

The Case for Christmas
Advent Worship Series - Week 1
Christianity Is a FACTual Faith

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements & Offering

SB#114 – Light of the world	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship	No CD
HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	HC-146	HCD13-T16
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#84 – Joy to the World	TB-103 - same	D4-T9 (3 vs.)
SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
SB#103 – Christians awake, salute the happy morn	TB-476 – same	HTD10-T1 (3 vs.)
SB#116 – O come, all ye faithful	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles	HTD3 –T1 (3 vs.)
HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	HC-140	HCD12-T20

Drama: I Know It’s True

The Evidence

Call to Worship:

Christianity is a FACTual Faith. During the Christmas season, Christians celebrate the great event—and truth—of the incarnation. In the Christ child of Bethlehem, God entered human history and revealed himself up close and personal. The astounding truth is that in Jesus Christ, humanity encountered God in a real, personal, historical, and tangible way. The ultimate significance of Christmas is that the infinite, eternal God the Son left his glorious throne in heaven. He accepted life as a human to personally offer his love and forgiveness to sinners.

(Without a Doubt, page 133)

SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus,	TB-370 – Hyfrydol (2 written verses combine to make 1 verse with this tune, no chorus)	HTD1-T14 (3 vs.)
---	--	------------------

Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

Candle Lighting:

Leader: Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:3 NIV)

Reader 1: **Prophecy** - “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** – All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us." (Matthew 1:22-23)

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God**

Reader 1: **Prophecy** – “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** – Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." (Luke 1:29-33)

Leader: **Therefore... Jesus is the Son of God. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophets.** (Matthew 1:22)

[Light the first candle]

HC#136 – We All Bow Down	HC-136	HCD12-T16
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20

Prayer:

[Piano continues to play chorus]

Who is this child? Who is this Wonderful Counselor? He is a man who has walked in our shoes, felt our pains and struggled with our temptations. Moreover, he walks with us now, every step of the way. How could we not love him? O Light of the World, prophesied deliverer of Israel, you have truly come. You are my deliverer and the light of my world as well. With joy I acknowledge your right to every righteous and holy title and to every place of authority. Come, Lord Jesus, Messiah, and rule over us with justice and peace. Do it even now in me. I welcome you gratefully to the throne of my life. Amen.

(The NIV Worship Bible, page 909)

Message – Part 1 – The Fitting of a Fingerprint

The Old Testament contains over 300 specific ancient predictions about the coming of the Messiah who would be the savior of Israel and the world. These 300 predictions made hundreds of years before the first Christmas when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, form in a sense a fingerprint. God was saying, look for the only one who would ever fulfill this fingerprint. That will be the one you will know is your Messiah, the savior of Israel and the world. **That would be the only one.** It was a great way for God to help people discern who was telling the truth when they claimed to be from God. And sure enough these predictions hundreds of years in advance describe the life of Jesus Christ.

The facts state that he would be born of a virgin of the seed of Abraham of the tribe of Judah of the house of David. That he would be born in Bethlehem. That he would be heralded by the Lord's messengers. That he would cleanse the temple. That he would be killed at a specific time in history. That he would be rejected by the Jewish people at the time. That he would have his hands and feet pierced. That he would be pierced in his side. That he would rise from the dead and that he would descend into heaven and would sit down at the right hand of the Father.

As we study these prophecies you just can't explain them away. There has got to be an explanation other than Jesus fits this prophetic fingerprint of history. Maybe the biggest defense of this might be there isn't just one person who fits this fingerprint. Maybe lots of people through history have fulfilled this fingerprint and thus Jesus maybe had a really good public relations agent, so we remember him as being the Son of God.

Maybe it is an easy feat to fulfill all these prophecies. Maybe they are vague. Maybe anyone could do it. Dr. Peter Stoner, a university mathematician and professor of science in California, did something very interesting. He got, over time, 600 students together and he challenged these students to come up with very conservative estimates of the

mathematical probability of just eight New Testament prophecies coming true in any human being throughout history.

The students came up with some very conservative estimates and then Dr. Stoner just did the math and ran the mathematical calculations. He concluded that the odds of any human being throughout history fulfilling just eight of these Old Testament prophecies is one chance in a hundred million billion. That makes the lottery seem like a sure thing. Let me illustrate just how big this number is:

(Hold up a sugar packet) Here is a sugar packet found in every restaurant in America. If you were to take this packet and put it on the floor and tile this whole auditorium and then the entire United States and then Canada and South America and Asia and Africa and Europe. The entire planet would be tiled with these little sugar packets all over the place. If you just imagine every square inch of dry land on the planet tiled with this kind of packet. And on the bottom of one would be a gold star put somewhere on the planet.

What are the odds of any human being throughout history fulfilling just eight of these prophecies? It would be like me choosing a person from the audience here today and saying you can go anywhere in the world – but you can bend down only one time and you can pick up just one sugar packet. What are the odds that the sugar packet with the star on the bottom was the one you would pick up? The same odds that any human being in history could fulfill just eight of these Old Testament prophecies. I thought that was pretty impressive.

But then Dr. Stoner didn't stop there. He and his 600 students looked at 48 prophecies and they determined that, based on their estimates of the odds of anyone fulfilling them, the odds were one chance in a trillion, trillion. This is a big number – a very big number – 1 with 157 zeros after it.

But can I tell you – Jesus did it! Against all mathematical odds, the only one ever in history to match this fingerprint was Jesus Christ. And it seals his identity as being the Messiah who came to be the Savior of Israel and the world. It affirmed his identity in the manger not as being a mere man but as God incarnate. (*The Case for Christmas Video*)

HC#10 – The Light has Come	HC-10	HCD1-T10
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah	HC-187	HCD17-T17
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19

How then should we live?

Responsive Scripture:

Leader: At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and

five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

All: At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

Leader: Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

All: 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

Leader: But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

All: Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'

Leader: But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'

All: **Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.**
(Matthew 25:1-13)

Message – Christ Is Coming

HC#45 – While We are Waiting, Come	HC-45	HCD3-T15
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#89 – Knowing You	HC-89	HCD7-T19
HC#120 – In the Manger	HC-120	HCD10-T20
HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11-T13
HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for us	HC-127	HCD11-T17
HC#139 – There is a Message	HC-139	HCD12-T19
HC#226 – I Worship You	HC-226	HCD21-T16
CF#32 – Sleep, Holy Babe!	CF-32	No CD

Benediction:

Lord, you are the light of lights, the sun of righteousness. Compared to you the sun is but a flickering candle in broad daylight. Yours is the light of joy, the light of revelation, the light of truth and the light of purity. Guide us, O Lord, with the light of Your beautiful presence, both now and forever.

(The NIV Worship Bible, page 1680)

Vocal Benediction – HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful SB#85 – O come, all ye faithful	HC-140 TB-552 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings	HC-61	HCD5-T11
HC#128 – My Tribute	HC-128	HCD11-T18
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13-T11
HC#149 – In Christ Alone	HC-149	HCD13-T19
HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus	HC-151	HCD14-T11
SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
HC#260 – Go, Tell it on the Mountain	HC-260	HCD24-T20

Week 1#	
DRAMA	
I Know It's True	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
© 2005 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission.	
Scripture:	Matthew 1:22-23
Synopsis:	Two friends discuss some unlikely predictions.
Characters:	Steve – a believer in tabloid predictions Jenny – his friend
Props/Costumes:	Modern dress.
Setting:	Bare stage.
Running Time:	3:00 minutes.

[*Jenny is standing center stage.*]

Steve: [running in] Jenny! Jenny! I have terrible news! You won't believe it!

Jenny: What is it, Steve? What's wrong?

Steve: Martians!

Jenny: [*disbelieving*] Martians?

Steve: Yeah, Martians. They're coming!

Jenny: Martians are coming?

Steve: Yeah. Actually, they're already here.

Jenny: Martians are already here?

Steve: Yeah, they've been preparing to attack us for years.

Jenny: So, where are they?

Steve: They're disguised as tourists.

Jenny: Tourists?

Steve: Yeah, tourists with cameras. They've been taking pictures of everything.

Jenny: So, how can you tell the Martians from the real tourists?

Steve: You can't. That's the genius in their plans. By the time we realize they're here, it'll be too late.

Jenny: Then how do you know they're here?

Steve: I read it?

Jenny: Where did you read it?

Steve: [*mumbling*] In the *National Daily Inquisitor*.

Jenny: Where?

Steve: [*louder, a bit embarrassed*] In the *National Daily Inquisitor*.

Jenny: You read it in the *Inquisitor*? Steve, you can't believe that garbage.

Steve: But, it's in their predictions for 2006. They interviewed 27 top psychics.

Jenny: 27 top psychics, huh? What else do they predict?

Steve: Well, by late next year, we'll all be driving cars that run on cheese instead of gasoline.

Jenny: Cheese?

Steve: Yeah, Wisconsin will become the new OPEC.

Jenny: Unbelievable.

Steve: I know. I gotta buy me some cows before the prices go up.

Jenny: Any other predictions?

Steve: Yeah, plenty, like Elvis will be the next president.

Jenny: First of all, this isn't even an election year, and second, [*not wanting to upset Steve*] Elvis has been out of politics for a long time.

Steve: It could still happen.

Jenny: Steve, I don't understand how you can believe all that nonsense.

Steve: But they're 27 top psychics.

Jenny: Okay, let me ask you this. Did these same psychics make predictions last year?

Steve: Yes, they did.

Jenny: How many predictions did they make?

Steve: I don't know. A couple hundred, I guess.

Jenny: And how many came true?

Steve: [*thinking*] Well . . . uhm . . . I think . . .

Jenny: That's what I thought.

Steve: Wait. Did disco make a comeback last year?

Jenny: No.

Steve: Well then, none, I guess.

Jenny: Then why do you put any faith in what they say?

Steve: Because Nostradamus predicted they would be right.

Jenny: But they never have been right. And they probably never will be.

Steve: They could be.

Jenny: I suppose they could get lucky just once. I really wish you wouldn't put your faith in false prophets.

Steve: But just in case, do you know where I can buy a cow? I want to be ready when the cheese-mobiles hit the market.

[*Blackout*]

The Case for Christmas
Christianity Is a FACTual Faith
Advent Worship Sermon - Week 1

Christ Is Coming

Scripture: Matthew 25:1-13

Theme: Be alert and watchful for he will return.

Introduction:

Half of the fun of any event is getting ready for it to happen. I am sure you can think of times in your life when you were making preparation and expecting some great event to take place:

As children we often anticipate Christmas, birthdays, first day of school, or first day of vacation.

A little later in life we make preparations for graduation, for marriage, or for the first baby.

Still later in life we make preparations for retirement (and still enjoy vacations and first grandchildren or great-grandchildren).

Our lives are full of planning, anticipation and expectation of things to come.

Advent is the time on the church calendar when we give attention to the coming of Christ. Often we think of Advent as merely the four weeks prior to Christmas. The preparation, if you will, for the celebrating of the historical coming of the Christ Child. The Advent season is really much more than looking back to the event of Christ's coming as a babe in Bethlehem. Advent also directs our attention to the future and the coming again of the King of kings and Lord of lords. This same Jesus, the Messiah, who came in fulfillment of so many Old Testament prophecies will come again. The prophecies are given. If he came once, is he not likely to come again as he said he would? This is not like waiting for Martians to land.

