

He's Coming Back



Well, here we are at Advent One, the first Sunday in the Church Year, the Church's New Year's Day. It's a chance to look forward to all the events that will happen in this New Year, to knowing Jesus better, to growing in Christ and to take one more step in building the Kingdom of God right here.

The word Advent comes from the Latin word "advenio" which means "coming"—coming in 3 meanings—the prophets' prediction that the Messiah was Coming; Jesus is Coming to be born in Bethlehem; and He is Coming back at the end of time. All three of those meanings can be found in celebrating the Season of Advent this year.

But Advent also speaks of a chance to look into the Future—to catch a glimpse, if that is possible—of what lies at the end of the road for humanity. Will it be an advance? Or will we, as some environmentalists say, be a step closer to extinguishing all life from this planet? Will more people turn to Christ, and begin a new spiritual life growing together with us? Or will the secular materialistic consumer driven world create more poverty, more violence, more sin and degradation, and more ecological damage to earth? In other words, will humanity climb higher, or will our world simply unwind into total annihilation.

As brothers and sisters in Christ, I believe it will be our actions that will count. Each of us, leaving our sin behind, intends to struggle closer to God, closer to each other, closer to bringing humanity together in a growing, learning, praising fellowship. We may not succeed, but we are certainly going to give it our very best try, right?

Well, after hearing the Gospel this morning, Jesus had something to say about all this. *"... the power of heavens will be shaken; and then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and much glory. When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your hearts ..."*

Jesus predicts that the power of heavens will be shaken. In other words, there will be catastrophes, disasters, wars, evil events, and everything coming apart at the seams. Human civilization will be going to pieces; and even nature will be falling into broken bits. Fear, suicide, and terror will be the usual human response, with nowhere to go that is safe. And it will get worse month after month. The universe itself will seem to be disintegrating. It's not the kind of thinking we are prone to want to have. We want everything to continue in peace and harmony—but Jesus says, there will come a time when everything will be falling apart, and there can be nothing we can do about it.

Disaster and terror all around.

And then it will happen—Christ will return and all will see Him. Wherever you are in the world, you will see His Return in great clarity, with power and glory. The word “cloud” refers to the “shekinah,” the Jewish way of speaking of the Presence of God. (It has nothing to do with an H₂O water cloud.) Time will come to an end, and so will the world. Pretty scary stuff.

But Jesus says, “when these things begin to happen, LOOK UP, and LIFT UP your hearts...” Don’t scurry for shelter, don’t hide in a cave, but stand tall and eager, and watch for His Return as King of Heaven. Jesus said He would return, and return He will.

Now hidden in these words of Jesus is something important for us to know. Simply speaking it’s this: **time is a straight line, not a circle**. There are those people who think of time as circular, with no beginning and no end. That philosophy means that there is no purpose to existence, no destiny, no future. We just keep repeating things endlessly, without meaning, without logic, without purpose. Hindus think that way, and so are striving to get off the circle, to fall into endless nothingness. There are others in our society who think and act that way—as if there is no purpose to life, except to get as much as there is going, and the devil take the hindmost.

Christians, like Jews, see history as a straight line—with a beginning and an end. The universe came from God, and ultimately returns to God. There is a genuine point to life, a reason for existence, a Destiny that is ours to claim as a Gift from Jesus. History is going somewhere, and we want to be going with it, not somewhere else. History has a goal, and that goal is the Return of Jesus Christ and the end of time. It may be tomorrow, or a thousand years or many more—but come it will. We have His promise, and the logic of history.

When this is to be, no one knows. Don’t listen to any crackpot who tries to tell you “it’s this Dec 16th” or “it’s next May”, or “sometime in 2015” or any such nonsense. No one knows—even Jesus Himself said that He did not know—only the Father knows. But come it will—and Jesus will be at the Centre when it does.

The concept of history being in a straight line means there is a reason for everything, a

Purpose in life, a Destiny. For us, that Destiny is to be with God the Father forever, in the Presence of our Saviour and the Holy Spirit, surrounded by all the Saints and Angels, and the whole Kingdom of Heaven. It is life without end, lived in the glory of God, and the music of the spheres. If you think this life is good, just wait until you see the Destiny that Jesus has for you. You’ve not seen anything yet.

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love Him.”—1 Corinthians 2:9

That is why Jesus clearly says: “look up, lift up your heads.” Those without Christ may run and hide, but we who have been expecting His Return, should stand expectantly and

joyfully. We look forward to His Return, and the Kingdom that He has promised. Be on your watch therefore, filled with expectation, for as we say each Sunday at the Eucharist—

“Christ has died; Christ is Risen; Christ will come again.”

Advent calls all this to mind. Advent says Christ will come again. Advent says we still have time. Advent calls us to confess our sins now, to put aside our petty dreams, and turn to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. It is time to look forward to the reality that is coming—to the reality of history forging to its ultimate destiny, to the end of Time, and to His Return, He is coming back, anytime now, and we need to be ready.

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