

WORSHIP

DECEMBER 03, 2023

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT PROPHECY SUNDAY

Today is Prophecy Sunday, and it begins the four weeks of Advent which lead up to the day we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is also known as Immanuel, that is, God with us.

The historical purpose of Advent is two-fold. **First**, Advent (*like Lent*) is a time to prepare our heart and life so that we are in the proper spiritual condition to celebrate God's physical entrance into our world. And **second**, Advent is a time for recalling all that God has done, how He did it, and why He did it in bringing Jesus to earth to save us from our sin and reconcile us to Himself.

Today we are going to focus on the prophecies from scripture that foretold Christ's coming, His life, His death, and His ultimate glory. As we consider these prophecies and their fulfillment, I encourage you to take note of the power, the plans, the faithfulness, the trustworthiness, and the active presence of God in individuals, in circumstances, in nations, and in world affairs. And why note this? Because God is just as active and present today – in us, in our circumstances, in the world around us, and in world affairs – as He carries out His plans for the world to come.

PRAYER:

LIGHT FIRST CANDLE: (#1) Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

CHORUS #49

THE KING OF GLORY

GENESIS 3:9-15 (#2)

Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" [10] He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." [11] And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" [12] The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." [13] Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What

is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." [14] The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; [15] and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

JEREMIAH 23:5-6 (#2)

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. [6] In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The Lord our righteousness.'

MAUREEN BATTY: The Lord Our Righteousness

HYMN

COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

From Genesis to Malachi, God foretells, in great detail, the birth, life, and death of His son, Jesus. Isaiah spoke about Jesus' appearing in **ISAIAH 7:14 . . .** "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

Though it is a mystery how God could be with us in the person of Jesus Christ, John affirms that Jesus and God are one five different times in his Gospel, and Paul states it clearly in Colossians.

JOHN 1:1-3 (#3)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

JOHN 1:29-30 (#3)

The next day [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! [30] "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

JOHN 8:57-58 (#3)

So the Jews said to [Jesus], "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" [58] Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

JOHN 10:30 (#3)

I and the Father are one.

JOHN 12:45 (#3)

He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me.

COLOSSIANS 2:9 (#3)

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.

HYMN

I STAND IN AWE

In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter confirms that Jesus is Immanuel. We read this in **Acts 2:36**: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made [Jesus] both Lord (*Adonai* – an OT name for God) and Christ (*Messiah*) – [and He is] Jesus whom you crucified". When Peter said Jesus was both **Adonai** and **Messiah**, he was saying that God and Christ were one and the same person.

One significant fact coming out of this mystery is that the same God that we must answer to for having rebelled against Him and for having gone our own sinful way is the same God who came to earth, took on flesh, lived as we live – yet without sin – and then died in our place in order to redeem us from the penalty of sin, to free us from His own final judgment on sin and unrepentant sinners, and to reconcile us to Himself – for eternity. Surely, a God who condemns sinners yet saves them from their rightful consequences is worthy of our trust and deserving of our love.

CHORUS

O COME LET US ADORE HIM

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES:

MICAH 5:2 (#4)

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah (*EF ruh thuh*), too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.

ISAIAH 9:6-7 (#4)

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. [7] There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

HOSEA 11:1 (#4)

When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.

ISAIAH 61:1-3 (#4)

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; [2] to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, [3] to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

PSALM 110:4 (#4)

The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

PSALM 69:9 (#4)

For zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

PSALM 22:18 (#4)

They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

ISAIAH 28:16 (#4)

Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.

GRANT STEVENS: Faithful and True

HYMN

ISN'T HE

One of the most encouraging OT prophecies is found in **Deuteronomy** where God saw and acknowledged the fear that the visible and audible forms of His presence struck in the hearts of the Israelites. In response to their fear, God said He understood and that He would show mercy toward those who are too afraid to draw near. And how did He show mercy? By coming into our world and making Himself known in the form of a human being – a form that we can see, touch, understand and draw near to without fear that we will die from getting too close to the Almighty God.

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (#5), The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. [16] This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.' [17] The Lord said to me, 'They have spoken well. [18] 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. [19] 'It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

According to studies of Biblical chronology that I have read and believe to be reliable, the time from the giving of the Law until God came as Immanuel and was born in Bethlehem was approximately 1476 years. That is a long time between promise and fulfillment. Yet, though the world had to wait, God kept His word. He is faithful and true.