Advent helps us to understand the time from Christ's death and resurrection to his Second Coming. The time between the two events is often referred to as the 'Church Age'—the age in which the community of faith witnesses to the truth of salvation and a relationship with a living God. That relationship with God is not just for the individual, but also for the church collectively.

Revelation 3:20 gives a picture of Jesus standing at the door, asking admission. While this is often interpreted as the door of the individual heart, the text is actually written in the context of the community of faith in the church of Laodicea. Advent is a time to think about the ministry of the church in today's world.

Advent is a time to become more aware of the meaning and possibilities of life as a Christian community. Christ has told us to be alert and watchful for his return because it

will come at a time when we least expect it.

*Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.
(1 Thessalonians 5:1-2)*

Advent is a time of great expectation and joy. Anticipation fills the air. Matthew 25:1-13 captures the spirit of Advent in the parable of the bridesmaids who anxiously await the coming of the Bridegroom. There is joy at the Bridegroom's expected coming. At the same time there is a sense of warning, for they are to be ready at any moment.

What are we to learn from the parable of the virgins who are awaiting the bridegroom?

Matthew is the gospel writer who relates this parable of Jesus. Jesus says the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who take their lamps and go to await the bridegroom. The story goes on to say that five were wise and five were foolish. The foolish ones took their lamps but they did not take any extra oil. The wise virgins took their lamps and some extra oil in a jar in case they needed it. The bridegroom was delayed and did not arrive until midnight. The cry went out that it was time to come and meet him, but the foolish virgins did not have enough oil in their lamps. The wise virgins could not share their oil or they may not have enough. The foolish virgins went to buy more but while they were getting more oil the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went into the banquet and the door was shut. When the others came and asked admittance they were turned away. The bridegroom said he did not know them. Jesus concluded the story with this warning:

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. (v. 13)

Matthew Henry's Commentary gives us this information about a marriage ceremony:

It was a custom sometimes used among the Jews on that occasion, that the bridegroom came, attended with his friends, late in the night, to the house of the bride, where she expected him, attended with her bride-maids; who, upon notice given of the bridegroom's approach, were to go out with lamps in their hands, to light him into the house with ceremony and formality, in order to the celebrating of the nuptials with great mirth. (Matthew Henry, 1333)

The bridegroom in the story is, of course, representative of Jesus Christ. The church is often spoken of as a bride being prepared for her husband. Revelation particularly uses that imagery:

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. (Revelation 19:7)

The virgins represent the church. The virgins are those who are anticipating the coming of the bridegroom. They come to honor him and to be there when the party begins. If someone had come to observe the virgins they would have all appeared the same. They would all sound ready for the coming of the bridegroom. They would all express anticipation for the festivities and they would all sound equally prepared. It is only when the bridegroom actually comes that the distinction of those who are ready is noticed.

Five foolish virgins represent those who look like a part of the church by entering into the present events, but who have not made preparation for the unexpected. They have only enough oil for the present, but nothing extra for any trials that may come. Perhaps the foolish virgins have an exalted confidence. They may believe that what they have will be adequate. At least they were in the right location, but they did not have the oil needed. They may have had the right language and behavior, but the inner necessity was missing.

The five wise virgins represent those of the fellowship who are ready for the unexpected trial or delay. These virgins know it is not enough to live just for the present, but in their heart they know they must store up for what may come.....

While our salvation is not of works, it is based on our hope in God, by exercising and living in that hope we store up for the days ahead.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 says:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

People will have to give an account for themselves and they will not be able to borrow extra from fellow Christians. The warning of this parable points to the fact that hanging around in the company of those who are awaiting the return of Christ is not enough. Attending church and being in good company with others is not what is needed. The oil has to be there. The Holy Spirit must be the source and reserve of those waiting for Christ.

The Oil of the Holy Spirit

When Christ left this earth, he did not abandon us. He left the presence of the Holy Spirit and he promised that he would return. In the mean time the Holy Spirit would be all that would be needed to sustain and hold us firm in our relationship with God. Many times in scripture, oil is used as a symbol for the Holy Spirit or the presence of God. The oil represents the grace of God to meet our needs. Oil was often present in special ceremonies representing the presence of God.

Exodus 29:7—Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head.

1 Samuel 10:1—Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul’s head and kissed him, saying, “Has not the Lord anointed you leader over his inheritance?”

Hebrews 1:9—You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions

by anointing you with the oil of joy.

Complacency in the Waiting

It is interesting that all of the virgins slumbered while waiting for the bridegroom. There is a real danger that those in the church do not take seriously the coming of the bridegroom because his coming seems so delayed. The church has been talking about this Second Coming for about 2000 years. Paul in his day first seemed to indicate that the coming would be quite soon. The early Christians did not anticipate this kind of time delay.

It is all the more important, then, that we be aware and ready for his coming. In a sense, perhaps many Christians are slumbering a bit, having not kept the vigil we are called to keep.

Personal Preparation

In the day of his coming I cannot borrow on someone else's experience. I will need the presence of the Holy Spirit in my own life and there will not be time to go for a refilling. No one else will be able to speak up for me or give me what I will need on that day.

There are no time extensions for the return of Christ. In college courses and reports, taxes, and even on payments, it is possible to get extensions—but there will be no extension when Christ comes.

In trials it seems the real depth of one's experience is tested. I often wonder how I might endure if I were put through a real testing. I am not sure how I would fare in the shoes of those who are called upon to suffer for their faith. Would the oil still be full and ready for his coming, with more to spare if needed?

In reality we are in the midst of awaiting the Coming King.

Conclusion

Scripture readings for Advent depict a strong prophetic tone of accountability and judgment. At the same time scripture is also faithful to the role of the Coming King who comes to rule, save, and judge the world. Over the next few weeks we will be looking at some of these truths of Advent and the role of the church.

Advent is a time of preparation and prayer. Advent's prayers are prayers of humble devotion and commitment, prayers of submission, prayers for deliverance, prayers from those walking in darkness that are awaiting and anticipating a great light (Isaiah 9)!

In our preparation for another Christmas, are we ready not only to celebrate the past, but to be ready to greet the Coming King of kings? Are our hearts ready with the infilling of the Holy Spirit should he come today?

We do not hear many sermons about the return of Christ. The tone of scripture is clear that he is coming. It is a prominent theme in the New Testament. The Messiah who has

come to achieve redemption by his death and resurrection is to return to consummate his redemptive work.

Revelation 22:7—Behold, I am coming soon!

Revelation 22:12—Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

Revelation 22:20—He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”

The urgency seems real yet so many years have passed. Do we still believe in his return? Perhaps we have bought into some of the more modern ways of understanding these texts:

Modern reactions –

1. the early church was misled or at least didn't get the eschatological information right
2. Not a literal return

Of course there are still those of us who believe that Jesus is coming again as he said he would.

The most convincing evidence of the return of Christ is in fact the evidence that he came in the first place. Dr. Stoner said the odds were 1 in 1 with 157 zeros after it that any person could fulfill the prophecies but Jesus did it. The fingerprint is there.

We must be alert and ready for the coming age when our redemption will be fully consummated. Creation itself waits in anticipation. (Romans 8:22) The victory has been won but the new régime has not yet been set up. We are called upon to be ready to bring in that new era when the King appears.

The children's chorus has some real truth to it:
“Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning.....”

Is your lamp ready and do you have oil to spare?

The Case for Christmas
Advent Worship Series - Week 2
If Jesus Wasn't God, He Deserves an Oscar

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES
 Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements & Offering

SB#116 – O come, all ye faithful HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles HC-140	HTD3 –T1 (3 vs.) HCD12-T20
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
SB#126 – The first noel the angel did say	TB-857 – The First Noel	HTD6-T18 (3 vs.)
SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13 –T11

Drama: What's the News?

The Evidence

Call to Worship:

If Jesus wasn't God, he deserves an Oscar. Eyewitness testimony is powerful, even compelling and convincing. Do we have the testimony of anyone who personally interacted with Jesus, who listened to his teachings, who saw his miracles, who witnessed his death, and who perhaps even encountered him after his alleged resurrection?

(The Case for Christ, page 20)

Are the facts clearly recognizable and accessible by everyone? Luke, the first-century Christian historian, said that he strove to provide an orderly and accurate historical “narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as those, who

from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, delivered them to us”.
(*The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, introduction xxx)

Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

Candle Lighting:

Leader: Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:3 NIV)

Reader 1: **Prophecy** - Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** - “She was found with child of the Holy Spirit... Then Joseph... did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called his name Jesus.” (Matthew 1:18, 24, 25)

Leader: **Therefore... Jesus is the Son of God.**

Reader 1: **Prophecy** - “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me, the one to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” (Micah 5:2)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** - “Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea.” (Matthew 2:1)

Leader: **Therefore... Jesus is the Son of God. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophets.** (Matthew 1:22)

[*Light the second candle*]

SB#118 – O little town of Bethlehem	TB-136 – same	HTD3-T5 (3 vs.) Bethlehem
-------------------------------------	---------------	------------------------------

Prayer:

[*Piano continues to play chorus*]

O Jesus, Son of God, you are the One promised in the prophets. You are the One born in Bethlehem, the Ruler of Israel from an ancient lineage. You bear the very name of God, ruling in matchless majesty. Your greatness exceeds and encompasses the whole earth. You alone are worthy, O Son of God, “to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” Amen.

(*The NIV Worship Bible*, page1248)

Message – Part 1 – The Claims of Eyewitnesses

Best-selling author Tim LaHaye writes, “Almost everyone who has heard of Jesus has

developed an opinion about Him. That is to be expected, for he is not only the most famous person in world history, but also the most controversial.”

Philip Yancey concurs: “It occurs to me that all the contorted theories about Jesus that have been spontaneously generating since the day of his death merely confirm the awesome risk God took when he stretched himself out on the dissection table—a risk he seemed to welcome. Examine me. Test me. You decide.”

The writers of Scripture invite us to examine this person Jesus for ourselves and to conclude for ourselves his significance. But we cannot focus the investigation just on his teaching or works. First and foremost we must focus the investigation on his identity. (*The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, page 137-138)

Matthew is the gospel which was written for the Jews. It was written by a Jew in order to convince Jews.

One of the main objectives of the book of Matthew is to demonstrate that all the prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus, and that, therefore, he must be the Messiah. It has one phrase which runs through it like an ever-recurring theme: "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet." That phrase occurs in the gospel as often as sixteen times. Jesus' birth and Jesus' name are the fulfillment of prophecy (1:21-3); so are the flight to Egypt (2:14-15); the slaughter of the children (2:16-18); Joseph's settlement in Nazareth and Jesus' upbringing there (2:23); Jesus' use of parables (3:34-5); the triumphal entry (21:3-5); the betrayal for thirty pieces of silver (27:9); and the casting of lots for Jesus' garments as he hung on the cross (27:35). It is Matthew's primary and deliberate purpose to show how the Old Testament prophecies received their fulfillment in Jesus; how every detail of Jesus' life was foreshadowed in the prophets; and thus to compel the Jews to admit that Jesus was the Messiah.

