

WAITING FOR ADVENT Revelation 22:20-21

INTRO

Do you know the feeling of waiting for someone you love to arrive at a gathering? The anticipation. Imagining what it will be like before the moment arrives: what they might say, the musty smell of their jacket, the joke they tell every time they see you. The longer you've been apart, the greater the anticipation. This kind of expectant waiting is the very heart of Advent.

Advent means “coming” – Christians throughout the ages have called this season “Advent” as we treasure the first coming of Christ and long for his second coming.

Why? Because God “coming” to us is the epic Story of Scripture. The message of the Old Testament is God saying “I’m coming for you,” and the message of the New Testament is God saying, “I’ve come for you, and I’m coming again.”

We long to get caught up in this story of waiting fulfilled and waiting yet-to-be-fulfilled, but instead we get swept along in the current of our culture that screams: “Buy! Eat! Give! Shop! Scroll! Click! Drink unseemly amounts of eggnog! Then Buy and Eat some more!”

It’s been said: “[t]o keep Advent as a season of spiritual reflection and waiting [requires] us to be countercultural.”¹

So how do we, like Mary, treasure up Christ’s first coming in our hearts and stoke a longing for his second coming?

Here in the final words of Scripture, we have the answer:

The Advent Promise, the Advent Prayer, and the Advent Benediction.

I. **(What is) The Advent Promise – SURELY, I AM COMING SOON**

A. Who makes this promise?

“He who testifies to these things” – who is that?

Look back in v. 16 – “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things...” Jesus makes this promise.

B. What is the promise? – “Surely, I am coming soon.”

¹ Bobby Gross, *Living the Christian Year*, p. 45.

Look in vv. 7 and 12 – “Behold, I am coming soon.” – so v. 20 is the third time this promise is made in these last verses of Scripture. We should take note of the repetition – Jesus wants this promise to root deeply in our hearts.

“Coming” here means “coming back” – return.

John begins and ends Revelation with Jesus’ return: Rev. 1:7 – “Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him...”

Jesus’ words in John 14 echo back – “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

This brings up the question:

- C. Why will Jesus return? – not in our passage today but throughout Revelation:

Short answer: Because he loves us. In Revelation 1:5, John writes, “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.”

Like a passionate Groom, Jesus is waiting. Waiting for the Day when he will finally sweep his Bride, the Church, off her feet and take her to be with him forever.

Jesus is clear – that Day will also be a day of judgment:

- To those who have trusted in Jesus, he will say: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt. 25:34ff).
- To those who disregard Jesus, he will say: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Leads us to one more question:

- D. When will Jesus return?

Many have sought to pin down the answer to this question with no success. Jesus does not tell us when he will return.

What he does tell us is: “Surely, I am coming **soon**.” Can also be translated “quickly.”²

We may second-guess Jesus: “Really? soon? It’s been almost two-thousand years!” But that would be to question the God who exists outside of our understanding of time – the God who is patient, not wanting any to perish, but that all should repent (II Peter 3:9).

And it would miss Jesus’ point. He wants Christians in every age to sense the nearness of his coming – *it could be today*. This fosters a desire to be watchful and ready when he comes.

“Watch, therefore,” Jesus says, “for you know neither the day nor the hour” (Mt. 25:13).

Brothers and sisters, there is a Day. There is an hour. It could be today. Let us be watchful and ready by holding fast to Jesus’ promise.

How are we to hold fast to his promise?
We learn to pray the Advent Prayer.

II. **The Advent Prayer** – *COME, LORD JESUS*

Jesus makes a promise; our prayer echoes his promise back.

[Like if you’ve been with a friend or family member you love and they say, ‘Goodbye, I’ll be back in a few months.’ And you say, ‘Yes, please come back!']

Three things to see about this prayer:

- 1) A Waiting Prayer – a prayer prayed in the waiting – a prayer that Jesus would **end** the waiting

Waiting is hard. Waiting to open presents, waiting on a diagnosis, for a relationship to be mended, for physical/spiritual/or emotional

² Zerwick, *Grammatical Analysis of the Greek NT*, p. 778.

healing, for financial provision, for graduation. In times of waiting, our hearts can deceive us that God has forgotten, that He is not good, or perhaps that He's not even there.

Where are you waiting?

