

The Waiting: The Prophecy of the Second Coming
By Jason Huff
December 24, 2015

For most of us, Christmas is old hat. That doesn't mean it's not fun anymore. It means that we know everything to expect. We have all the traditions memorized. We know the stories about Mary and Joseph, about the inn, about shepherds and angels and wise men. Even if you've never been in church much, if you live in America, even in this day and age, you likely know the basics of the Christmas story.

A few weeks ago, some of us went out to the old-fashioned Christmas out at Simpson Park Campground. We took an hour and caroled for people taking a horse-drawn carriage through the camp. When we got through with all the song sheets, there were still more songs we wanted to sing, like "O Holy Night" and "Let It Snow." What was surprising was just how far we could get through those old carols by memory alone! And when was the last time you heard something you didn't recognize on the Christmas station? It doesn't happen.

Over the last few weeks at CrossWay, we've been celebrating Advent as it was originally intended, as a season of waiting for Christmas. We've held out on singing our favorite carols and found some songs that have the same tunes but were written for the time in-between, the time of preparation. Together, we've studied some of the ancient prophecies where God promised a Messiah that would come to us, a King who would save us from our sins, a Son who would be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

But as I studied the practices of the church throughout the centuries, I found that the celebration of Advent now isn't much like what it was before. Now, we typically spend the four weeks before Christmas talking about the trip to Bethlehem and baby Jesus in a manger. But in the past, that was saved for the two weeks of the Christmas season itself. Advent was not about the first coming of Jesus. It was about His second coming.

What we are missing in the lead-up to Christmas is not that Jesus came to save us from our sins. It's that He will return in triumph. He will raise all those believers who died throughout the centuries to eternal resurrection life. He will come to judge the nations and all those who did not follow Him. He will bring God's Kingdom to us. As we are told in the last chapters of Revelation, the old heaven and old earth will pass away, and the new heaven and new earth will come together at the new and perfect Jerusalem.

The second coming of Jesus Christ is the real story of Advent. We often set that story aside because Christmas is far easier for us to celebrate. Who doesn't like the birth of the baby King? Who doesn't like God coming to live among us as a helpless child, truly becoming One of us in the Son? Those are good and right and true things. Yet it's only part of the story. In fact, we're never told to celebrate Christmas. We are told to eagerly anticipate the second coming of Jesus.

If we celebrate the first Advent, the first coming of Jesus, and forget about the second Advent, the second coming of Jesus, then we will have missed out on the big picture. Because Jesus' intent was always to come twice – the first time to teach us of true holiness and to become the perfect sacrifice for our sins, and the second time to bring His Kingdom in all its perfection. Our salvation is only made complete and perfect when Jesus comes again and fulfills all the promises made throughout Scripture that God would forever dwell among His people and grant us His peace through all eternity.

Perhaps we don't spend Advent waiting for Jesus' coming because we're not sure He is really going to return. Maybe we're afraid; maybe we're not ready. But if you know Jesus Christ and He knows you, if by God's grace you have turned to Him in faith, then there is nothing to fear and everything to gain. When we know Jesus as our Savior and Lord, Advent becomes not just a sentimental time of remembering ancient events in redemption history, but a time of longing and hope.

We long for God to finish what He started. With the church throughout the centuries, with the martyrs and the prophets and the saints, we cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus!" We long for the time when we no longer are tempted to sin, when we no longer disobey, when we can meet Jesus face to face and see that He is everything we have ever wanted or needed. And we have hope. We hope for a world beyond what we can see, a Savior beyond what we can currently touch, and a God who reaches down to us and saves us out of His loving grace and mercy. We have hope that this world will be set right and all God's people will come together to praise His name forevermore.

As Advent comes to a close tonight, as we start the celebration of His first coming, will you step into the mystery of Jesus' second coming? Will you have faith in Him and call upon Him for salvation? Will you eagerly await His joyful return to us, when faith will become sight and the baby we celebrate tonight comes again as Lord of all? May it be so for all of us. Amen.