In addition, Matthew has an especially strong interest in all that Jesus said about his own second coming, about the end of the world, and about the judgment. Matthew 24 gives us a fuller account of Jesus' apocalyptic discourse than any of the other gospels. Matthew alone has the parables of the talents (25:14-30), the wise and the foolish virgins (25:1-13), and the sheep and the goats (25:31-46). Matthew has a special interest in the last things and in judgment. (Barclay, *The New Study Bible*, page 6)

Another eyewitness was the physician and historian Luke, who authored both the gospel bearing his name and the book of Acts. These two books together constitute about one-quarter of the entire New Testament. Consequently, a critical issue is whether Luke was a historian who could be trusted to get things right. When archaeologists check out the details of what Luke wrote, do they find that he was careful or sloppy?

The general consensus of both liberal and conservative scholars is that Luke is very accurate as a historian. He writes as an educated man, and archaeological discoveries are showing over and over again that Luke is accurate in what he has to say. (*The Case for Christ*, page 97)

Archaeology may support the credibility of Luke, but he isn't the only author of the New Testament. What would scientists have to say about John and Mark, whose gospels were sometimes considered suspect because they talked about locations that couldn't be verified? Some scholars charged that since they failed to get these basic details straight, John must not have been close to the events of Jesus' life.

That conclusion, however, has been turned upside down in recent years. There have been several discoveries that have shown John and Mark to be very accurate. When everything is put into the appropriate context, there's no problem with John or Mark's account. John McRay, author of *Archaeology and the New Testament* states, "Archaeology has not produced anything that is unequivocally a contradiction to the Bible." (*The Case for Christ*, page 29-101)

SB#12 – Eternal God, Unchanging	TB-213 – Aurelia	HTD3-T3 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#10 – The Light has Come	HC-10	HCD1-T10
HC#139 – There is a Message	HC-139	HCD12-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
HC#226 – I Worship You	HC-226	HCD21-T16

How then should we live?

Responsive Scripture:

Leader: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

All: The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

Leader: But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

All: **Therefore...when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"**

Leader: He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

All: Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:
'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Leader: **Therefore...I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."** (Matthew 21:33-44)

Message – Coming King

HC#136 – We All Bow Down	HC-136	HCD12_T16
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10 –T6 (4 vs.)
HC#45 – While We are Waiting, Come	HC-45	HCD3-T15
HC#89 – Knowing You	HC-89	HCD7-T19
HC#120 – In the Manger	HC-120	HCD10-T20
HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11–T13
HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for us	HC-127	HCD11-T17
HC#139 – There is a Message	HC-139	HCD12-T19
HC#156 – Enter In	HC-156	HCD14-T16
HC#169 – Hallelujah	HC-169	HCD15-T19
HC#179 – Come to Jesus	HC-179	HCD16-T19
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
HC#226 – I Worship You	HC-226	HCD21-T16

Benediction:

Lord, your people waited a long time for your deliverance. But your word is true and at last you came with an anointing of truth and power that has lasted to this day. Still you bind up our broken hearts and deliver us from our sinful bondage. You comfort us and fill us with joy. You restore our losses and give us new purpose and hope. Now we worship and wait once more with faith for you to come again in power and glory. Amen.
(The NIV Worship Bible, page 990)

Vocal Benediction – HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful SB#85 – O come, all ye faithful	HC-140 TB-552 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings	HC-61	HCD5-T11
HC#128 – My Tribute	HC-128	HCD11-T18

HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13-T11
HC#149 – In Christ Alone	HC-149	HCD13-T19
HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus	HC-151	HCD14-T11
SB#112 – It was on a starry night	TB-535 – same	
HC#180	HC-280	HCD16-T20
HC#260 – Go, Tell it on the Mountain	HC-260	HCD24-T20

Week #2	
DRAMA	
What's the News?	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
© 2005 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission.	
Scripture:	Luke 2:1-20
Synopsis:	The editor of the <i>Jerusalem Herald</i> and one of his reporters discuss a possible headline story.
Characters:	Mr. Stern – a newspaper editor, impatient and cranky Johnson – a newspaper reporter
Props/Costumes:	A desk and two chairs, assorted papers and folders and a computer or typewriter. Mr. Stern should be dressed in dress pants (suspenders optional) and a dress shirt with rolled up sleeves and a loosened tie. Johnson should be dressed in dress pants and a dress shirt.
Setting:	Johnson is sitting at his desk working on a story when Mr. Stern enters.
Running Time:	3:00 minutes.

Mr. Stern: [enters] Johnson!

Johnson: [leaping to his feet] Yes, Mr. Stern.

Mr. Stern: Johnson, we need a feature article for tomorrow's edition. What do you got?

Johnson: [excited] How about this? [making grand gestures] "King of the Jews born in a stable."

Mr. Stern: King of the Jews? Stable, hmm? Keep going . . .

Johnson: Well, it seems that there was quite a happening last night in Bethlehem.

Mr. Stern: [disbelieving] Bethlehem? Why is it always the suburbs? Don't you have anything local? After all, this is the *Jerusalem Herald*.

Johnson: Sorry, Mr. Stern. I don't make up this stuff, I just report it.

Mr. Stern: Well, go on . . .

Johnson: Anyway, with this census going on . . .

Mr. Stern: The census? That's old news. Everybody's covered that to death. I want fresh – I want breaking news.

Johnson: If you'd just let me finish, sir.

Mr. Stern: Well, get to the point then.

Johnson: Long story short – pregnant girl gives birth to child in a stable, angels appear to shepherds, who then, *ehem*, “flock” to the stable, see the baby and tell the whole village he’s the Messiah and the King of the Jews.

Mr. Stern: You can’t be serious.

Johnson: Yes, I am.

Mr. Stern: You want me to run “Baby in Bethlehem” as our headline?

Johnson: Actually, it’s “King of the Jews born in a stable.”

Mr. Stern: Whatever. Do you have any proof? Any eyewitnesses?

Johnson: Definitely. You know me. I always get the facts. I talked to the parents . . .

Mr. Stern: No good. They’re only in it for the kid.

Johnson: I talked to the innkeeper who owns the stable . . .

Mr. Stern: Nope. He only wants the free publicity.

Johnson: And I talked to the shepherds.

Mr. Stern: We can’t use them – they aren’t credible witnesses. Nobody would believe them. If only we had some religious leader or a politician.

Johnson: As for now, the religious leaders are keeping quiet and King Herod doesn’t know – and *I’m* not going to be the one to tell him.

Mr. Stern: But, you expect me to print it front page, bold type?

Johnson: Well, yeah.

Mr. Stern: I don’t know. This whole thing seems a bit “tabloid-ish.”

Johnson: I guarantee we’ll sell papers with this as our top story.

Mr. Stern: But will anyone believe it?

Johnson: We'll just present the facts and let the readers decide.

Mr. Stern: Can't we get more witnesses? I'm just not that comfortable with shepherds.

Johnson: Well, I did try to track down the angels, but it seems they disappeared as quickly as they showed up.

Mr. Stern: Angels?

Johnson: All gone. So, shepherds will have to do.

Mr. Stern: Couldn't we just identify them as local businessmen?

Johnson: I don't know that shepherds are technically businessmen.

Mr. Stern: Come on, Johnson. Work with me a little. Isn't there someway we can make this story more believable?

Johnson: Mr. Stern, the story stands as is. I did my job; I checked my facts, I talked to eyewitnesses and I even saw the baby.

Mr. Stern: Did he look kingly?

Johnson: He looked like a baby.

Mr. Stern: I don't know, Johnson. I just don't think it's the right story.

Johnson: But, Mr. Stern . . .

Mr. Stern: [*turns to exit*] Maybe McIntire can spin the census one more time.

[*Blackout*]

The Case for Christmas
If Jesus Wasn't God, He Deserves an Oscar
Advent Worship Sermon - Week 2

Coming King

Scripture: Matthew 21:33-46; Philippians 2:1-11

Theme: Once as a babe in a manger to be a servant, but twice as the King of Glory! (Parable of the Tenants)

Introduction:

The promised Messiah for whom the Jewish nation awaited came as a babe in Bethlehem, to a virgin as prophesied in the Old Testament. But he came in lowly form and with a meekness they had not expected. It was not the kind of story to make headline news.

He who was truly God, took upon himself the form of a baby and was born in a manger as we read in Philippians 2:1-11. He came as a servant lowly and mild. How will his second coming be different to the first?

As we discussed last week, Advent has a dual focus.

Advent points us to the coming of Christ

A) Once a babe in the manger – there is a part of the Advent season that should be reflective on that first coming. The incarnation is God taking on human form and living with the limitations with which we live. He could relate to our infirmities and he became the “once for all” sacrifice for sin. The birth in Bethlehem, as important as it is, is not the end of the message of Advent.

B) We await the second coming of the Messiah in power and glory – as the reigning King. The work of salvation is not yet finished. Christ, on the cross, finished the requirements of the payment for sin, until Christ returns – there is grace for salvation for all who will accept him. When he comes again there will be a consummation and a completion of salvation in the glorification of God.

Parable of the Tenants

Matthew, once again, is the gospel writer who relates this parable of Jesus. Jesus tells the story of a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it. He dug a winepress and even built a watchtower for guarding his possession. When all was complete he rented the vineyard to some farmers to work the land, and he went on a journey. The owner sent some servants to collect the fruit from the vineyard, but the tenants on the land killed the servant. The landowner sent other servants with the same outcome. Finally he sent his son, thinking they would have some respect for the son. Instead of respect they decided to kill the heir to the land, as well. Jesus asks the hearers what the landowner should do with the tenants. The response was that of course the land should be taken and given to others to operate. It should be given to those who will give the share of the crop at harvest time to the landowner.

Jesus clearly says to those listening; “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit” (Matthew 21:43). The reaction of the listeners is also clear, “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet” (vv. 45-46).

It is fairly easy to identify the players in the parable. **The landowner is God** who has created and set everything in order and has set his people as tenants of his creation. In the Garden of Eden, God sets humanity over the rest of the created order to care for it. Genesis 2:15 says, “The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” The Fall changed all of the original arrangement, but the promise of a land was repeated to Israel several times. One of the examples is during the time of Moses when God is about to bring them out of slavery to establish them in a land God has prepared for them.

Exodus 3:7,8—

The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey...”

The Lord has prepared the land for his people and he has left them to tend the land and to bring forth the fruit of the harvest.

The servants are the Prophets whom God has periodically sent to his people to call them back to repentance. God longs to see the fruit of the harvest, in the sense of the people living in harmony with him. But they have killed the prophets and have paid no attention to their warning or the call to be reunited with God. Jeremiah was a prophet called to speak to God’s people. His was not an easy message.

Jeremiah 26:7,8—

The priests, the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speak these words in the house of the Lord. But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the Lord had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, “You must die!”

Being a messenger or servant of God to his people has not been an easy task.

Of course **the son** in the parable is the picture of God’s own son coming to bring a message to God’s people. God sent his own son and, as we know, he was put to death. The people hearing this parable would of course not have seen that yet.

A Babe – a servant, lowly and gentle

Jesus’ coming in the first instance was, as we have seen, as a babe in the manger. He came without pomp and ceremony. He was born in a little “backwater” town to a young woman and her carpenter husband who were visiting there from a tiny village in Galilee.

His ministry was as one of a servant who gave himself in caring for the hurting world. He came to lay down his life as a sacrifice. He suffered a humiliating death on the cross at the hands of those he had come to save.

God will return not as a babe but as a King. And when he returns he will not be put to death nor will he be a suffering servant. Rather he will return as a conquering King. He will return, as did the landowner in the parable.