There are two kinds of waiting:

- a) *Hell-like Waiting*: as Christopher Ash calls it – this is waiting experienced apart from Christ – waiting with no fulfillment. As Ash puts it, “waiting can be a foretaste of the terrors of hell, for hell is waiting and waiting without hope. Hell is an eternity of waiting in vain.”³
- b) *Hope-filled Waiting*: the kind of waiting experienced in growing depth by the believer – because you know there is a glorious end to the waiting.

[In Luke 2, we see a man named Simeon waiting to embrace Someone he has never met, yet he knows with all his being this Someone will come. Every day he wondered, “could this be the day?” As he waited, he had this burning hope in his chest. May this be increasingly true of us.]

Not only a waiting prayer:

- 2) A Love-filled Prayer: John Piper notes that the prayer “Come, Lord Jesus,” is rooted in something deeper: “I love you, Jesus.”⁴

Think about it – if you don't love Jesus, you won't care for his return. It's the people you really love who you get excited to see.

In II Timothy 4:8, Paul uses the phrase, “all who have loved his appearing,” meaning Jesus' second appearing.

Those who love Jesus will love his appearing – they will long for his return.

³ Christopher Ash, *Repeat the Sounding Joy*, p. 119.

⁴ John Piper, *Come, Lord Jesus*, p. 7.

But the opposite is also true: those who do not love Jesus will not love his appearing.

Paul gives an example of this kind of person: “Demas, *in love with this present world*, has deserted me.”

The prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus” can be revealing. It shows what we really love. Do I really want Jesus to come back? Do I love his appearing, or do I love this world?

The temptation is to pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, but not today – don’t be in any rush. I’ve grown quite fond of things here.”

This is an opportunity to confess, repent and return to the love you had at first.

Or it is an opportunity to admit that I never really loved Jesus. I go to church. I try to be nice to people. But Jesus asks too much – he wants everything, and I want to keep part of me back for myself.

This is an opportunity to give yourself wholly to him. When you do, you won’t get your old life back, you’ll get something completely new.⁵

“Come, Lord Jesus” is a love-filled prayer.

3) Lastly, The Sum of All Prayers⁶

- If this one prayer were answered, every prayer you’ve ever prayed would be answered in a more glorious way than you could imagine.
- If this prayer were answered, all your deepest desires would be met, because all our desires are ultimately met in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- This is the Lord’s Prayer summed up in three words.

⁵ Ike Reeder, *For the Good*, Documentary, 3:31.

⁶ Adolf Schlatter

- It's a prayer for when you don't know what else to pray, for when you don't want to pray. For when all seems lost, when God seems far away: "Come, Lord Jesus," "O come, O come, Emmanuel"

And finally we have the Advent Benediction:

III. The Advent Benediction

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

Benediction means "good word." What better word to end the Bible with: Grace – God's unmerited favor through Jesus Christ.

This is a fitting way to end because, as one put it: in Christ, "grace always has the last word."⁷

So there we have it – we are the waiting ones, waiting for Advent – the second Advent.

The Lamb of God once lying in a manger to live and die for us will be the Lion of Judah riding a white horse to finally and forever rescue us.

Sisters and brothers, our waiting will soon end.

May your celebrations today and tomorrow whet your appetite for that Day.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

BENEDICTION

(Blake) "Surely, I am coming soon."

(Congregation) "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

(Blake) "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

⁷ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, p. 350.

Children's Sermon

- Wanted to show you something: Shepherd's Advent Calendar – you may have seen one. Today we opened the last little door.
- As you see the doors opening, you see Christmas Day getting closer. It helps you wait because you see how close you're getting.
- **Raise your hand: Have you ever had to wait on something/someone? Has it been hard to wait to open Christmas presents?**
- Let me tell you a story of a man who waited a long, long time for something.
- In Luke 2 – read vv. 25-26
- "Consolation" – comfort – rescue, deliverance
- So, he walked around every day wondering, "could this be the day?" Picture him walking around, doing his chores, taking out the trash, tying his shoes
- One day he was walking in the temple and – "there he is! This little baby is our Rescuer!" Held him up in his arms and praise God.
- **Raise your hand: Do you know who that little baby was?**
- Just like Simeon was waiting for Jesus to come, we are too. He promised to come back to rescue us for good.
- How do we get ready for him to come back? We put our hopes and trust in Jesus just like Simeon did.

Let me pray