of the equivalent *60,000 years* of viewing every day.
[2] Tom Wright frames his preface with similar questions in 'Surprised by Hope'.
[3] Wright & Stott, *Rejoice: Advent in all the Scriptures.* p.1.
[4] J. R. R. Tolkien first used this word in a letter in 1944.

Quick Terms

From the earliest of Christian times, **ADVENT** has been a season of waiting in eager anticipation of Christ's return. In fact, the traditional church calendar doesn't begin on January 1, but with the first Sunday of Advent: we begin our Christian year in waiting! Not with *"...the merriment of Christmas or the triumph of Easter. We do not begin with the work of the church or the mandate of the Great Commission. Instead, we begin in a place of yearning."*[5] We wait with eyes and hearts ready to receive our King, but also looking back, rejoicing in God's faithfulness in coming to us throughout human history. The word *advent* is derived from the Latin *adventus*, which simply means "coming".

The **INCARNATION** of Christ is the Christian doctrine (i.e., belief) that God took on flesh and became truly human in Jesus. In becoming human, the Son did not abandon his divine nature, *but was fully human and fully God*.

Outline

Week 1	Waiting in *(and for)* the Garden	Genesis 3:1-12 (Romans 16:20)
Week 2	Waiting in the Wilderness	Mark 1:1-8 (Isaiah 40:1-11)
Week 3	Waiting in the Temple	Luke 1:5-25 (Malachi 3:1)
Week 4	Waiting in Bethlehem	Luke 2:1-20 (Micah 5:1-4)
Week 5	Waiting for the City	Revelation 22:1-5 (Genesis 2:8-15)

General Resources

- *Devotional:* "Waiting for the Christ" by *Chase R. Kuhn.* 📚
- *Devotional (email):* Advent by *Gospel in Life:* https://gospelinlife.com/devotional/advent/
- *Devotional:* "Sing in Exultation"" by *Jonanthan Landry Cruse.* 📚
- *Devotional:* "The One True Gift" by *Tim Chester.* 📚
- *Devotional:* "Advent for Everyone: Luke" by *Tom Wright.* 📚
- *Read:* "Advent (Fullness of Time Series)" by *Tish Harrison Warren.* 📚
- *Read:* "What Christians Ought to Believe" by *Michael Bird.* 📚
- *Read:* "Waiting Isn't a Waste" by *Mark Vroegop.*

[5] Tish Harrison Warren, *Advent (The Fullness of Time Series).* p.1.

St Bart's Resources (including for families)

For the series overview, weekly sermons, small group material, and weekly children's curriculum, visit: stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/advent-wait

- *Read:* "The Birth of Jesus" by *Josephine Hood.* 📚
- *Read:* "When Santa Learned the Gospel" by *Simon Camilleri.* 📚
- *Read:* "The Christmas Promise" by *Alison Mitchell.* 📚
- *Read:* "The Really Good News of Christmas" by *Dai Woolridge.* 📚
- *Read:* "The Night Before Christmas" by *Oliver Lancaster.* 📚

ADAM LOWE
St Bart's Anglican Church, November 2026

📚 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Church Library (stbarts.com.au/library)
✍️ Summaries: *Adam Lowe* (AL), *Amy Norman* (AN), *Justin Lai* (JL).

how to use this series overview

For each week in the series, a Bible reading, "the big idea", some reflection questions, and a prayer is provided.

- **PRAY**
  Begin with prayer, for example:
  Gracious God, please enlighten our minds, enliven our hearts, and shape our wills according to your life-giving Word. In Jesus' Name, Amen.
- **READ from the Bible**
  Read the part of the Bible that we are focusing on for that week. Some key verses (from that reading) are also printed—you might even like to memorise these!
- **REFLECT**
  Read the 'big idea' and use the questions to reflect on the Bible passage. This will help prepare for the sermon and the following week's small group questions (provided on the St Bart's website).
- **PRAY**
  Each week a prayer is provided that you may like to use.
  Of course, you need not to be limited to this prayer.