In the meantime, the “church”—the people of God—is still responsible for fruit from the vineyard. The Lord still looks for fruit in the harvest. Galatians 5:22, 23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” The fruit of the Spirit needs to be evidenced among his people.

The second coming of Christ will be with judgment...the coming King will be taking in the harvest.

The King

The king is going to come. While it may seem as if the forces of this world are in control, God has his strong hand on all the events of this world. It is not out of his control. What a celebration it will be! Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Philippians gives a wonderful account of the suffering servant who gave up everything to be poured out on our behalf. But it goes beyond that to speak of the coming King.

Here we look at Philippians 2:5-11 (in particular 8-11) against what we have read in the parable that Jesus told.

And being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The second coming of Christ will not be unnoticed. Just as he came once in history, so he will come again...

He will come physically as he was taken up into heaven

Acts 1:10,11—They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Some of the accompanying signs of the return of Christ are given by other writers. We are not going to dwell on these signs only to say that his coming will not be a secret. “While Jesus came in his first manifestation as the suffering servant, he shall come again the second time as the conquering king and judge.” (Bloesch, 180)

Matthew 24:30-31—

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52—

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1 Thessalonians 4:16—

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Conclusion:

Advent expresses a hope that God, who at times seems very distant, is in fact anticipated as a ruling king who will bring truth and justice and righteousness into the world. The Messiah will in fact bring peace and righteousness.

Matthew, who was concerned with the authenticity of Jesus for his Jewish audience, was just as concerned that we understand Jesus is coming again. The New Testament writers have this “coming kingdom” as a major theme.

The anticipation entails a judgment on sin and a calling of the world to accountability before God, as Philippians says. Yet, as the prophet Amos warned, the coming judgment of the "Day of the Lord" may not be the day of light that we might want. The judgment of God will prove just as thoroughly the people of God.

Because of this truth, especially in the Eastern Orthodox churches, the season of Advent has been a time of fasting and penitence for sins, similar to the season of Lent.

In other churches the season of Advent has come to be celebrated more in terms of expectation or anticipation. The Old Testament and Judaism seems to anticipate the coming not in connection with remembrance of sins, but in the context of oppression and injustice, the longing for redemption, not from personal guilt and sin but from the systemic evil of the world expressed in evil empires and tyrants. It is in that sense that all creation groans for its redemption as we witness the evil that so dominates our world (Romans 8:18-25).

Thus all of creation seems to cry out – “Even so, Lord Jesus, come...”

Are we anticipating the return of the King? May he find the fruit from the harvest that he desires.

An old song that we used to sing says, “Nothing but leaves for the Master; oh how his ...heart grieves. Instead of the fruit we offer him nothing but leaves”

What have we to lay before him?

The Case for Christmas
Advent Worship Series - Week 3
God Speaks through Scripture, not Stars?

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements & Offering

Call to Worship

His birth was the well-kept secret of God, whispered among the stars. Only a handful of people even cupped their ears to listen. And they were from Persia, not Palestine. They were Gentiles, uncircumcised and without the promises of God.

It was odd that the revelation of a Jewish Messiah was heard by foreigners, astrologers, of all people. Odd that it wasn't heard by priests or rabbis or members of the Sanhedrin. Odd too, that the messenger was not a prophet but, of all things a star. Not a comet or a meteor shower but a mere star, hung quietly in the night among a million others.

Something about this star captured the attention of these Eastern astrologers. Somehow they knew this sapphire dangling among the constellations was “his” star. Whatever it was, the Spirit of God spoke to them through this hushed revelation and beckoned them to follow.

(Moments with the Savior, page 41)

HC#121 – Joyful, Joyful	HC-121	HCD11–T11
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
SB#114 – Light of the world HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship HC-146	HCD13-T16
SB#107 – Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,	TB-87 – Joy to the World!	D4-T9 (3 vs.)

SB#115 – If I were a star then I would shine, shine, shine	TB-773- Noel	No CD
---	--------------	-------

The Evidence

Message – Part 1 – Evidence of the Star

Let's discuss the star. There are all kinds of speculation and study about what that light in the sky was. A lot of Christians would say that they don't need any scientific basis for this. It was a miracle. The Magi thought the star was something God made appear and they just followed it. It was miraculous no matter what, but if through astronomy we can go back in time based on what we now know about the movement of the heavenly bodies and discover that there was something there about that time that these wise men would have seen – what corroboration! The fact that it may have been explainable scientifically does not take away from the fact that it is still miraculous.

A lot of the miracles in the Bible were miraculous by their timing, not by their event. Storms ceasing is not a miracle, but when it happens right after Jesus says, "Peace be still." That's a miracle!

There has been speculation that it was a meteor, but a meteor burns out within seconds, so it wasn't a meteor. Was it a comet? Possibly, but according to a study there were no comets before 11 B.C. Was it a supernova, an exploding star – they have no evidence of that. But they have found that as they go back to the movements of the planets there was a near convergence of the two brightest planets - Venus and Jupiter – and it goes back right about to the time that Jesus was born. (Video – *The Case for Christmas*)

Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

Candle Lighting:

Leader: Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:3 NIV)

Reader 1 **Prophecy** – I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a **scepter** will rise out of Israel. (Numbers 24:17)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** - After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” (Matthew 2:1-2)

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God.**

Reader 1: **Prophecy** – The kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring presents; the

kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts. (Psalm 72:10)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** – Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem...and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him. (Matthew 2:1, 11)

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophets.** (Matthew 1:22)

[Light the fourth candle]

SB#101 – As with gladness men of old	TB-276 – Dix	HTD11-T3
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#136 – We All Bow Down	HC-136	HCD12-T16
HC#139 – There is a Message	HC-139	HCD12-T19
HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	HC-146	HCD13-T16
HC#169 – Hallelujah	HC-169	HCD15-T19
HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah	HC-187	HCD17-T17
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
SB#117 – O come, O come, Immanuel	TB-444 – same	TD11-T8 (3 vs.)
SB#131 – When wise men came seeking for Jesus from far,	TB-507 – Normandy Carol TB-497 – Away in a Manger	HTD11-T6 (3 vs.) HTD6-T3 (3 vs.)
HC#168 – Offering - "Christmas Offering" (Christmas words on vs. 1) Over the skies of Bethlehem appeared a star While angels sang to lowly shepherds Three wisemen seeking truth, they traveled from afar Hoping to find the Child from Heaven falling on their knees They bow before the humble Prince of peace We bring an offering of worship to our King No one on earth deserves the praises that we sing Jesus, may You receive the honor that You're due O Lord, I bring an offering to You [Song continues with original words]	HC#168	HCD15-T18

Prayer:

[Piano continues to play chorus]

Lord, I cannot comprehend that you, the creator of the universe, took on flesh and were born of a peasant girl. You, the one who spoke galaxies into existence became a speechless newborn baby. You, the one who gave the stars their light, veiled your own glory and slipped unnoticed into the human race. The miracle of your incarnation is all too unexpected, too mysterious, too holy for me to understand. I can only follow the kings to the manger and bow in astonishment and thanksgiving, glorifying and praising you for all that I have heard and seen. Amen.

(The NIV Worship Bible, page 1374)

How then should we live?

Scripture Reading:

Leader: No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Reader 2: As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.

Reader 1: That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

Leader: **Therefore...keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.**

Reader 1: But understand this: if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.

Leader: **Therefore...you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**

Reader 1: Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

Reader 2: But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:36-51)

Leader: Therefore....**Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.** (Revelation 1:3 NIV)

Message – Part 2 - Countdown to His Coming

HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11–T13
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#120 – In the Manger	HC-120	HCD10-T20
HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for us	HC-127	HCD11-T17
HC#139 – There is a Message	HC-139	HCD12-T19
HC#156 – Enter In	HC-156	HCD14-T16
SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10 –T6 (4 vs.)

Benediction:

You are true to your name, Immanuel, God with us. This name proclaimed at your birth was also hailed at your ascension. You are with us always—with us, not against us; with us, not absent from us; with us, not oblivious to us.

And so we go forth in your authority to raise up a spiritual army, to build up your glorious church and to lift up your gracious church and to lift up your magnificent name among the nations. Amen.

(The NIV Worship Bible, page 1338)

Vocal Benediction – HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful SB#85 – O come, all ye faithful	HC-140 TB-552 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings	HC-61	HCD5-T11
HC#128 – My Tribute	HC-128	HCD11-T18
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13-T11
HC#149 – In Christ Alone	HC-149	HCD13-T19
HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus	HC-151	HCD14-T11
SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
HC#260 – Go, Tell it on the Mountain	HC-260	HCD24-T20

Week #3	
DRAMA	
Star Gazing	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
© 2005 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission.	
Scripture:	Matthew 2:1-12
Synopsis:	Two people look at the night sky hoping for a sign.
Characters:	Benjamin – an avid star gazer Derek – his friend, also a star gazer
Props/Costumes:	Casual dress.
Setting:	Bare stage. If possible, a large sheet of plywood or other sturdy board could be propped up at an angle for Benjamin and Derek to “lie” on as they gaze up at the sky. This would give the impression that they are lying on the ground while still being visible to the congregation.
Running Time:	3:30 minutes.

[Benjamin and Derek are standing (or lying) center stage looking up at the stars.]

Benjamin: Didn't I tell you this was a great spot?

Derek: Yeah, it's amazing. I've never seen quite so many stars.

Benjamin: I know. And nobody else knows about it.

Derek: And you do this every night?

Benjamin: Well, almost every night. But I haven't missed one in the last four months.

Derek: So you must have the whole sky memorized.

Benjamin: Just about. But it seems like I find something new every night.

[They pause for a moment, looking up at the stars.]

Derek: *[breaking the silence]* So, why do you do it?

Benjamin: *[surprised]* Do what?

Derek: Why do you do this? Why do you lie here every night looking at the stars?

Benjamin: It's just a way of reminding me how small I am and how big God is.

Derek: Wow. I guess he's pretty big.

Benjamin: Yeah. And, I keep looking – hoping – that somehow, God is going to speak through the skies.

Derek: That would be pretty cool. So what are you looking for? A shooting star?

Benjamin: A shooting star, a comet – something like that. I'll know it when I see it.

Derek: I bet it'll be big.

Benjamin: And we'll be the first ones to see it.

[They pause for a moment, looking up at the stars.]

Derek: *[pointing off to the side]* Hey, what's that?

Benjamin: *[looking]* I'm not sure. I noticed it a couple of nights ago.

Derek: It's pretty bright. Maybe it's a planet.

Benjamin: No. It's not in a spot where any planets would be.

Derek: Maybe it's a comet.

Benjamin: I don't think so. It doesn't seem to move. It's always in the same spot.

Derek: Maybe it's your sign.

Benjamin: Yeah, right.

Derek: Hey, it may not be a shooting star, but it is pretty bright.

Benjamin: Yeah, but it's real low on the horizon. If God were going to speak, it would be high in the sky so everyone could see.

Derek: I don't know. I think most people could see that. Look how bright it is.

Benjamin: But it doesn't move. It's almost like a marker or something.

Derek: Maybe God's pointing to something.

Benjamin: Like what? A sale at Saul's House of Tents?

Derek: Well, what's over that way?

