

VIRTUAL TO REALITY / REVELATION 22:1-5

Christmas is a little like virtual reality. We all have the picture in mind: a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a feed trough, protected by His peasant teenage mother and her carpenter husband. Shepherds watching, Magi coming. But how do we know if it's real, or even relevant?

1. The difficulties we face are _____.

2. The first advent began the _____.

3. The second advent empowered the _____.

4. At the final advent, the King of kings will return in _____.

5. The timing of the final advent is known only by the _____.

6. You must be _____!

7. The only reason the last advent has delayed is so that _____ can be ready.

Scripture References (In order of use): Luke 1:80; Matthew 6:10; Revelation 3:20; Genesis 3:5

Referenced Works: Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott (The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge); Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew (H. A. Ironside); The First Christian Primer: Matthew (Bob Utley); The Gospel According to Matthew (Elaine Wainwright); Matthew (Stuart Weber); Matthew (Douglas Sean O'Donnell)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What's one thing you're still waiting for that you ordered online? How does waiting for something affect your anticipation?
2. Read **Revelation 22:1-5**. Is there anything from the sermon you would like to discuss?
3. How does acknowledging that satan is "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) change how you view current world events, personal struggles, or suffering?
4. How does viewing ourselves as part of a "resistance movement" or "insurgency" change your perspective on being a Christian in today's culture?
5. Of the three advents (Jesus' birth, the coming of the Spirit, Christ's return), which of these three do you think about most often? Which do you tend to neglect?
6. If you knew Jesus were coming back today, what would you be doing differently?
7. Read **2 Peter 3:9-12**. Peter says God delays His return because He wants everyone to repent. Who in your life needs to hear about Jesus before it's too late? What's preventing you from sharing with them?
8. Patrick said, "Being ready is the best way to live today." What does a "ready" life look like practically? How is it different from a life lived for comfort, security, or personal success?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- Each morning, pray: "Holy Spirit, fill me with Your presence and power today. Help me live as if Jesus is returning tonight."
- Look over your OIKOS list. Who do you need to add to the list or take off. Pray for them daily. Ask God for one opportunity this week to share your faith with at least one person.
- Each day until Christmas, read one passage about Christ's second coming (Matthew 24, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 2 Peter 3, Revelation 19-22) and journal about how it affects your perspective.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Day 1: From Paradise Lost to Paradise Restored

Reading: Genesis 3:22-24; Revelation 22:1-5

The journey from exile to restoration defines the entire biblical narrative. When humanity fell, we were barred from the tree of life by a flaming sword. Yet God's final word isn't exclusion—it's invitation. In Revelation, we see the tree of life flourishing again, accessible to all who belong to Christ. The difficulties you face today are real consequences of living in a fallen world, but they're not the final chapter. Every struggle, every tear, every moment of pain exists in the tension between paradise lost and paradise promised. Christmas began the great reversal. The baby in the manger came to unlock the gates we closed through rebellion, offering us eternal access to God's presence.

Day 2: Joining the Resistance

Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; John 8:42-47

You are living behind enemy lines. The "god of this age" still wields influence, blinding minds and dealing death. Yet Christ's first advent launched a divine insurgency. When Jesus arrived in that Bethlehem stable, He began an underground movement to overthrow the devil's unlawful kingdom. As a follower of Christ, you're not a passive observer—you're an active resistance fighter. Every act of love defies hatred's grip. Every truth spoken shatters deception's chains. Every prayer advances the Kingdom. The darkness around you isn't evidence of Christ's absence but proof of why His presence matters. Don't be discouraged by the battle's intensity. The Commander has already secured the victory; we're simply reclaiming occupied territory until His triumphant return.

Day 3: Empowered by the Spirit

Reading: Acts 2:1-4; Ephesians 5:15-21

Pentecost wasn't a one-time historical event—it's a daily invitation. The same Spirit who descended in tongues of fire waits to fill you each morning with divine presence and power. You cannot fight spiritual battles with human strength. The Holy Spirit provides the leadership, protection, and courage needed to assault strongholds in human hearts. Are you confessing what's wrong between you and God? Are you daily inviting the Spirit's control? When you do, Christmas becomes perpetually real—Christ makes your life His manger. You become a living nativity, demonstrating His presence to a watching world. The Spirit transforms ordinary believers into the extraordinary army of God, equipped to build His Kingdom one surrendered heart at a time.

Day 4: The King Returns in Victory

Reading: Revelation 19:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Devotional: The final advent will be nothing like the first. No humble stable, no vulnerable infant. Jesus will return as conquering King—eyes blazing, crowned with many diadems, leading heaven's armies. Every knee will bow. Every enemy will fall. Satan and all who serve him will face eternal judgment. The new heaven and new earth will replace this corruption forever. But here's the urgent reality: no one knows when. Not angels. Not even the Son knew during His earthly ministry. Only the Father knows the day and hour. This uncertainty isn't meant to paralyze you with fear but energize you with purpose. Live each day as if Jesus might return before sunset. Make decisions as if you'll stand before Him tonight. Are you ready?

Day 5: Patient Mercy, Urgent Readiness

Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 13:32-37

Devotional: Why hasn't Jesus returned yet? Peter answers clearly: divine patience. God delays because He desires everyone possible to repent and be saved. His seeming slowness is actually stunning mercy. But don't mistake patience for permission to procrastinate. You have no guarantee of tomorrow. Your next breath is a gift, not a right. This could be your final Christmas. The early Christians lived with urgent expectancy, and their passion transformed the world. They wanted everyone right with God today because they knew time was short. What would change if you truly believed Jesus might return this afternoon? Would you forgive that person? Serve more faithfully? Share the gospel more boldly? Being ready for His return is simply the best way to live today—effective, fulfilling, joyful, and significant..

DEACONS ON CALL

Johnny Davis and Ed Watson

WEEKLY EVENTS

- **WORSHIP:** Sundays at 9:45 AM
- **SMALL GROUPS:** Sundays at 11 AM
- **DEEP DIVE:** Returns January 14
- **FIRST KIDS:** Returns January 14
- **FIRST YOUTH:** Returns January 14

