

Christmas Eve

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[0 : 00] We read this in Luke chapter 2. In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria, and all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house in lineage of David to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night, and an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David our Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

[1 : 15] Let's pray. God, we thank you so much, Lord Jesus, for taking on flesh, for remaining in fleshed, for coming back in fleshed.

God, would you bless our time in your word tonight? In Jesus' name, amen. Tonight I want to say to you, Fear not, For behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people that Jesus is coming back again.

We are living in between the advents, the first coming of Jesus Christ and the second coming of Jesus Christ, and in between the advents.

If you've got any time on this planet, you know we experience both the goodness of God and the hardness of sin. Sin affecting our relationship with God.

Sin affecting our perception of ourselves. Sin affecting our relationship with others. Sin affecting our relationship with a creation that is now a threat.

[2 : 26] Sin affecting our relationship with a person. It's good to look back on Christ's first advent. Just think of Luke 1 and 2.

Think of all the little vignettes of people building in anticipation of Christ coming as a man.

Zachariah, Mary, Elizabeth, the shepherds out in the field by night, the multitude of angelic hosts singing glory to God in the highest, peace to men.

And then there was Simeon and Anna who had lived long lives and they were waiting to see the Christ.

There is much anticipation leading up to Christ's first advent when God took on flesh and he walked this sin-hardened planet.

And he walked it to live a perfect life, die as a substitute, been raised from the dead in order to reclaim this for himself. There is this similar building of anticipation leading to Christ's second advent.

[3 : 50] This Christmas time, we have been purposefully looking forward to the second advent of the incarnate King, Jesus. And so I just want to remind you of some of the ground we've covered.

Early in December, on the 8th, we asked if we're living between the advents, between the first coming and the second coming of Jesus, where is Jesus now and what is he doing?

Well, according to our Bibles, Jesus, after he died on the cross and was raised from the dead, he ascended to the right hand of God and he sat down.

And he's presently seated at the right hand of God and all things have been put under his feet. So where is Jesus right now? He is in heaven at the right hand of God. What is he doing?

What is he doing? He's upholding his creation with the word of his power. Hebrew 1. He's expanding his kingdom of grace.

[4 : 55] He said in Matthew 16, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. He is receiving his due praise.

Have you read the book of Revelation? It is one big praise manual. And he is awaiting his return. In Matthew 24 and Revelation 22, he speaks of his coming back.

In fact, in Revelation 22, he says three times, I am coming soon. So Jesus is right now at the right hand of God.

And then on the 15th, we asked, when and how will Jesus come back? When will the incarnate king come again?

And what will that be like? Well, when it comes to the when question, Jesus himself addressed that in Matthew 24, 36. And he said, no one knows the day or the hour, not the angels nor the sun, only the father.

[6 : 11] So the time that Jesus spoke that, only the father knew the day and hour of his return, which means this for us. We know he's coming back.

We just don't know when. His return is promised, yet unexpected. And that puts us in a state of suspense, a suspenseful anticipation of seeing Jesus again.

And we must be ready for his return. When Jesus spoke about that in Matthew 24, the first way he illustrated is that, is like, remember the days of Noah? When everybody was getting married and giving in marriage, and they were not ready, they were not aware that the promised flood was coming unexpectedly, but Noah and his family were ready.

In Matthew 24, 30, Jesus then tells us, he tells us how he's going to come back. He's promised he will, we don't know when, and then he tells us how he will come back visibly on that day.

All the nations will see him. He will come back bodily. He'll come back incarnate. Just as the second person of the Trinity took on flesh and was incarnated and lived an incarnate life and died incarnate on the cross and then was raised incarnate from the dead and then ascended incarnate to the right hand of God where he reigns right now, he's going to come back incarnate.

[7 : 56] Bodily. And when he comes back bodily, he's coming back gloriously. With power and great glory, says Jesus himself.

It will be a brilliant spectacle. Just think about his transfiguration. Just think about Revelation 1 and this vision that John has of this risen, reigning, and radiant Jesus.

Just think of Revelation 19 of this one on a white horse whose eyes are ablaze. He's coming back. He's coming back in glory. And when he comes back, he's going to be coming back provocatively. All the nations on the planet, everyone will respond in one of two ways.

You will either wail at his coming. You'll mourn at his coming because you know who he is and why he's come and you're not ready. Or you will rejoice and you will worship because your name is in the Lamb's book of life.

[9 : 04] You've put your faith in him and he has rescued you from your sins. So though we don't know when he will return, we know he will return and he will return in all of his glory for all to see and so we've got to be ready.

We've got to stay awake. We've got to be faithful because our master's gone but he's going to come back on an undisclosed time. This past Sunday, we asked the question, what will the incarnate King Jesus do when he returns?

What will happen then? And we looked at Matthew 24 and 25. We looked at Revelation 20, 21 and 22 and what we know from those passages is that when Jesus comes back, he will gather all.

And when we read that in our Bibles, that gathering of all is not just all the people on the planet at the time of his return. It's all people who've ever lived on the planet for all time.

There will be this great, the resurrection of the last day and all will be gathered around his throne. He will gather all and then he will judge all.

[10 : 21] In Matthew 25 and Revelation 20, there's this great throne with Jesus sitting on it and books are open and he separates people, all people from all time as the sheeps from the goats.