Week 1

Waiting in *(and for)* the Garden
Genesis 3:1-12 (cf. Romans 16:20)

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Genesis 3:15

READ GENESIS 3:1-12

REFLECT. The Bible's story of waiting doesn't begin in a stable, but in a garden. God created the world, breathed life into humanity, and entrusted us with a key role to rule, care for, and fill the earth. Adam and Eve were given every permission with only one prohibition: do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or you will die. This was not just forbidden fruit but deadly fruit. But seeking to dethrone God and encourage humanity to deify themselves, the serpent distorted God's words and planted seeds of doubt. *Did God really say that? You will not certainly die!* So grabbing what was not theirs to take, they saw, desired, and took the fruit — sin entered the world. It's a well-rehearsed pattern that has been repeated down the ages. Yet even in their rebellion, God did not abandon Adam and Eve. He comes looking for them *in his garden,* and calls, "Where are you?" But consumed by their guilt, they hid from God and blamed him for their disobedience. Yet even as God pronounces judgement (evicting them from the garden), he speaks a promise that the woman's offspring will one day crush the serpent's head (v.15) and clothes them. Ever since, humanity has been waiting for that promise to be realised. At Christmas we celebrate that the serpent-crusher, born of a woman, has come! Jesus is the second Adam who restores what was lost in the garden, offering us forgiveness, life, and life forever with God. *We long for new creation, but because of Jesus, we can wait as the forgiven, without fear, and with confidence.* AL

- What does it look like to live as a *forgiven* person? (cf. The Lord's Prayer)

PRAY. *Gracious God, as we look forward to Jesus' return, please help us to wait as the forgiven, without fear, and with confidence of life forever with you. Amen.*

Week 2

Waiting in the Wilderness
Mark 1:1-8 & Isaiah 40:1-11

...as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" — "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" Mark 1:2

READ MARK 1:1-8

REFLECT. In the Bible, the *wilderness* is often the place *in between*: between slavery and the promised land, between exile and home. With the temple in ruins, the road back to Jerusalem must have seemed like a pipe dream for God's people. Jeremiah told them to settle down, build houses, and seek the city's welfare because the wait would be long. Yet into that heartache, Isaiah speaks tender words from God: "Comfort, comfort my people." What an assurance that, even in exile (waiting can feel like exile!), God comes to his people like a shepherd who cares (Isaiah 40:11). As Jesus comes to rescue his people out of the ultimate slavery (to sin and death), Mark opens his Gospel with the same promise! Mark connects the dots that: (a) Jesus is the Lord; and (b) the voice crying out in the wilderness is John the Baptist. Echoing the words entrusted to Isaiah, John calls people to repent, and that is still the primary way we wait for Jesus, in our case for his return (cf. 2 Peter 3:9–14). As the Lord Jesus has come to us, we are to make straight paths — in our hearts and with our lives — for him. If we trust in Jesus, we have great confidence not only that the Lord has rescued us from sin, but also that he is returning and is with us now. While the world seeks to avoid discomfort and difficulty, we wait assured of what is ahead and comforted by his Spirit, who is with us always. AL

- What do you think it looks like daily to be preparing the way for the Lord?

PRAY. *Lord God, help us to make way for you in our hearts and with our lives. Help us to take comfort in your presence and be confident of your return. Amen.*

