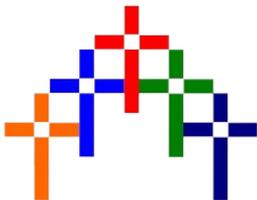


The Advent Hope

A Bible Daily Reading for Advent



Fr Peter M Down



Five Crosses

Tintinhull, Chilthorne Domer,
Yeovil Marsh, Thorne Coffin,
Lufton

Foreword

Advent is a special time of year. It is an opportunity for Christians to prepare for the celebration of our Lord's birth at Christmas. It is also a time for us to reflect upon the reasons why God sent his Son into the world; hence, its traditional themes of the Four Last Things – death, judgement, heaven and hell. But it is also marked by hope, peace, joy and love. As we reflect on the birth of Jesus we are called to reflect too on the promises in scripture that he will return as judge. Advent is a season not, primarily, of penitence but of joyful expectation and preparation to welcome the Lord.

Sadly, all too often, Advent is lost in the activity of the weeks before Christmas. In the hope of allowing us to refocus our attention these daily readings and brief reflections are offered so that, in the rush of this time of year, we might find a moment's quiet and stillness to reflect on exactly what it is we are preparing for.

As usual this guide is available in several formats – as a booklet, as an ebook or as a pdf document to read on your computer. The scriptural texts are not included so you will need a bible beside you (in the electronic versions there are links to the texts in the *New Revised Standard Version* on the *oremus Bible Browser* (www.devotions.net) website). Use the version that you feel most comfortable with. The few quotations from the bible in this booklet are from the *New Jerusalem Bible*.

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us;
let us find our rest in thee.

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

Advent 2017

A Daily Bible Reading through Advent

Advent Sunday 3rd December – Isaiah 1.1-20

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Isaiah looks at the state of Israel and sees that all is not well. He understands that God requires faithfulness and loyalty from his people. He sees that their worship is insincere and unacceptable to God. Isaiah therefore calls on the nation to renew itself and make a new beginning in its relationship with God.

Pray – for all who live and work in our parishes

Monday 4th December – Isaiah 25.1-9

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Concern for the state of his people and nation does not cause Isaiah to despair. With God there is always hope. God has always shown faithfulness to his people and can be trusted to do so again. But he also sees that God's love will be poured out not on Israel alone but on all peoples, who will be invited to share his banquet.

Pray – for all who lead our worship

Tuesday 5th December – Psalm 72.1-4, 18-19

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

The Psalmist (Solomon here according to the title) shares Isaiah's vision of a future in which all people will receive God's blessing. A king will come who will be concerned not with accruing wealth and power but with executing justice for the poor. Thus will the whole world be filled with the Lord's glory.

Pray – for all who decorate our churches

Wednesday 6th December – Matthew 12.38-end

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Jesus warns that for the new beginning to be possible it is necessary for people to repent. He uses the story of Jonah to illustrate the way in which God is always ready to forgive those who repent. Will his generation follow the example of the people of Nineveh? Failure to repent will result in rejection and condemnation as the following two short sayings demonstrate.

Pray – for all who clean and care for our churches

Thursday 7th December – Psalms 42 & 43

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

These two psalms together (they were probably originally a single psalm) are a lament at the psalmist's sense of separation from the Lord. He yearns for God's presence but is unable to feel it. But still he trusts in the Lord to show love and faithfulness. The psalm ends with an affirmation of his belief that God will restore him into his presence.

Pray – for all who have visited our churches this year

Friday 8th December – Isaiah 29.17-21

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

This passage follows an extended criticism of the the Temple worship, the religious and secular leaders of Jerusalem, the injustice of the rich and the exploitation of the poor by them. Isaiah sees that God will not tolerate such behaviour and he paints a picture of the time after God acts against such abuses. His deliverance will reach beyond the boundaries of Israel and Lebanon (and beyond) will be blessed.

Pray – for all who have worshipped with us this year

Saturday 9th December – Psalms 9 & 10

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

These two psalms (which were probably originally one psalm) find the Psalmist (David according to the title) appealing to the Lord on behalf of the poor and oppressed. Their oppressors need to be reminded that they too are only human, and that God is the only recourse of the oppressed and the orphan. It is an appeal for justice, a cry from the heart.

Pray – for our churchwardens

The Second Sunday in Advent, 10th December – Baruch 5

(If you are using the hard copy version and your Bible does not include the books of the Apocrypha see the appendix for the text of this reading.)

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

This passage, from the Apocryphal Book of Baruch, urges the people of Jerusalem to believe that God will deliver them from their distress and inaugurate a time of joy and justice. It is an image of the fulfilment of Isaiah's vision for the nation and for Jerusalem. Indeed Baruch draws heavily on words from Isaiah 40-42.

