

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
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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	
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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
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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?