Benjamin: I don't know. It's too far south to be Jerusalem. Maybe Bethany or Bethlehem.

Derek: Do you want to go check it out?

Benjamin: Check what out?

Derek: The star. The marker.

Benjamin: And what do you expect to find? It'll take you at least a day to walk there.

Derek: I don't know. It could be fun. It beats lying around here looking up at the same old stars every night.

Benjamin: I thought you said this was cool.

Derek: It was – for about five minutes. [*turns or stands to exit*] So what do you say? Are you up for a walk?

Benjamin: And miss out on a sign from God. I think I'll pass.

Derek: Okay, but when I find out what's there, don't say I didn't invite you to come.

Benjamin: All you're going to find is that you've walked a long way for nothing.

Derek: Or maybe I'll find that you've been staring at the sky too long to realize when you've actually seen something important.

Benjamin: Like what, a sign from God?

Derek: Well, I guess there's only one way to find out. [*exits*]

Benjamin: [*looking back at the sky*] It does look pretty bright. But there's no way I'm walking all that way to Bethany or Bethlehem or wherever just to miss out on something really special.

[*Blackout*]

The Case for Christmas
God Speaks through Scripture, not Stars?
Advent Worship Sermon - Week 3

Countdown to His Coming

Scripture: Matthew 24:36-51

Theme: The time of his coming is unknown. The time is not as important as our preparation and labor until he comes. We need to be working when he comes.

Introduction:

It is interesting that at the first coming of Christ the message was given to people from a foreign nation in the form of a star. It was made clear to them, while the religious people did not heed the information they had been given.

In some sense today we have been given the information though the time of his coming is still unknown. We have no idea how long we have before the Lord breaks into our world in power and glory—but we know he is coming! During these few weeks of Advent we have been focusing our attention on the return of Christ to this world. We can be confident that he is coming because we can look back in history and know he came before, as he said he would.

I think there are a couple of responses to the idea of Jesus' return. Some people long for his coming and can hardly wait for him to come. Others want him to wait a little longer. There is an old gospel song that says, "Wait a little longer please, Jesus," because there are so many loved ones who have not yet come to faith. Yet there are others who would like a little warning so they can make the last-minute preparation. If Jesus were to come today, would you be ready? I remember reading a poem about the things that might need to be changed at our house if Jesus should come today. Are there magazines or books to be put away? Would the toys of life need to be set aside and the Bible dusted off to be put on the coffee table?

I am sure, like Herod's response, some world leaders would like to know exactly where to find him in order to put an end to any notion of another world leader.

While we may be confident that he is coming it is hard to keep waiting. I don't know about you, but waiting is not one of my strengths. Do you ever go into the grocery store and try to figure out which line is the better one to get into? How about in the doctor's or dentist's office, do you try to figure out how many of the people who are sitting there are waiting to see the same doctor you want to see? I sometimes hope that they don't have too much wrong with them and their visit will be quick. Certainly our culture wants everything instantly. Waiting in the traffic is another place of difficulty for some people. Then how are you doing waiting for the return of Christ? Is it possible that we are living

in such a way that we hardly give any thought to it?

Advent is a period of time in the year for us to say, “It is not enough to remember that he once came—am I ready for his return?” Over the past two weeks we have looked at the virgins who were waiting in anticipation for the bridegroom, and then the tenants who perhaps thought they could deny that the landowner had any claim on them. “Whoever he sends, we can handle.”

The scripture reading for today reminds us that we do not know when Jesus will return.

Matthew 24:36—

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Matthew indicates that until Jesus returns, we ought to be busy doing the things he has given to us to do.

Matthew 24:45-46—

Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

What has God given us to do until he returns?

In general terms, there are some things that God expects of his people today and at this Advent season, God gives yet another reminder to be ready.

Call to Relationship. We have looked at our hearts needing to be ready with the oil of the Holy Spirit filling us.

Call to Produce Fruit in our lives. God will look for the fruit of the Spirit when he comes.

Call to Responsibility in the Body of Christ. We are called to community. We are called to minister to one another and to encourage one another.

What are some of the responsibilities that God has placed on his people and church?

The mark of his people is Love:

One of the things that is repeated in a variety of ways is the command to love one another. When Jesus was asked by an expert of the law what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus responded, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)

We have talked about the love which brings us into relationship with God, but love is to be the mark on our relationships with other believers as well. John, in recording the words of Jesus says, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” (John 15:12) Jesus repeats this to his followers, “This is my command: Love each other.” (John 15:17)

The relationship in the church will be something new... people who have nothing else in common will find themselves in relationships that the world will find puzzling. Barriers

of cultural norms will be broken by an all-surpassing love that originates in the love of God. Paul, in writing to the early church in Galatia says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

In 1 John 4:19-21, it is said even more clearly,

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Then the question is: How do we love our neighbor?

How can we say we love, and let people go hungry and homeless and unclothed?

How can we say we love, and let injustice continue?

How can we say we love, and continue to allow people to be treated in ways we would not allow members of our own family to be treated?

God says they are your family....

Social involvement and concern is a natural outcome of loving God.

Encourage One Another

Not only are we to love one another, but we are called upon to build one another up.

1 Thessalonians 5:10,11 says,

He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Hebrews 10:25 says,

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 says,

And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

It is so much easier to see the faults in others than to look for the good and to build them up. How helpful it is for someone to come along and let you know that your efforts are appreciated and that your ministry is not taken for granted.

Look around at all of the things that get done in the church from week to week. How long has it been since you have taken the time to thank those who do many of the behind-the-scenes jobs? Who folds the bulletins? Who makes sure the doors are unlocked? Who changes the light bulbs and sweeps the floor? I am sure you can think of many people who do their jobs from week to week with little thanks, but today can we take the time to say thanks and encourage one another in ministry? We are all in this together.

Evangelism

Many of us are afraid of the word evangelism. For some of us we recall experiences of

going door-to-door to talk to people about the salvation God has to offer. For some, you almost begin to shrink in the pews just at the mention of this word. It seems so hard to share our faith. The church is the witness today to the resurrected Christ. For that reason our love for one another is essential.

Nothing is more damaging to the building of the kingdom than for those of us who are in it to talk badly about other members. We need to pray for one another and we need to build one another up and we need to stop gossip among us. The way to stop it is to stop listening. If there is no listening ear, there isn't anything to be said.

We have made evangelism a responsibility of the few who admit that they have the gift....We have reserved it for a couple of special times of the year, or special events, but evangelism is a way of life for the people of God.

Thessalonians records a number of things that the believers were charged to do as they waited for the Lord's return. Paul charges them to live holy lives, to avoid immorality of all kinds and to control their bodies and its desires. They were to live with love for one another and to do their work as pleasing to God.

1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12 is very plain:

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Something very similar is said by Peter in 1 Peter 2:12—

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

The lifestyle we live ought to cause those around us to see that we are different. 'Different' does not mean 'odd.' Often times Christians are seen as so odd that no one can relate to them. We are not advocating for being odd, but for being Christ-like in all that we do, in our work, in our relationships both in and out of the fellowship of believers. By so doing you will win the respect of the unbelievers. This is a lifestyle-evangelism.

There is a place as well for speaking up and proclaiming the gospel. It may be that some are particularly called to that. But all of us are called to live our faith.

Witnesses

In other words, we are all called to be witnesses wherever we are. The disciples had asked Christ if he was going to establish his kingdom right away. Acts records the conversation.

Acts 1:6-8—

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power

when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Conclusion

It will be a good thing when the master returns that he finds the servants doing what he left them to do. Perhaps the non-Christians are more expecting his return than those of us who claim to belong to him..

While we may not know the time of his coming we know that in his absence we have a job to do. Love one another, build one another up and witness to him in our lifestyle. “You will witness to me by the purity of your life and by the quality of your daily work.”

When did you last commit the day to the Lord as if it might be the last? There was a song on the radio that was quite popular. It spoke of what would happen if you learned today that you were terminally ill. The singer talks about how he lived with such knowledge and, in essence, he learned to enjoy every day to the full. Then in the song the singer wishes for all who are hearing him that they might experience what it is like to “live like you are dying.”

Perhaps the Church and fellowship of believers would be enlivened if we lived with the realization that Jesus could return at any time. If this were your last day to encourage someone, what would you say to them? If this were your last day to witness to someone, how would you do it? If this were your last day to express love to someone, how would you do that?

If this were your last day would the things you have fretted about this week, or this morning be of any concern? Have you spent enough time with a broken relationship and a lack of love for someone of the fellowship? If Jesus comes today will he find you doing the things we have been left here to do?

Make it right just now...Let's live like this is our last day to set things right.

The Case for Christmas
Advent Worship Series - Week 4
What Secret is God Keeping with This Child?

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements & Offering

SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus,	TB-370 – Hyfrydol	HTD1-T14 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
SB#114 – Light of the world HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship HC-146	HCD13-T16
SB#116 – O come, all ye faithful HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles HC-140	HTD3 –T1 (3 vs.) HCD12-T20
SB#126 – The first noel the angel did say	TB-857 – The First Noel	HTD6-T18 (3 vs.)
HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings	HC-61	HCD5-T11
HC#121 – Joyful, Joyful	HC-121	HCD11–T11
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13 –T11
HC#241 – Crown him with many crowns	HC-241	HCD23-T11

THE EVIDENCE

Call to Worship

The Magi traveled by night when this star was the most visible. They traveled in search of a king, not knowing where it would lead or what would happen to them en route or how their lives would be changed afterward.

By the time the wise men reach the outskirts of Jerusalem, the star has melted into the

morning sky. Surely the holy city would be bustling with activity after the arrival of its king. Shops would be closed. People would be celebrating. Thank offerings would be overflowing the temple.

But as the caravan threads through the outer gates, it’s just another day in Jerusalem. Shopkeepers are minding their stores. Women are picking over produce. Priests are attending to the daily rigors of religion.

The only thing that creates a pause in the morning routine is the presence of these foreigners.

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?”

Heads turn at the sound of their language coming to them in a thick Persian accent. The crowd looks at them quizzically. A stern-looking man steps forward. “Careful of talk like that around here.”

The wise man turns to a rabbi.

“We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

But the rabbi scolds him. “God speaks through Scripture, not through the stars. Your talk is blasphemy, the babble of sorcerers and astrologers.”

Before noon, word reaches the imperial palace. Every step of Herod’s ascent to the throne has been stained with the blood of his rivals. When he hears rumor of still another one, he does everything he can to mask his paranoia. But behind the mask he is troubled.

And all of Jerusalem is troubled with him. (*Moments with the Savior*, page 42-43)

Drama: A Threat to the Throne		
--------------------------------------	--	--

HC#136 – We All Bow Down	HC-136	HCD12-T16
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#82 – Jesus, Name Above All Names	HC-82	HCD7-T12
HC#120 – In the Manger	HC-120	HCD10-T20
HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11-T13
HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	HC-146	HCD13-T16
HC#169 – Hallelujah	HC-169	HCD15-T19
HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah	HC-187	HCD17-T17
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20

<p>HC#168 – Offering - "Christmas Offering"</p> <p>[<i>Christmas words on vs. I</i>]</p> <p>Over the skies of Bethlehem appeared a star While angels sang to lowly shepherds Three wisemen seeking truth, they traveled from afar Hoping to find the Child from Heaven falling on their knees They bow before the humble Prince of peace</p> <p>We bring an offering of worship to our King No one on earth deserves the praises that we sing Jesus, may You receive the honor that You're due O Lord, I bring an offering to You</p> <p>[<i>Song continues with original words</i>]</p>	<p>HC#168</p>	<p>HCD15-T18</p>
--	---------------	------------------

Prayer:

I confess, I go through times when my heart is like Herod’s, when I get tightfisted about holding onto my little kingdom. Forgive me when I get troubled and challenge your right to rule over my life. How much heartache could I have avoided if only I had stepped down from the throne and acknowledged you as the rightful King?