Casting those who have not believed in him into eternal punishment and those who do believe in him, he welcomes into the new Jerusalem. And following the judgment, he will restore all.

And that is going to be phenomenal. As far as the curse is found, he will make all things new.

Full, final, forever peace. Forever shalom. Not just the absence of hostility, it's the fullness of God's good. Good with your relationship with God.

Good in your relationship with yourself. Good in your relationship with everybody else. Good in relationship with all of creation. It is this comprehensive restoration of all things.

[11 : 35] And only he can do it. And then if that's not enough, he will reign forever and ever with us.

all whose names are in the Lamb's book of life on the new earth. We will be in his presence. We will see his face. We will feel his hand wipe away our tear in his presence, with his people, in his place. So do you know what that means for us now living in between the Advents? We take courage because even though this life is both good and so hard at the same time, we know we're one day closer.

One day closer. On that day, he will make all wrongs right at the judgment. And then he will make all things new as the creator of all.

For the last few weeks in December, we have covered a lot of Second Advent ground. Because I've been wanting to get into your mind something that's going to be in your mind after the Christmas season.

[12 : 59] That you will have a hope going into January and February and March. Now I can imagine many parents of young children tonight having a particular kind of conversation.

they're going to repeat some instructions before bedtime tonight. And they're going to repeat this for emphasis.

It's going to go something like this. Okay kids, tomorrow morning is going to be super fun. We are going to exchange gifts and we're going to give each other presents and we're going to give each other gifts and presents because God has given the greatest gift in Jesus Christ to us.

But don't forget you must stay in your room until 7am. Let me just repeat that for you.

You can't go downstairs until 7am. You've got to stay in your room. You know what? You tell me kids.

[14 : 10] What time can you come downstairs? 7am? In a similar way at the end of the book of Revelation the very last book of the Bible Jesus repeats something for emphasis just like a parent repeating themselves to prepare their kids for Christmas morning.

Our risen king repeats something for us to prepare us for the second advent. And you know what it is? Three times in Revelation 22 Jesus says I am coming soon.

Revelation chapter 22 verse 7 behold I'm coming soon. Revelation 22 verse 12 behold I'm coming soon. Revelation chapter 22 verse 20 surely amen verily I am coming soon.

He wants us his people to be knowing and banking on that he is coming soon soon soon I know what you're thinking.

Didn't Jesus say that 2,000 years ago? 2,000 years isn't what I'd consider soon.

[15 : 38] That's a really long soon. Has anybody else asked that question? Jesus why do you wait?

Why do you tarry? the apostle Peter addresses that very question in 2 Peter 3 of why Jesus hasn't come yet.

And this is what he says. He gives two reasons. He says first consider this with the Lord one day as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. So why hasn't Jesus come back yet?

Why is it? It's been 2,000 years. The answer the first reason is well Jesus is on God time. His timing is not our timing. 2,000 years to us seems like a long time.

To Christ it's nothing. His timing is not our timing. But I want to let you know there's another reason why he is apparently delayed.

[16 : 47] There's another reason for this long soon that we're living in in between the advents. And that's found in 2 Peter 3 9.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness and the promise he's speaking of is the return of Jesus. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise of coming back as some count slowness but is patient toward you.

All of his elect all of his blood bought all who would one day believe in him he's not slow but is patient toward you.

Not wishing that any should perish. He doesn't want any of his blood bought to perish. Rather he wants all coming to repentance.

All coming to know him. What we're learning is he will not let any of his elect any of those he loves and pursues and calls by name as a good shepherd and they will hear his voice and follow him.

[18 : 05] All those written in the Lamb's book of life none will perish. All will come to repentance. repentance. Jesus' second advent will take place only after the full number of his blood bought people from every tribe tongue and nation are brought into his one flock. He's got a really good reason. Reasons. he's gathering a people for himself to worship him. And maybe you're in the room and you're thinking am I in? Do you know how you can be sure your name is written in the Lamb's book of life? You put your faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. You trust in him alone. Trust in his payment for your sin and that he's been raised from the dead.

[19 : 12] He's alive. And he's right now at the right hand of God the Father. He's expanding his kingdom. He's delivering sinners from the domain of darkness and bringing them into the kingdom of his beloved son and we get to join him in what he's doing.

So in between the advents, our incarnate king is patiently gathering a people for himself. And when all of his people repent and believe, then the end will come.

Christ will return. He will gather all and he will judge all and he will restore all full final forever peace and he will reign for ever and ever on a new earth with his blood-bought people.

love. I come bearing good news of great joy of the second coming of Jesus Christ tonight.

And may these words, surely I am coming soon, may they fill your heart with an anticipation, not a fear. You don't need to fear him.

[20 : 24] You trust him. May they fill your heart with anticipation of seeing him face to face and experiencing the peace of the Prince of Peace.

He's our hope in between his advents. Living in between the advents, well, there's a lot of good, but there's a lot of hard.

And tonight, I just wanted to point you to these repeated words of Jesus. Behold, I'm coming soon.

Behold, I'm coming soon. Surely, I am coming soon.

Emmanuel is coming back. And do you know what we say in response? Amen. Come, Lord, Jesus.

Let's pray together. Emmanuel, our King, we live in between your advents.

[21 : 35] And though we are so grateful of your first advent, we are longing more and more for your second, where you will make all wrongs right, and you will make all things new, and we will be with you in your place, experiencing your comprehensive peace forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.