

CHRISTMAS II

THE 2ND COMING OF JESUS

"Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! Revelation 22v20

Introduction

Start by Reading 1 Thessalonians 4vs 13 - 18

Have you ever thought about the Meaning of ADVENT? Many see it as the beginning of the Christmas season while others have more of an insight because of their particular background and Christian tradition.

One thing is for sure, the general population these days find it hard to know what Christmas really means never mind ADVENT. What has been your understanding of Advent up until now? (***Very quickly get some feedback from different members of the Life group***).

What is an 'eye-opener' for many, particularly those from an evangelical/pentecostal background is that the main emphasis of **Advent** points to the 2nd Coming of Jesus and His return for those who belong to Him.

If a feature film becomes a Classic it can create a major challenge for producers to try and follow it. The second follow-on can easily become a flop!
Not so with CHRISTMAS II ! This sequel will take us all into eternity!

1) **ADVENT** is about **KNOWING**

The basic meaning of the word Advent is 'Coming'. In the 6th century Christians made it a special focus for preparation for the return of Christ. In religious terms Christians put it in the calendar in order to 'put things right' before Jesus returned.

They focused on **Knowing** the details concerning the return and what it would mean to them personally. Even in our scripture today (1 Thes 4v13) Paul says 'We want you to Know what will happen.....'

From God's perspective Christmas 1 and Christmas II are one plan - His redemptive plan. For so many they have little understanding of what the true Christmas represents - and even less concerning Christmas II.

Do you know where we as Christians are in that plan?

This period of time is giving us opportunities to prepare for the future. What are the ways we need to prepare? *(To help you read 2 Peter 3v11 & v9)*

In the Old Testament, during the time when the Israel was in captivity, it was vital that a whole new generation was taught about the time of return to the promised Land. Hope for the future release from captivity was kept alive by the Prophets and family leaders.

For us who are the ambassadors of Jesus and His church in this generation, there is a responsibility placed on us 'teach' the world how to **know** freedom from the captivity of sin AND Hope of eternal life.

2) **ADVENT** is about **SEEING**

Who do we need to **see**? We need to see Jesus - but not as we usually know Him?

When it comes to Christmas most people keep Jesus IN the Manger and lock Him away there! Our Scripture in 1Thessalonians 4v16 says;

The Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God.

The '**Lord**' is very different here - This is Jesus as described in Rev 1 vs 13 - 16. Take a look at these verses - How is He different from Christmas 1? What does this description tell us about Jesus?

Christmas 1 reveals Jesus as God becoming human like us and suffering as the sacrifice for our sins. Christmas II reveals Jesus as the Victorious King of Kings redeeming His Church and Judging the world.

QUESTION: If Christmas 1 gives us the Good News to proclaim to the world, what should Christmas II make us feel about the urgency of the message?

3) **ADVENT is about HOPING**

Many of the bible writers talk about a **HOPE** that is **solid and eternal**. Here in **1 Thes 4 v13** Paul says he didn't want Christians '**to grieve like people who have no hope**'.

He's talking about '**dying**' - not an easy subject but the truth is for a considerable number of people this will happen before Christmas II.

There are 3 words we need to focus on from verse 13

First is **GRIEVE**. The meaning is 'to become distressed and sorrowful'. We are not to be like this says Paul! The reason is the meaning of the next two words:

DIE. It means to 'Fall asleep'. This shows we have moved from one part of our life to next important step. It is not the end but the end of the beginning!

This results in Biblical **HOPE** - SAFE, SECURE, ETERNAL!

There is an advantage to 'falling asleep' before Christ's return. Can you see what it is? (vs14-17)

4) **ADVENT is about ANTICIPATING**

We have seen ADVENT is symbolic of God's great plan for the world and also for us personally. It starts with Christmas 1 bringing salvation to the world and the JOY of a relationship with God. As we count down on the advent calendar each year looking forward to the usual celebrations, we must not forget the count down to Christmas II is happening and becoming rather close. Our anticipation for this should cause us to;

- Grow in Jesus and stay right with Him
- Share the Gospel and our own story as a matter of priority.
- Live without fear of the future knowing we are in His Plan

The signs of the times are all around us and even if these are sometimes negative, they should serve to remind us that 'the Lord is coming soon!

Encourage each other with these words (v18)

Take a few moments to pray for each other that your anticipation for Christmas II will increase.