Thankfully, Lord, there are times when my heart seeks you as the wise men did. When I am diligent in searching for you. When I am delighted at any sign pointing the way. When I am down on my knees in your presence. Multiply those times in my life, Lord.

Thank you for the stars and the Scriptures and the many ways you reveal yourself. Give me eyes to see you in the circumstances of my life, ears to hear you in the Scriptures, feet to find you in the Bethlehems of this world, hands to bring you my gifts, knees to bow before you, and a heart overflowing with worship.

Thank you for coming those many years ago when you wobbled into the world as meek and tender as a lamb. Come once more, Lord Jesus, this time as the Lion of Judah, this time to claim your throne. Amen. (*Moments With the Savior*, page 46-47)

Reading:

The wise men spend the night in Bethlehem, talking among themselves, trying to understand it all. “Herod in his palace...and the heir to the throne huddled away in the

corner of some tumble-down house? In Bethlehem, of all places. Why here? What secret is God keeping with this child?"

That night an angel visits Joseph. He bolts upright in bed, heart pounding, eyes wide as Roman coins. He shakes Mary awake and tells her the dream.

She throws off her covers and bundles up Jesus while Joseph gathers what little food and personal belongings they have. Thoughts race through his mind as he packs. They have no money to go to Egypt. And what will we do when we get there? How will a foreigner like me find work?

He gathers up the gifts of the Magi—the pouch of gold, the costly frankincense, the precious bottle of myrrh. And suddenly he realizes. God has not only pointed the way but provided a way. (*Moments with the Savior*, page 44-45)

Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

Candle Lighting:

Leader: At least three prophecies were fulfilled in this account of the birth of the Christ child. He was born in Bethlehem; He would be called out of Egypt; and there would be mourning in the land because of the loss of children. This is too much to be merely coincidental. (*Jesus, Who is He?*, page 184)

Reader 1 **Prophecy** – “When Israel was a child, I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son.” (Hosea 11:1)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** - “Arise, take the young Child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.” When he arose, he took the young child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” (Matthew 2:13-15)

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God.**

Reader 1: **Prophecy** - Thus says the Lord: “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping. Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were no more.” (Jeremiah 31:15)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** – Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. (Matthew 2:16)

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophets. (Matthew 1:22)**

[Light the fourth candle]

HC#82 – Jesus, Name Above All Names	HC-82	HCD7-T12
--	-------	----------

Prayer:

[Piano continues to play chorus]

Jesus, you amaze us—you were present when the earth was spun into orbit and the stars were ordered in the night sky. You designed the awesome workings of our planet and all that live here on it. You shared with your Father in the joy and wonder of creating everything that now exists. And yet when we were lost and fallen, you were willing to take on the frailty of our human nature and become one of us so that we might be saved. We praise and worship you, Immanuel. You are indeed “God with us”! Amen. (*The NIV Worship Bible*, page 1293)

HOW THEN SHOULD WE LIVE?

Sermon – Part 2 – The Triumph of the Manger

HC#120 – In the Manger	HC-120	HCD10-T20
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#156 – Enter In	HC-156	HCD14-T16
HC#179 – Come to Jesus	HC-179	HCD16-T19
HC#186 – When I look into your holiness	HC-186	HCD17-T16
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
HC#226 – I Worship You	HC-226	HCD21-T16
SB#102 – Away in a manger, no crib for a bed	TB-497 – Away in a Manger TB- 511 – The Manger Scene	HTD6 –T3 (3 vs.) HTD6-T14 (3 vs.)
SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10 –T6 (4 vs.)

Benediction

Lord Jesus, however the events in prophecy play out across the world’s stage, keep the eyes of our spirits fixed upon you. Whatever we may encounter as the final days unfold, we ask you to provide us with peace, patience, loyalty and discernment to remain faithful to you and you alone, until the final Amen is spoken. (*The NIV Worship Bible*, page 1671)

Vocal Benediction – HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful SB#85 – O come, all ye faithful	HC-140 TB-552 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings	HC-61	HCD5-T11
HC#128 – My Tribute	HC-128	HCD11-T18
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13-T11
HC#149 – In Christ Alone	HC-149	HCD13-T19
HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus	HC-151	HCD14-T11
SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
HC#260 – Go, Tell it on the Mountain	HC-260	HCD24-T20

Week #4	
DRAMA	
A Threat to the Throne	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
© 2005 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission.	
Scripture:	Matthew 2:1-8
Synopsis:	King Herod and his attendant discuss his plans for the new-born “King of the Jews.”
Characters:	King Herod – ruler of Judea Julius – his attendant
Props/Costumes:	Biblical dress, if possible, with a robe and crown for Herod. A throne for Herod.
Setting:	Herod is seated on his throne when Julius enters.
Running Time:	2:30 minutes.

- Julius:** [enters] They’ve gone, your Highness.
- Herod:** Good. And they will report back to us once they find [sarcastically] “the king?”
- Julius:** Yes, your Highness.
- Herod:** Good. It’s best that we take care of this matter quickly and quietly before anyone realizes anything has happened.
- Julius:** Do you really think this child could be a threat?
- Herod:** I think everyone could be a threat. And I take any threat to my throne seriously.
- Julius:** But, we’re talking about a child. The Jews themselves didn’t seem to be too concerned about him. Why should we be?
- Herod:** The Jews were just trying to please me. And they knew that I would take care of the matter. Trust me, they don’t want to lose their place either.
- Julius:** Then why don’t they just handle it “internally?”
- Herod:** And risk the public backlash? It’s much easier to have the hated monarch killing babies. I’d get blamed for it anyway. Besides, this child could be more trouble than he seems.

Julius: Why do you say that?

Herod: Those travelers obviously know something.

Julius: They are very wise.

Herod: [*gives Julius a dirty look*]

Julius: But not as wise as the King.

Herod: But they had knowledge of some prophecy. They must've known of this child or they wouldn't have journeyed this far.

Julius: So, I ask you again, do you really think this child could be a threat?

Herod: It doesn't matter. Any threat, real or imagined, will be gone in a matter of weeks, if not days. And you will see that it is done.

Julius: As you wish, your Highness.

Herod: Make arrangements to travel to Bethlehem with a brigade of soldiers as soon as we receive word of the child's whereabouts.

Julius: As you wish, your Highness.

Herod: And make sure the parents are kept silent as well. By any means possible.

Julius: It shall be done – quickly and quietly.

Herod: I would have it no other way. Soon we will be done with this talk about the “King of the Jews” and we will be able to get back to what matters most. Now, bring me my drink.

Julius: As you wish, your Highness. [*exits*]

[*Blackout*]

The Case for Christmas
What Secret is God Keeping with This Child?
Advent Worship Sermon - Week 4

The Triumph of the Manger

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Theme: Peace and joy are the gifts he offers at great cost to himself.

Introduction:

This is such a busy time of year! There is excitement in the air as people try to get all of the last-minute things done. Gifts have been purchased. Decorating has been done. Baking and preparations of all sorts have been made.

As you come to this point in another season of celebrating the birth of Christ, do you ever wonder why we do this? What is it all about?

Perhaps you have sat down and gone through your list of people for whom you need a gift. Often the more times you do that, the more names you think you must add to the list. Then there are all the service people you want to remember, like your postal carrier, your hair stylist and others who serve you regularly.

For some people there is the need to try to guess how much the other person is going to spend on you, in order that you know how much to spend on them. It would be terrible if your gift looked 'cheap' compared to the one you receive from them. So the game goes on with gift giving and receiving. Is this what it is all about?

Over the past few weeks we have been realizing again that the Advent season and Christmas is much more than our cultural celebration of it. More than the celebrating is the reality of the coming of the Messiah once in history to make a change in our world. Jesus was born into a world of chaos—a world faced with hatred and fears. At his birth came a promise of peace.

But in our world of chaos, where is the peace and joy that Jesus came to bring?

We have read today the story of the coming of the babe in the little village of Bethlehem and the message that was given by the angels. The shepherds were told where they might find him who was to be the Savior of the world. The angels proclaimed peace.

Luke 2:13, 14—

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

The Magi, too, had come seeking a new king. One who would be ruler over Israel. Perhaps the one who would bring a new peace?

What is this Peace?

Peace is often used to mean the absence of war or strife. Surely peace means more than just the lack of strife; surely there is a positive sense of regard as well. The Oxford Dictionary says peace is ‘a quiet tranquility, a mental calm; serenity, or the freedom from, or the cessation of, war.’

The peace that Jesus came to give is not the peace that this world understands.

John 14:25-27—

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

Peace carries with it a sense of confidence and contentment. The peace that the angels proclaimed was not necessarily the cessation of war. They were not proclaiming peace with the Roman authorities and the freedom of Israel from foreign rule. Jesus came proclaiming a new message: Proclaiming a New Kingdom.

Christian Hope

As kingdom people we have a confidence and a trust in something beyond ourselves. There is a sense of contentment in the midst of turmoil. We have a hope and peace that is beyond comprehension to many non-believers.

Romans 5:1-2—

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Hope is not naïve but realistic as it deals with things of this world, for it holds a different value base. This world is passing away and the eternal things are much bigger than the things valued in this world.

Christians hope in the final victory of the creative, self-expanding, community-forming love of the triune God. Hence they hope in the triumph of the love of God over all hate, of the justice of God over all injustice, of God’s freedom over all bondage, of community with God over all separation, of life with God over the power of death. Yet this hope becomes indistinguishable from cheap optimism if it fails to recognize and to share the present agony of the world. (Migliore, 238)

This hope in God’s final triumph involves a variety of expectations, but among them is triumph over personal sin, a triumph over injustice in society and some sort of cosmic restoration as well.

Personal Hope

We celebrate Christ as the baby born in the manger and we look to his life as an example to live by. Here is the example of true humanness. Christ came to show us what life can

and should be. He gave us principles and guidelines by which we can live true and valid lives. But he knew our weaknesses. The final triumph for us will be the overcoming of the sin nature and the restoration of our personhood as it would have been prior to the Fall. In this life we will be tempted and we will struggle to live lives pleasing to God. But our hope is in the future when we will be like him.

Corporate Hope

Jesus knew we would need the fellowship of other believers. He formed the Church around the concept of a people held together by love. In community we discover our gifts and the possibility of living to please God in all things. Alone we may be very godly, but in community and in the company of others is where we actually display patience and kindness and the other fruit of the spirit. It is impossible to demonstrate growth while living in isolation. It is in community that we grow. Alone we accomplish little, but in community we find real meaning.

In the corporate sense as well, we look for social justice and a righteousness that permeates all of life. Hope looks for a king who will rule in truth and justice over all of creation. God may at times seem very distant, and the waiting extreme, but Christian hope hangs on with anticipation. Poverty and injustice of every sort will be done away when the King returns to rule in peace.

