

***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**

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

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

<b>HC#136 – We All Bow Down</b>	HC-136	HCD12-T16
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty</b>	HC-219	HCD20-T19
<b>HC#220 – Incarnate</b>	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*)

<b>HC#10 – The Light has Come</b>	HC-10	HCD1-T10
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#187 – Jesus, Messiah</b>	HC-187	HCD17-T17
<b>HC#219 – King of Kings, Majesty</b>	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**

<b>HC#45 – While We are Waiting, Come</b>	HC-45	HCD3-T15
<b>Additional Optional Songs</b>		
<b>HC#89 – Knowing You</b>	HC-89	HCD7-T19
<b>HC#120 – In the Manger</b>	HC-120	HCD10-T20
<b>HC#123 – Shine on Us</b>	HC-123	HCD11-T13
<b>HC#127 – How Deep the Father’s Love for us</b>	HC-127	HCD11-T17
<b>HC#139 – There is a Message</b>	HC-139	HCD12-T19
<b>HC#226 – I Worship You</b>	HC-226	HCD21-T16
<b>CF#32 – Sleep, Holy Babe!</b>	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)*

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

<b>Week 1#</b>	
<b>DRAMA</b>	
<b>I Know It's True</b>	
<b>By Martyn Scott Thomas</b>	
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<b>Scripture:</b>	Matthew 1:22-23
<b>Synopsis:</b>	Two friends discuss some unlikely predictions.
<b>Characters:</b>	<b>Steve</b> – a believer in tabloid predictions <b>Jenny</b> – his friend
<b>Props/Costumes:</b>	Modern dress.
<b>Setting:</b>	Bare stage.
<b>Running Time:</b>	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?