



# **CELEBRATING ADVENT**

## **Expecting the Promised One: Hope**

### **“Upon Them a Light Has Dawned”**

Matthew 4: 12-16

**Introduction:** The season of Advent is not only a time of reflection upon the One Who has come, but also upon the One Who is coming again. In the days of the first advent the Jewish people were yearning for some sense of hope in a time of great oppression, longing for deliverance in a time of national despair. Since then the world has progressed significantly more into the darkness and once again God’s people, and even the world, longs for deliverance and hope.

#### **Sermon Outline**

##### **I. Galilee of the Gentiles**

- A. The history of Naphtali and Zebulun
  - 1. In settling Canaan
  - 2. In Isaiah’s day
- B. Galilee by the Sea in the time of Christ
  - 1. Farthest north/east and nearest the Gentile (heathen/pagan) regions
  - 2. Significant trade route
  - 3. A mixed population of free-thinkers and revelers
- C. The most unlikely place for a Messiah to begin His work
  - 1. Despised by the Jerusalem crowd and all of Judah
  - 2. Ungodly and irreverent, loose living and independent
  - 3. Broken, lost, and desperately needing hope and healing

##### **II. The People that Walked in Darkness & Dwelt in the Shadow of Death**

- A. Galilee of the Gentiles was, both figuratively and literally, a place of spiritual darkness. More than any other place of the Jews in the day, they were most in need of redemption, light, and hope.
- B. One of the great themes of the Bible is the contrast between light and darkness
  - 1. The properties of light are attributable to God Who IS Light
  - 2. The light illuminates, brings out color, detail, shape, and perspective
  - 3. Spiritually, light represents purity, holiness, guilelessness, the ability to see clearly and truly with Godly perspective
- C. Darkness, on the other hand
  - 1. Calls to mind the father of lies, the evil one, and those whose wicked deeds are done under cover of night
  - 2. It obscures, depletes of color, destroys perspective, and in the most extreme blackness, leaves one blind and unable to see at all.

##### **III. Have Seen a Great Light, and Upon Them a Light has Dawned**

- A. Jesus began His public ministry in the most unlikely place in order to bring light and the glory of God to those most in need
- B. He is still today the Hope of the Nations and the Coming King
- C. But He is also the hope of every person walking in darkness, living in the shadow of death: He comes with the light, He offers forgiveness and healing; He gives new sight, purpose, and direction even in our personal darkness.

**Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; <sup>13</sup> and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. <sup>14</sup> This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: <sup>15</sup> "THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES-- <sup>16</sup> "THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED."**

**Matthew 4: 12-16**

## The Meaning of Advent – Weekly Emphasis of Advent Traditions

### December 2

The word advent – formed from a Latin word meaning *coming* or *arrival* – is about the coming of Christ. The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Messiah in his first advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his second advent.

Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation and anticipation; of preparation and longing. It is a season of remembering and rejoicing; watching and waiting. It is a time to reflect upon the promises of God that have already been completed, and to anticipate the fulfillment of God's promises for the future with patience, prayer, and prepared hearts.

There is a yearning by the people of God for deliverance from the evils of this world both without and within ourselves. It is the deliverance from sin and sins. It is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin, and yet have hope of deliverance by the God who hears and answers those cries. And it is the cry of one who is sold into bondage to sin – “I do not understand what I do! For I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate...the very thing I do not want.” God also hears that cry to set us free from the body of sin and death – thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death.

It is that hope (however faint at times, and that God, however distant He sometimes seems) which brings to the world the anticipation of a King who will rule with truth and justice and righteousness over His people and His creation. It is the hope that once anticipated, and now anticipates anew the reign of an Anointed One, a Messiah, who will bring peace, joy, and love to the world. We long for the world to be set right! He will come again as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to reign in righteousness.

So there are twin themes represented at advent – our sinfulness; a judgment for sins; a calling of the world to accountability before God and then a different emphasis on a spirit of expectation that is captured by joyous happiness awaiting the coming of our King.

I Peter 1: 8-13

## First Week of Advent Readings

### *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

### Luke 1: 1-38

Sing *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

### Malachi 2: 17 - 3:5

You have wearied the LORD with your words. "How have we wearied him?" you ask. By saying, "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them" or "Where is the God of justice?" "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. "So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty.

### 1 Peter 1: 8-13

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

### *The Darkness Turns to Dawn*

*The darkness turns to dawn, the day-spring shines from heav'n,  
For unto us a child is born, to us a Son is giv'n.  
The Son of God most high, before all else began,  
A virgin's son behold Him lie, the newborn Son of Man.  
How rich His heav'nly home! How poor His human birth!  
As mortal man He stoops to come, the light and life of earth.*

By Timothy Dudley-Smith