Cosmic Hope

A very real part of Christian hope has to do with what we may at times refer to as the natural order of things: When natural disasters will cease, when sickness and disease will be no more and creation itself will be restored to its quality prior to the Fall. JB Phillips says that “all of creation stands on tiptoe” awaiting the coming King.

The peace that Jesus brings has been established, in a sense, already, for as Romans says, we have “peace with God” but the hope of the Christian still anticipates a further reality of peace.

Confidence as a quality of God’s Peace

Here and now we should know a peace of mind. The promised peace, particularly in the New Testament, includes the sense of: the sustaining power of God, so that we need not fear losing our hold on God. God will guard our minds and keep us close to him.

Philippians 4:7—

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Of course there is a responsibility on us to guard what things we put into our minds. You cannot put in garbage and expect God to keep cleaning it up. We are to think on things that are good and pure and pleasing to God. We are to guard our minds then in order to know his peace.

Romans 8:6—

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.

Fearlessness as a quality of God's Peace

Fear is a torment in our world. The media and the news broadcasts alone leave us fearful. We hear of so many things. We can become fearful of every stranger and every new situation and, if not kept in check, this fear can make us prisoners in our own homes. But God gives us a peace, as Jesus says:

John 16:33—

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

In a world that is in chaos, our lives as Christians ought to be a place of calm and stability—for we know who holds this world in his hands. There is nothing outside of the control of our God. If we should lose our life – do we not believe in a resurrection? I wonder why it is that as Christians we often live as if this is all there is. “Take heart,” says Jesus, “I have overcome the world.” This should help us be at peace.

Trust in the Family as a quality of God's Peace

The Peace of God will bind us together in the fellowship as we talked about last week. The communion of fellow believers should give us a sense of peace even as we strive to live at peace with each other.

In large families you often see the squabbles between siblings, but when an outsider comes along to do harm to any family member, the family sticks together. The family of God, too, may suffer some sibling rivalry at times, but if we remember where the real battle exists we might be encouraged knowing our family will be there. We are members together in Christ's family.

Colossians 3:15—

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Romans 14:17,19—

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit...Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Conclusion

We come to the triumph of the manger, then, as we celebrate the birth of Christ—for the law and the Old Testament were inadequate to lead us into real peace. He came as a humble servant in order that we may have peace with God, and in order that we might live at peace.

2 Corinthians 13:11—

Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

In the meantime, Christ has left us the promised Holy Spirit. He has also left us many instructions on how to live. He has also encouraged us (in the prayer he taught his

disciples) that we should pray for the coming of God's Kingdom.

Matthew 6:10—

“Your kingdom come, your will be done.”

Revelation 21:1-4 gives a picture of the consummation and the final triumph of God with the establishment of the New Kingdom in its fullness. Herein lays some source of peace:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Luke 2:20 says,

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Just as the shepherds and the wise men came to the little village of Bethlehem with expectations of this king, what are you expecting and what do you long for in your life today? The greatest gift of Christmas is the peace Jesus longs to give. Not a peace that the world can give or even understand, but a peace that will sustain you in all that life will bring your way.

Can we go out from here today glorifying God, for we have found him and experienced him and have seen his peace, just as it had been told? His peace is our peace and we are ministers of peace in a world of chaos.

May we each go out as ambassadors of peace and joy to a hurting world.

The Case for Christmas
Advent Worship Series – Christmas Day
My Eyes have Seen Your Salvation

WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES

Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. It is recommended that the headings of each section of the service be included in the bulletin.

Announcements & Offering

Call to Worship

SB#108 – Hark! The herald angels sing	TB-270 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing	HTD4-T5 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
SB#113 – Joy to the world!	TB-87 – Joy to the World!	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
SB#114 – Light of the world HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship HC-146	HCD13-T16
SB#103 – Christians awake, salute the happy morn	TB-476 – same	HTD10-T1 (3 vs.)
SB#116 – O come, all ye faithful HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles HC-140	HTD3 –T1 (3 vs.) HCD12-T20
SB#126 – The first noel the angel did say	TB-857 – The First Noel	HTD6-T18 (3 vs.)

SB#113 – Joy to the world!	TB-87 – Joy to the World!	HTD4-T9 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		

SB#100 – Angels, from the realms of glory	TB-398 – Come and Worship (Regent Sq.)	HTD4-T12 (4 vs.)
SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
SB#114 – Light of the world HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	TB-653 – Here I am to Worship HC-146	HCD13-T16
SB#126 – The first noel the angel did say	TB-857 – The First Noel	HTD6-T18 (3 vs.)
SB#133 – Wonderful counselor HC#10 – The Light Has Come	TB-859 – The Light Has Come HC-10	HCD1-T10

The Evidence

Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

Candle Lighting:

Leader: Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:3)

Reader 1: **Prophecy** - “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Genesis 22:18)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** - The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1)

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God**

Reader 1: **Prophecy** - But God said to Abraham... “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” (Genesis 21:12)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** - Jesus...the son of Isaac. (Luke 3:23, 34)

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God**

Reader 1: **Prophecy** - “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.” (Numbers 24:17)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** - Jesus...the son of Jacob. (Matthew 1:2)

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God**

Reader 1: **Prophecy** - “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him shall be the obedience of the people.” (Genesis 49:10)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** - Jesus...the son of Judah. (Matthew 1:2)

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God**

Reader 1: **Prophecy** - There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse; and a branch shall grow out of his roots. (Isaiah 11:1)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** - Jesus...the son of Jesse. (Matthew 1:6)

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God**

Reader 1: **Prophecy** - “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “that I will raise to David a branch of righteousness; a king shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the land.” (Jeremiah 23:5)

Reader 2: **Fulfillment** - Jesus...the son of David... He shall be called Lord.

Leader: **Therefore...Jesus is the Son of God. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophets.** (Matthew 1:22)

[Light the third candle]

SB#118 – O little town of Bethlehem	TB-136 – same	HTD3-T5 (3 vs.) Bethlehem
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#10 – The Light has Come	HC-10	HCD1-T10
HC#72 – Emmanuel	HC-72	HCD6-T12
HC#82 – Jesus, Name Above All Names	HC-82	HCD7-T12
HC#123 – Shine on Us	HC-123	HCD11-T13
HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for us	HC-127	HCD11-T17
HC#146 – Here I am to Worship	HC-146	HCD13-T16
HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah	HC-187	HCD17-T17
HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty	HC-219	HCD20-T19
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20

Prayer:

[Piano continues to play chorus]

Thank you God, that the genealogy of your son is a lineage of grace, testimony to the reach of your love throughout the generations.

Thank you for reaching across generations for us. And for ever so patiently grafting us into that tree. Thank you for the firmness of your hand and the tenderness of your touch. We have needed both at one time or another, and doubtless we will need both again. Continue to lift and to prune. To water and to weed. And to do whatever it takes to bring us to a place where we have something to offer others.

O Lord...who watched so faithfully over those families who waited for the Savior to come, watch over my family who waits for him to come again. Amen.

(Moments With the Savior, page 20-21)

Reading:

The Jews regarded their own nation as the chosen people, but they saw quite clearly that by human means their nation could never attain to the supreme world greatness which they believed their destiny involved. By far the greater number of them believed that because the Jews were the chosen people, they were bound some day to become masters of the world and lords of all the nations. To bring in that day some believed that some great, celestial champion would descend upon the earth; some believed that there would arise another king of David's line and that all the old glories would revive; some believed that God himself would break directly into history by supernatural means.

But in contrast to all that, there were a few people who were known as *the Quiet in the Land*. They had no dreams of violence and of power and of armies with banners; they believed in a life of constant prayer and quiet watchfulness until God should come. All their lives they waited quietly and patiently upon God. Simeon was like that; in prayer, in worship, in humble and faithful expectation he was waiting for the day when God would comfort his people. God had promised him through the Holy Spirit that his life would not end before he had seen God's own anointed king. In the baby Jesus he recognized that king and was glad. *(The New Daily Study Bible, page 31-32)*

Responsive Scripture:

Leader: On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

All: When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

Leader: Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he

would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.

All: When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

Leader: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

All: The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother:

Leader: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

All: There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

Leader: Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

All: When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. (Luke 2:21-40)

Drama: That's My Boy

SB#124 – Silent night! Holy night!	TB-842 – Stille Nacht	HTD4-T15 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#169 – Hallelujah	HC-169	HCD15-T19
HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah	HC-187	HCD17-T17
HC#220 – Incarnate	HC-220	HCD20-T20
SB#153 – Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown	TB-94 – Margaret	HTD10 –T6 (4 vs.)
SB#158 – Who is he in yonder stall	TB-287 – Who is he?	HTD10-T19 (6 vs.)

How then shall we live?

Reading:

Leader: Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Revelation 1:3)

Reader 1: Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. (Revelation 22:12)

Reader 2: Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. (James 5:7)

Leader: **Therefore...keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.** (Matthew 24:42)

Reader 1: Be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. (James 5:8)

Reader 2: Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him. (Revelation 1:7)

Reader 1: Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?

Reader 2: You ought to live holy and godly lives. (2 Peter 3:11)

Leader: **Therefore...keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.** (Matthew 24:42)

Reader 1: For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? (1Thessalonians 2:19)

Reader 2: Indeed, you are our glory and joy. (1Thessalonians 2:20)

Leader: **Therefore...keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.** (Matthew 24:42)

Sermon – In the Fullness of Time

SB#116 – O come, all ye faithful HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful	TB-496 – Adeste Fideles HC-140	HTD3 –T1 (3 vs.) HCD12-T20
--	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------

Additional Optional Songs		
SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
SB#108 – Hark! The herald angels sing	TB-270 – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing	HTD4-T5 (3 vs.)
SB#115 – If I were a star then I would shine, shine, shine	TB-773- Noel	No CD
SB#126 – The first noel the angel did say	TB-857 – The First Noel	HTD6-T18 (3 vs.)
HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings	HC-61	HCD5-T11
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13 –T11
CF#17 – Angels we have heard on high	CF-17	No CD

Benediction:

Across the centuries, throughout all recorded history, you have called out to us in your gracious love. You have offered yourself to us, and pleaded with us to come to you. You have invited us to come when we are thirsty; come when we are wounded; come when we are lost in sin; come when we are poor, alone and without hope. And we have come, Lord, in faith, in humility and in gratitude. Now we join our voices and invite you to come to us. Return to us, Lord Jesus, and make your dwelling place among us. We pray that you will come soon and come quickly, for above all else we long to see your face. Amen.

(Praise & Worship Bible, page 1684)

Vocal Benediction – HC#140 – O Come, All Ye Faithful SB#85 – O come, all ye faithful	HC-140 TB-552 – Adeste Fideles	HCD12-T20 HTD3-T1 (3 vs.)
Additional Optional Songs		
HC#61 – Crown Him King of Kings	HC-61	HCD5-T11
HC#128 – My Tribute	HC-128	HCD11-T18
HC#141 – All Hail the Power	HC-141	HCD13-T11
HC#149 – In Christ Alone	HC-149	HCD13-T19
HC#151 – Fairest Lord Jesus	HC-151	HCD14-T11
SB#112 – It was on a starry night HC#180	TB-535 – same HC-280	HCD16-T20
HC#260 – Go, Tell it on the Mountain	HC-260	HCD24-T20

Week #5	
DRAMA	
That's My Boy	
By Martyn Scott Thomas	
© 2005 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission.	
Scripture:	Luke 2:21-35
Synopsis:	A proud mother reflects on her son.
Characters:	Mary – mother of Jesus
Props/Costumes:	Biblical or modern dress.
Setting:	Bare stage.
Running Time:	2:30 minutes.

