

The Second Coming of Christ: Stay Awake! 1st Sunday of Advent (Year B)

Isaiah 63:16-17, 19b; 64:1-8—Come Down from Heaven, God!

1. Isaiah: Prophecy of “the latter days” (8th century B.C.)
2. Return of the Lost Tribes of Israel: “return... the tribes of your heritage” (63:17)
 - a. Assyrian Exile (722 B.C.): 10 Tribes of Northern Kingdom (Israel)
 - b. Babylonian Exile (587 B.C.): 2 Tribes of Southern Kingdom (Judah)
 - c. Time of Jesus (30 A.D.): 2 Tribes have returned; 10 Tribes still scattered...
 - d. Jewish People: waiting for the *ingathering of the twelve tribes of Israel*
3. Prayer: for God to “rend the heavens” and “come down” himself (64:1, 8)

Psalm 80—Lord, Let Us See Your Face and We Shall Be Saved

1. Prayer for Restoration: “come to save us!” (v. 2) and “restore us, O God!” (v. 3)

1 Corinthians 1:3-9—We Wait for the Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ

1. We are waiting for the “revealing” (Greek *apokalypsis*) of Jesus Christ (1:7)

Mark 13:33-37—You Don’t Know When the Time Will Come

1. Context: Jesus’ Prophecy of the Final “Coming” (Greek *parousia*; Latin *adventus*)
2. Warning: “Take heed, watch and pray” (Mark 13:33)
3. Reason: Time of Christ’s Return is Unknown
4. Parable of the Master on a Journey:
 - a. Master = Christ
 - b. Servants = Disciples (each with his “work”)
 - c. Doorkeeper = You (commanded to “be on the watch”)
5. Message: You don’t know when “the Master of the House” will come
 - a. Four hours: “evening,” “midnight,” “cockcrow,” or “morning”
6. Warning: “lest he come suddenly and find you asleep...”
 - a. Compare the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42)
 - b. Jesus’ command: “Watch” (Mark 14:34)
 - c. He “found them sleeping” (Mark 14:37)
 - d. “The *hour* has come; the Son of man is betrayed...” (Mark 14:41)
7. Vigilance: “Watch” or “Be on the alert” (Greek *grēgoreō*)

St. Augustine on the Difference Between the First and Second Comings

The first coming of Christ the Lord... was in obscurity; the second will be in the sight of the whole world. When he came in obscurity no one recognized him but his own servants; when he comes openly he will be known by both good people and bad. When he came in obscurity, it was to be judged; when he comes openly it will be to judge. (Augustine, *Sermon* 18.1; trans. E. Barnecut, p. 10)

The Catechism on Advent and the Second Coming

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)

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 prophet Isaiah prays for God to “rend the heavens” and “come down” and restore the tribes of Israel (Isaiah 63-64)? How is this fulfilled in the first advent of Christ? How do you think it will be fulfilled at the Second Coming of Christ?

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?

For Further Reading

Edith Barnecut, *Journey with the Fathers: Commentaries on the Sunday Gospels Year B* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1993), 10-11. Excellent commentaries from the Church Fathers on the specific readings of each Sunday.

Mary Healy. *The Gospel of Mark*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.