Week 3

Waiting in the Temple
Malachi 3:1 & Luke 1:5-25

"And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1:17

READ MALACHI 3:1 & LUKE 1:5-25

REFLECT. The Old Testament closes with a promise: "suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple" (Malachi 3:1). Incredible! But then for about four hundred years, God seemed silent. No new prophet. Many must have wondered if God would ever fulfil his promise. Then one day, as part of his rostered duties, an elderly priest named Zechariah shows up at the temple. It seems like a stroke of luck that his division was on duty that day and that he was chosen to burn the incense, but this is God's grace meeting a lifetime of faithfulness. Zechariah was likely praying not only for a child (he and Elizabeth were childless) but also for Israel's redemption. Today, God's apparent silence is broken. An angel tells him, "Your prayer has been heard." Their son, John, would prepare the way for the Lord and be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born. Zechariah cannot believe it and is struck mute, but in time Elizabeth is filled with the Spirit and rejoices. Simeon would later hold the infant Jesus in his arms and declare, "My eyes have seen your salvation" (Luke 2:30). Jesus has not only come to the temple; he is the true temple, where God meets his people. How we long and wait to see Jesus face-to-face. Yet whilst we wait for that day, we wait neither in silence nor without God's presence. God has given us his Word, and his people have become the temple of his Spirit. AL

- Jesus is the true temple and by his Spirit we are now God's temple. How does that shape how we wait for Jesus' return?

PRAY. *Lord God, thank you that you are true to your promises and that we can meet you in Christ! Help to know your presence and proclaim your return. Amen.*

Week 4

Waiting in Bethlehem
Micah 5:1-4 & Luke 2:1-20

"Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Luke 2:11–12

READ MICAH 5:1-4 & LUKE 2:1-20

REFLECT. "When will that ruler arrive?" Against the failed leadership and nationwide suffering, God promised through Micah that a ruler would come in the *strength* of the Lord. He would faithfully shepherd his people (Micah 5:4) and bring forth the hope of restoration (cf. 4:1-8). The answer dawned at the first advent! The anointed King ('Christ') has arrived; the *eternal* Son of God has entered human history! Yet this is a King unlike any other. As Micah prophesied, he comes not in the splendour of a palace, but from a *little* town of Bethlehem (5:2), in the vulnerability of a newborn child (5:3). God's Son is eternal, but became truly human, sharing our weaknesses and entering our suffering. He shepherds his flock not from high, but from humility. But he comes not just to sympathise with us, but to triumph over sin and death through his cross and resurrection. He is a compassionate King who understands us, and a victorious King who can save us! And on the *final* day, he will stand as the supreme Ruler, "*in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God," a*nd for those who put trust in him, *"will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth."* (5:4). So, while we wait for this final fulfilment, let us receive this King and sing, "*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests*" (Luke 2:14). JL

- Knowing the character of this King who has come, how does that help us entrust our lives to him today and confidently await his glorious return?

PRAY. *Lord God, thank you for sending your eternal yet humble Shepherd to us. Help us to follow him faithfully while waiting for the last day. Amen*

Week 5

Waiting for the City
Revelation 22:1-5 & Genesis 2:8-15

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Revelation 22:3-4

READ REVELATION 22:1–5

REFLECT. The countdown to Christmas might be over, but our waiting has not ended. We live in-between Christ's arrival and his return. We are not waiting for a disembodied realm, but to dwell with Jesus in a physical new creation as described in Revelation (21:5)! Part of our future is pictured like a city, like a garden city. As in the Garden of Eden, there is a river (cf. Gen 2:10), a tree of life (2:9), and the presence of the Lord (3:8). But where rebellion against God led to a curse and expulsion from the garden, now the curse is removed (Rev 22:3). Every element of this city points to who is at the centre, the throne of God and the Lamb. We wait for a future dwelling with the Lord, enjoying his light, and receiving eternal life from him. It is a picture of flourishing, abundant life with the Lord. This is not a future we have built or saved for, but "it is done" by the Lord. (Rev 21:6). Jesus' death and resurrection are what secures this future we await. The invitation is for us to "Come! Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life" (Rev 22:17). It is a future that is offered to *anyone* who calls on the name of the Lord, who comes to Jesus for life. We can feel pressured to make each new year 'stand out', but in Christ we live *securely* that the ultimate — *glorious* — future awaits. AN

- How should the security of our future life with God, shape how you approach this new year?

PRAY. *Holy Lord, we praise you that you are the one who makes all things new and gives life to all who call on you. Help us to wait faithfully for your return. Amen.*