Mary: As a mother, it's easy to see the best in your children. And it's easy to sing their praises over any accomplishment, no matter how routine. Whether it's a first tooth, a first step or a first word, we only see the brightest future – my child is going to have the cutest smile, be the fastest runner and have the most beautiful singing voice. It's my job as mother to dream the biggest dreams for my children and help them to see it in themselves.

But it's an even higher honor when others see the potential in your child. A mother's pride swells when someone else sees in your child what you knew was always there.

Looking back, I remember when that happened with my first born. It was when we presented him at the temple for his purification. We were very nervous as new parents to be taking him anywhere, but we knew that it was required by the Law. So, we took him to the temple.

We were even more nervous when the old man approached us, but something about him quickly put us at ease. It was almost as if we knew him. He could have even been part of our family.

As he took the child from my arms, I willingly handed him over to this stranger. Then he spoke these words,

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

At first, we were too stunned to say anything. How could this aged

man see such promise in a simple little baby? But, then I knew. I had heard these same things from the angel before he was born. Joseph knew, too. It was confirmed. All that we had thought to be true was indeed true. God, himself, had sent his Son to be our son and to be Savior of all mankind.

But the old man, Simeon, wasn't finished. He went on to tell us, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

These words stung me. How could he say something so cruel to the parents of a newborn? But we knew this also must be of God and took his words to heart.

Before we could move on, another came over to us. Anna, a prophetess, gave thanks to God and spoke about our child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Israel.

And so before he was even a few weeks old, my son made his mother proud. Not a bragging kind of proud, but an awe-filled pride in the greatness I held in my arms. He was the Son of God, but he was also my child and I couldn't have been more proud.

[Blackout]

The Case for Christmas
My Eyes have Seen Your Salvation
Advent Worship Series – Christmas Day

In the Fullness of Time

Scripture: Luke 2:21-40
Theme: All in God's time.

Introduction:

The day has arrived. The event has come. There are no more sleeps needed. The long anticipated celebrating is upon us. How exciting to see the expectations met! I hope you have gotten today some of the things you have imagined under the tree, but more than that, I trust that you will have a day of joy and rejoicing with loved ones.

The scripture reading today has told us about two people in particular who have been waiting for the arrival of the Messiah, the birth of the King. Each of them has been serving God in anticipation of his coming. They have served according to their own capacity and with their own giftedness.

Remember as we wait for the coming King we should keep busy doing the things he has called us to do. In the fullness of time the promises will be fulfilled.

The Scriptures record that Simeon was a man in Jerusalem who was righteous and devout. Can you imagine such a wonderful thing being written beside your name for eternity? How incredible that he was seen as righteous and devout in an age when the religious leadership had become corrupt in many ways. Just because others may be lowering their standards does not mean we, as individuals, have to succumb to the same behaviors. While we are part of a community, we are personally responsible for our own behavior at the same time. There are so many paradoxes in the Christian walk. We are reborn into a community of faith in which we are to bear the burdens of others and at the same time keep our lives individually pure before God.

The other person who had been particularly waiting for the coming of the Messiah is Anna, a prophetess and the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. Anna had been serving in the temple since she had been left a widow for many years. She declared and recognized that this child would be for the redemption of Israel. What a wonderful dramatization of this for us this morning—an insight, perhaps, into the heart of Mary.

The Leading of the Spirit of God

As we look at Simeon it is clear that the Spirit of God can guide his people to be in the right place at the right time. I am not sure that there are coincidences with God. Perhaps much of what happens in our lives are 'Holy Spirit moments', if we are aware of them.

We are not actually told what Simeon was doing in Jerusalem, but the text is clear in

declaring that the Holy Spirit led him to the temple courts.

Luke 2:27—

Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required.

The Spirit of God nudges us in a variety of ways:

The words of others in the community – sometimes gifts are confirmed and choices of occupation or calling are revealed as fellow believers express what they see in us.

How many young people have been encouraged to Salvation Army officership because someone has told them that they seem gifted in pastoral or preaching skills? We should not say such things lightly, but as the Spirit lays things on our hearts we should express what we believe.

Intuitive Sensing

Sometimes the Spirit of God moves us by simply placing a concern in our mind or laying a person on our heart. It is not uncommon to feel that you should make a phone call or send a note to someone. Have you ever just felt led to pray for a friend?

God leads us in very simple ways when we are in tune with his voice. This only comes by practice.

Simeon followed the leading of the Spirit and was in the right place at the right time to see, as he says, “the consolation of Israel.”

Blessed by the timing of God

Simeon had felt that God had made a personal promise to him, as Luke indicates in verse 26,

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.

Not too early and never too late, the Lord completes what he intends. Simeon is so blessed by this experience he breaks into praise:

Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

Let me share with you an email story circulated not long ago about a mission field request. This beautiful story was written by a doctor who worked in South Africa:

One night I had worked hard to help a mother in the labor ward; but in spite of all we could do, she died leaving us with a tiny premature baby and a

crying two-year-old daughter. We would have difficulty keeping the baby alive, as we had no incubator (we had no electricity to run an incubator). We also had no special feeding facilities.

Although we lived on the equator, nights were often chilly with treacherous drafts. One student midwife went for the box we had for such babies and the cotton wool that the baby would be wrapped in. Another went to stoke up the fire and fill a hot water bottle. She came back shortly in distress to tell me that in filling the bottle, it had burst (rubber perishes easily in tropical climates). "And it is our last hot water bottle!" she exclaimed.

As in the West, it is no good crying over spilled milk; so in Central Africa it might be considered no good crying over burst water bottles. "All right," I said, "put the baby as near the fire as you safely can, and sleep between the baby and the door to keep it free from drafts. Your job is to keep the baby warm."

The following noon, as I did most days, I went to have prayers with any of the orphanage children who chose to gather with me. I gave the youngsters various suggestions of things to pray about and told them about the tiny baby. I explained our problem about keeping the baby warm enough, mentioning the hot water bottle, and that the baby could so easily die if it got chills. I also told them of the two-year-old sister, crying because her mother had died.

During prayer time, one ten-year old girl, Ruth, prayed with the usual blunt conciseness of our African children. "Please, God," she prayed, "send us a hot water bottle today. It'll be no good tomorrow, God, as the baby will be dead, so please send it this afternoon." While I gasped inwardly at the audacity of the prayer, she added, "And while you are about it, would you please send a dolly for the little girl so she'll know you really love her?"

As often with children's prayers, I was put on the spot. Could I honestly say, "Amen"? I just did not believe that God could do this. Oh, yes, I know that he can do everything—the Bible says so. But there are limits, aren't there? The only way God could answer this particular prayer would be by sending me a parcel from the homeland. I had been in Africa for almost four years at that time, and I had never, ever, received a parcel from home. Anyway, if anyone did send me a parcel, who would put in a hot water bottle? I lived on the equator!

Halfway through the afternoon, while I was teaching in the nurses' training school, a message was sent that there was a car at my front door. By the time I reached home, the car had gone, but there, on the verandah, was a large twenty-two pound parcel. I felt tears pricking my eyes. I could not open the parcel alone, so I sent for the orphanage children. Together we pulled off the string, carefully undoing each knot. We folded the paper, taking care not to tear it unduly. Excitement was mounting. Some thirty or forty pairs of eyes were focused on the large cardboard box.

From the top, I lifted out brightly-colored knitted jerseys. Eyes sparkled as I gave them out. Then there were the knitted bandages for the leprosy patients, and the children looked a little bored. Then came a box of mixed raisins and sultanas—that would make a batch of buns for the weekend. Then, as I put my hand in again, I felt the.....could it really be? I grasped it and pulled it out—yes, a brand new, rubber hot water bottle. I cried. I had not asked God to send it; I had

not truly believed that He could. Ruth was in the front row of the children. She rushed forward, crying out, "If God has sent the bottle, he must have sent the dolly, too!"

Rummaging down to the bottom of the box, she pulled out the small, beautifully dressed doll. Her eyes shone! She had never doubted! Looking up at me, she asked: "Can I go over with you and give this dolly to that little girl, so she'll know that Jesus really loves her?" Of course, I replied!

That parcel had been on the way for five whole months. Packed up by my former Sunday school class, whose leader had heard and obeyed God's prompting to send a hot water bottle, even to the equator. And one of the girls had put in a dolly for an African child—five months before—in answer to the believing prayer of a ten-year-old to bring it "that afternoon."

"Before they call, I will answer" (Isaiah 65:24)

God's timing is perfect....

No Age or Gender Limits in God's Timing

How many times are we guilty of thinking that everything should be left to the younger people? The ministry is often thought of for the young. The younger people will lead us into new ways of worship and ministries.

Here is a wonderful example of God blessing and using a woman who is 84 years of age. Anna had only been married for seven years before she became a widow, and she is now advanced in age. God has a particular blessing for her and a word for her to give as to the redemption of Israel. The text tells us that she has spent all of her days since becoming a widow in the service of the temple. She has worshipped and given herself to fasting and prayer. Her labors were not unnoticed by God.

Luke 2:38—

Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Anna saw what had been long awaited. Her prayers and worship were acknowledged in her having seen the promise fulfilled.

Christ had come as a babe in the fullness of time for the redemption of the world and these two people in particular knew who he was.

Encouragement in the Message

Mary and Joseph had a particularly difficult responsibility. Theirs was the task of raising the son of God. They took him to their home and trained him in the faith in the little village of Nazareth. There, Jesus grew. Luke 2:52 says,

And Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men.

Simeon blessed Mary and Joseph that day in the temple and gave a word to them, and in particular to Mary,

Luke 2:34b-35—

“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Words to which Mary would need to cling as Jesus grew and moved into ministry. Simeon in his message seems to indicate how difficult it will be on Mary. It will be like a sword thrust into her.

On the Cross in the Fullness of Time

Christ on the cross said, “It is finished.” The work that began in the mind and heart of God in response to the sin of humanity was set in motion in a particular way, here in Bethlehem, at the incarnation of God. God with us in human flesh.

The plan of God was further developed on the cross and in the resurrection, but the culmination of it all will be in the fullness of time when Jesus comes again.

His Return will be in the Fullness of Time

But there is still a final day of victory for which we wait.

Conclusion

As we worship at the manger we recognize that the cross makes the final victory real. In the fullness of time all of the pieces will come together.

“Christian faith and theology are oriented to the coming glory of God and the fulfillment of the promise of God contained in the gospel of Jesus Christ.” (Migliore, 232)

We long for God to come and set the world right! Yet, as the prophet Amos warned, the expectation of a coming judgment at the "Day of the Lord" may not be the day of light that we might want, because the penetrating light of God's judgment on sin will shine just as brightly on God's people.

As we worship at the manger today, let us look to Jesus who loved us enough to come in the form of man to be treated so cruelly in our place.

Hebrews 12:2—

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Until he comes again, let's be in the place where we will be ready, with our lives fully in tune with him by the power of the Spirit of God in us.

We worship him today as the babe in the manger, but await him as our Coming King!