The NT affirms the fulfillment of this prophecy in many places, but today we will read from **Hebrews 1:1-4 (#5)**, God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, [2] in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. [3] And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, [4] having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

HYMN

WONDERFUL, MERCIFUL SAVIOR

According to Old Testament prophecy, Christ was going to willingly submit to the mistreatment and false accusations of the religious leaders.

Isaiah 50:6-7a (#6)

I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. [7] For the Lord God helps Me.

The New Testament account of this is found in **I Peter 2:21-23**, and it describes how Christ dealt with His abusive treatment. Then it exhorts us to be like Jesus when we are being mistreated by those who have power and authority over us.

I Peter 2:21-23 (#6)

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, [22] who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; [23] and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.

The Old Testament gives specific details about what was done to Christ's hands, feet, and his clothing.

Psalms 22:16-18 (#6)

For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. [17] I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; [18] they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

Luke describes the crucifixion scene in a way that is similar to the psalmist's description.

Luke 23:33-35 (#6)

When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. [34] But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. [35] And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One."

CHORUS

HALLELUJAH, MY FATHER

The Old Testament speaks of Christ's resurrection in **Psalms 16:10-11**.

Psalms 16:10-11 (#7)

For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. [11] You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

This New Testament account is found in **Matthew 28:1-7**.

Matthew 28:1-7 (#7), Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. [2] And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. [3] And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. [4] The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. [5] The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. [6] "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. [7] "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

HYMN

LAMB OF GOD

Following Jesus' death and resurrection, he spent forty days with his disciples. At the end of the forty days, Jesus gathered his disciples in Galilee where, before their eyes, he ascended into the heavens. During his ascension, two angels appeared and gave a prophetic word to the disciples.

ACTS 1:9-11 (#8)

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. [10] And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. [11] They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

CHERIE HENDRICKS: Comforter

HYMN

JOY TO THE WORLD

PROPHECY REQUIRES WAITING

Today, we've looked at scriptures concerning the coming, life, death, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus Christ. The first of these prophetic scriptures began in the Garden of Eden – and that was a long, long time before the Christ-child was born. **Prophecy requires waiting.**

For us, however, those prophecies have been fulfilled. The promised Messiah has come, which is why we are looking back and celebrating their fulfillment.

Yet we also are waiting – waiting for the return or second coming of Jesus Christ. This time, His coming will bring a different kind of salvation – for He will save all who belong to Him from the ravages and destructiveness and the horrors of sin – both in the world and in those who belong to Him. Yet how many of us are waiting for this great salvation with expectation and anticipation – and therefore feel the weight of waiting?

I think you can agree that a growing cloud of evil is engulfing our world. Many people, all over the world, are not just self-destructing, they are taking their family, friends, neighbors, community, and nation down with them. Justice, integrity, civility, love, and the good of the community are being overshadowed by this growing cloud of evil that is twisting the truth to the extent of calling evil good.

Just as the first coming of Jesus Christ brought much needed salvation and healing, so the return of Christ will bring salvation and healing – from all that is wrong and evil in our world, and all that is still wrong and ungodly in us. Yet, we have to wait just like those who lived before the first coming of Christ had to wait.

However, having to wait is not bad. It builds trust in God's goodness and faith in His word. But it also gives us the opportunity to look into our world and consider the various ways God is at work – whether it is in unseen ways or obvious ways.

The reality is, from that first prophecy in the Garden until Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God was at work in many ways and with many people all over the world. He was not waiting to act, as if fulfilling the prophecy of the Christ-child was His next action. He was active up to, through, and beyond the advent of Jesus Christ.

We know nothing of having to wait for the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But we know about waiting for His return. And we know about waiting for God to act on our behalf in the daily affairs of life. May our waiting be of such a kind as to produce in us an ever growing trust in the goodness of God, faith in the word of God, and a discerning sensitivity to what God is doing each and every day – for us and around us and with us and in us.

Galatians 4:4-7 (#9)

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

HYMN

GREAT ARE YOU LORD

ANNOUNCEMENTS