

25 READINGS FOR ADVENT



The COMING *of the* KING

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J C RYLE

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INTRODUCTION

For most of us, Advent is synonymous with Christmas. After all, don't our Advent calendars and candles help us to count down to December 25th? Isn't Advent a time to think about the birth of the baby in the manger, the angels and the shepherds? It certainly is. The word "advent" means a "coming" or "arrival"—in particular, the coming of the special baby who was laid in a manger in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago.

But J C Ryle, who was Bishop of Liverpool in the late 1800s, would often remind people of the "Second Advent" when Jesus will come again. On that day, Jesus will return to our world, not as a baby but as the unmistakable King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Church of England's official Prayer Book that Ryle used was the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. In it, the Collect (or prayer) for the First Sunday in Advent speaks both of Jesus' first advent—when human eyes first saw the Son of God—and his second, when he will come again in glory. In these 25 readings, we will also consider the two advents of Christ, in the hope it will deepen our understanding of both. In Ryle's words:

[Jesus Christ] came the first time as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, He was born in the manger of Bethlehem, in lowliness and humiliation ... He will come the second time as the King of all the earth, with all royal majesty.

These readings are all from Ryle's *Expository Thoughts*, from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Our first two reflections contrast Jesus' first coming with his second. Then 9 reflections which consider the second advent, taken from Matthew's Gospel; and 14 readings on the first advent from Luke's Gospel, taking us right up to Christmas Day. Ryle's theology and distinctive style have been retained and his original language lightly updated for today's readers. I have also added a prayer to each reading to aid our devotions.

The first time I read Ryle's reflections on the Gospels many years ago, I was thrilled by his warm, single-minded, contagious devotion to Jesus. Even though his material is well over 100 years old, his words remain as relevant, fresh and heart-warming as ever. I think it is because Ryle himself is so focused on our Lord Jesus, who doesn't change, and because he speaks directly to the human heart which is essentially unchanged since the time of our forebears in the garden of Eden.

I hope your heart will be warmed, as mine is, by Ryle's effusive meditations on our Lord Jesus Christ. But be warned—he is uncompromising as he explains the implications of Jesus' second coming as King. He doesn't steer clear of passages about our Lord's return that we may find hard to hear.

Finally, in these words, we see Ryle's heartbeat:

My chief aim ... in all my writings is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and make him beautiful and glorious in the eyes of men, and to promote the increase of repentance, faith, and holiness on earth.



DECEMBER 1

KING OF KINGS

READ MATTHEW 24:29–35

“The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (24:29–30)

In this part of our Lord’s prophecy He describes His own second coming. These verses teach us that when the Lord Jesus returns to this world, He will come with particular glory and majesty. He will come “in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Before His presence the very sun, moon and stars will be darkened, and “the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

The second personal coming of Christ will be as different as possible from the first. He came the first time as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, He was born in the manger of Bethlehem, in lowliness and humiliation. He took on him the form of a servant, and was despised and rejected by mankind. He was betrayed into the hands of wicked people, condemned by an unjust judgment,

mocked, scourged, crowned with thorns and, at last, crucified between two thieves.

He will come the second time as the King of all the earth, with all royal majesty. The princes and great men of this world will themselves stand before His throne to receive an eternal sentence. Before Him every mouth will be stopped, every knee bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

May we all remember this. Whatever ungodly men and women may do now, there will be no scoffing, no jesting at Christ, no infidelity at the last day. The servants of Jesus may well wait patiently. Their master will one day be acknowledged King of kings by all the world.

PRAYER

Lord of lords, King of kings, you came into our world in lowliness and humiliation. You were despised, rejected, betrayed, condemned and crucified. But, one day you will return as King of all the earth. I worship you today and I acknowledge you as King of my life. As I wait for that day, show me how I am rejecting you as King of my life. I turn my heart back to you now. Amen.



DECEMBER 2

WHEN HE COMES IN HIS GLORY

READ MATTHEW 25:31–46

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.” (25:31)

In these verses our Lord Jesus Christ describes the Judgment Day and some of its leading circumstances. There are few passages in the whole Bible more solemn and heart-searching than this. May we read it with the deep and serious attention which it deserves.

Let us mark who will be the Judge in the last day—we read that it will be the Son of Man, Jesus Christ Himself.

That same Jesus who was born in the manger of Bethlehem and took upon Him the form of a servant, who was despised and rejected of men and often had no place to lay His head, who was condemned by the princes of this world, beaten, scourged and nailed to the cross: that same Jesus shall Himself judge the world, when He comes in His glory. To Him the Father has committed all judgment (John 5:22). To Him at last every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:10–11).

Let believers think of this and take comfort. He that sits upon the throne in that great and dreadful day will be their Saviour, their Shepherd, their High Priest, their elder Brother, their Friend. When they see Him, they will have no cause to be alarmed.

Let unconverted people think of this and be afraid. Their judge will be that same Christ whose gospel they now despise and whose gracious invitations they refuse to hear. How great will be their confusion at last, if they go on in unbelief and die in their sins! To be condemned in the day of judgment by anyone would be awful, but to be condemned by Him who would have saved them will be awful indeed. Well may the Psalmist say, “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry” (Psalm 2:12).

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, one day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that you are Lord. One day I will face you as my Judge—but you are also my Saviour, my Shepherd, my High Priest, my elder Brother and my Friend. I praise you for your indescribable mercy and grace.

I pray for (*name a friend or family member*) who has not yet bowed the knee to you. I pray that you would open the eyes of their heart to see you for who you truly are. Amen.