

You Do Not Know the Day or the Hour of Christ's Coming First Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Isaiah 2:1-5—Prophecy of the Age of Salvation

1. Isaiah: Prophecy of “the latter days” (8th century B.C.)
2. New Jerusalem: mountain of “the house of the Lord” (=Temple)
 - a. “Highest of all the mountains”
 - b. “All the nations (Hebrew *goyim*) “shall flow to it”

Psalm 122: Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord

1. Psalm of pilgrimage of twelve tribes to Jerusalem (vv. 1-4)
2. Goal of Pilgrimage: to “give thanks” to the LORD (v. 4)
3. Pray for the “peace” (Hebrew *shalom*) of Jerusalem (vv. 6-9)

Romans 13:11-14—Salvation is Nearer to Us Now than when we First Believed

1. Second Coming: “The night is far gone, the day is at hand”
2. Moral Preparation for the Final Judgment: “Cast off the works of darkness”
 - a. “Reveling” or “Orgies” (Greek *kômos*; cf. feasts of Greek god Dionysus)
 - b. “Drunkenness”
 - c. “Debauchery” or “Promiscuity” (Greek *koitê*, “bedding”)
 - d. “Licentiousness” or “Lust” (Greek *aselgeia*, “sexual excesses”)
 - e. “Quarrelling” or “Rivalry”
 - f. “Jealousy”

Matthew 24:37-44—You Do Not Know on what Day the Lord is Coming

1. NOT about the false doctrine of the “Rapture” (e.g., *Left Behind* novels)
 - a. So-called ‘Rapture’: ‘disappearance’ of believers before 7 year tribulation
 - b. Rapturists *add* the word “one is taken, one is left *behind*”
 - c. “Days of Noah”: those left behind are destroyed in the flood
2. IS about the Second Coming/Final Advent of Christ
 - a. Context: “of that day and hour no one knows...” (Matt 24:36)
 - b. One taken, one left: final separation of righteous and wicked (cf. Matt 25)
 - c. “*You do not know on what day the Lord is coming*” (Thief in the night)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes present this *ancient expectancy of the Messiah*, for *by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.* (CCC 524)

1st Sunday of Advent: Collect (a.k.a. ‘Opening Prayer’)

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ, with righteous deeds at his coming,

so that, gathered at his right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom, through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (1st Sunday of Advent, Year A)

1. Why does the Church connect the season of Advent—which we usually think of as preparing for Christmas—with the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time? (See CCC 668-682)

2. The apostle Paul lists several very specific “works of darkness” that followers of Jesus should avoid if they are to be ready for the final judgment. How can we apply St. Paul’s teaching to our lives today?

3. In the Creed, we profess that “He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.” What are some practical ways to “keep awake” and be ready for the Second Coming of Christ? And why should we prepare if the final Advent does not happen in our lifetimes?
