

Advent II

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- [0 : 0 0] With all that is happening in the world today, the doomsday prophets have started to speak about the end of the world again.
- And you know the story all too well. Some of you probably remember, as I do, that little book, 88 Reasons Why the Lord Will Return in 1988.
- I know I'm kind of dating myself a little bit, but I do remember that. I remember hearing how the Persian Gulf Wars were a fulfillment of the prophecies found in the book of Daniel as Saddam Hussein was the new Nebuchadnezzar setting the stage for Armageddon.
- Remember Y2K? We were told that the computers would go on the fritz and the world would fall apart. And now we hear how the nations of Russia, China, and Iran are starting to unite in opposition to Israel, the United States, and other Western nations.
- There will always be wars and rumors of war. Friends, we do not need fanciful predictions, nor do we need doomsday prophets telling us what we already know.
- [1 : 2 2] And that is, Jesus is coming back to judge the living and the dead. And this is the point of Advent. Advent teaches us to prepare, to prepare for our Lord's return, not making fanciful predictions nor speculating about the unknown.
- We are not to get our theology from the current news cycles. We do, however, read a rather dire account of what will happen when the Son of Man comes in a cloud with power and glory, to quote our gospel text, Luke chapter 21, verse 27.
- We heard this morning that there will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars. There will be great distress of nations. We heard how the sea and the waves will roar and the hearts of the people will melt in fear.
- This imagery is quite dreadful, which we heard from Luke chapter 21, especially focusing on verses 25 and 26.
- So what is our Lord talking about here in our gospel text? Well, the background to these words is that our Lord is describing the destruction of Jerusalem and the great temple by the enemies of the Israelites, namely the Romans.
- [2 : 5 3] Jerusalem was that great city where it was believed that the Messiah would come and he would then reign and rule over the rest of the world from his throne in the temple in Jerusalem.
- The Messiah would be from the line of David. And the temple was the place where God met his people. The temple was a place adorned quite intentionally to look like the Garden of Eden.
- It was Eden in the midst of the people of God. The temple was Eden and the paradise for God's people. It even had collars depicting Eden with gold, precious metals, and wood.
- It was a place that had lampstands made to look like trees. And in the heart of the Holy of Holies, there was the Ark of the Covenant. And there, two cherubim on both sides of the top, that is, on the lid of the Ark.

And that lid was called the mercy seat. And the day of atonement, that one day of the year where sacrifices would be offered for the sins of the people, there would be blood poured out on that mercy seat.

[4 : 15] But all of that is now gone, vanished. When Jesus describes the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, it was more than just a defeat for the Israelites at the hands of their enemies.

It signified that the temple religion of Israel was now gone. It was over. There would be no longer a blood atonement for sin.

God was no longer present and among his people. And the glory of the Lord had disappeared. Paradise was lost once again, just like it was in the garden.

But we know that the temple of God is most certainly present. But it's present in the person of Jesus. He is the final sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

And his body is now the temple of God. And we know that we are being built together to be a dwelling place, a holy temple, part of the body of Christ.

[5 : 24] And we know that Jerusalem is not that small piece of land that has become the hotbed of hostilities in the Middle East. The new Jerusalem is the place where the whole church gathers around the throne of God, entering into that Eucharistic feast with the whole company of heaven.

Heaven and earth meet in Christ. The Holy of Holies is the altar of God, where the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus is offered and represented perpetually for people from all tribes, from all nations, all who bow down to Jesus as Lord.

Therefore, beloved, we do not need to be gloom and doom people. We are called to be looking. We are called to be watching. We are called to be serving, preparing for the coming of our Lord.

We are to be, in the words of our collect, reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting the word of God, seeking to imitate our master, our savior, Jesus the Christ, by living a life of love to God and love to one another.

Serving and extending the love of God to others. Friends, we know the story. And we know how the story ends.

[7 : 01] It ends as it began. Perfect harmony with God and one another. Serving our Lord for all eternity. And our Lord promises at the end of our gospel reading this morning, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.

The word of God is what we are to lean on. The word of God is our foundation. And we are to be learning, marking, inwardly digesting, so that we might be conformed more and more to Christ, our King.

And become less and less anxious about what the future holds. Dear people of God, let us then be watching, serving our Lord, because that produces hope.

The hope that we heard about in our epistle text, repeated in Romans chapter 15. It produces hope. It produces hope. It produces an anticipation, not a fear, for the day of our Lord's arrival, as we long for the coming of our great God and King, Jesus the Christ.

Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[8 : 57] Amen.