Pray – for all members of our PCCs

Monday 11th December – Isaiah 45.14-end

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Isaiah here has a new understanding of God's relationship with his chosen people. He is not only their God but the God of all nations. The role of the people of Israel is to make God known to the nations so that they turn from their idols and worship the one true God. God is the only Saviour and the whole world will worship him – in Jerusalem.

Pray – for who have been baptized this year

Tuesday 12th December – Matthew 18.12-14

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Just as Isaiah understands that God cares for all people and nations, so Jesus shares that view. Here he uses the parable of the lost sheep to show that God cares for each and every person. None shall be lost. God's will is that all people should be saved.

Pray – for all who have died in our parishes this year

Wednesday 13th December – Psalm 103

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Although the Psalmist does not share the view of Isaiah and Jesus that God is the God of all, here he sings a hymn of God's loving mercy and justice. The oppressed, the poor, the sick and those in need will be saved by God's saving love, which is everlasting for those who fear him.

Pray – for all who have been married in our churches this year

Thursday 14th December – Matthew 11.11-15

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Jesus believes that the coming of John the Baptist marks a turning point. The kingdom of heaven is subject to a violent assault. The return of Elijah, in the person of John, is a reference to Malachi 4.5-6 (3.23-24 NJB). The return of Elijah brings a time of reconciliation and heralds the coming of the Messiah.

Pray – for St Margaret's School

Friday 15th December – Psalm 82

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

The Psalmist cries out for justice. God alone can deliver justice. The rulers of the nations will pay the price for their wrong actions. The weak, the orphan, the destitute, the needy will be delivered from their clutches. The psalm ends with an appeal to *God ... for all nations belong to you.*

Pray – for Lufton College

Saturday 16th December – Ecclesiasticus 48.1-4, 9-11

(If you are using the hard copy version and your Bible does not include the books of the Apocrypha see the appendix for the text of this reading.)

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

The author of the book of Ecclesiasticus sings the praise of Elijah. He worked great signs and miracles and heralds a new beginning, an age of reconciliation and restoration. At the end of the passage is a hint of a belief in immortality although the original text is unclear. Immortality is a very late belief in Judaism.

Pray – Kingfisher School

The Third Sunday in Advent, 17th December – John 1.6-8, 19-28

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

John the Baptist is sent by God to *bear witness to the Light* in order that people might come to believe. He describes himself as, *a voice of one that cries in the desert*, quoting from Isaiah 40.3. The Pharisees deny by implication that John is the returning Elijah. John does not argue but the claims he makes for himself suggest that he believes himself to be, like Elijah, the herald of the Messiah.

Pray – for Chilthorne Domer Church School

Monday 18th December – Jeremiah 23.5-8

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Jeremiah foresees a time when the Lord will raise up a wise and just king so that Israel and Judah can live in safety. It is clearly a Messianic prophecy although it relates to deliverance of the people of Israel and Judah from exile and looks to their restoration. However, it also has a real sense of a new age and an eternal promise.

Pray – for Yeovil Deanery

Tuesday 19th December – Psalm 146

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

The psalmist praises the Lord for his justice and mercy. God will care for those in need and frustrate the ways of the wicked. The Lord will reign for ever and all who look to him for help will be blessed.

Pray – for the Diocese of Bath & Wells

Wednesday 20th December – Luke 1.26-38

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

The angel Gabriel appears to Mary to tell her that she has been chosen to be the mother of a son. The child will be called *Son of God*. This is unlike the messianic expectations in the prophets. *He will be given the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever*. This, though, is in keeping with the messianic prophecies. The Messiah will exceed the expectations of the prophets.

Pray – for St Peter's & St Paul's Church, Lufton

Thursday 21st December – Luke 1.39-56

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth's acclamation of Mary causes Mary to sing the *Magnificat*. Here she sings of God's bias to the poor, the hungry and the lowly. Here the vision of what God is doing for his people, through the coming of the Messiah, fulfils the expectations of the prophets. God is keeping faith with his people.

Pray – St Margaret's Church, Tintinhull

Friday 22nd December – Matthew 1.18-25

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Joseph also receives a visit, in a dream, from an angel. Matthew's focus is less on the kingship of the Messiah than it is on his divinity. He is to be called *Immanuel* (God-is-with-us); and *he is the one to save his people from their sins*. Again we see how the gospels extend the understanding of who the Messiah is and his relationship with God.

Pray – for St Andrew's Church, Thorne Coffin

Saturday 23rd December – Luke 2.1-20

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

Although the angels proclaim the birth of Jesus to the shepherds with the words, *Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord*, Luke's account of the birth of Jesus has little that accords with the prophets' image of the Messiah (*Christ*, from the Greek). The focus here is all on the miraculous nature of the birth and the heavenly announcement of a Saviour.

Pray – for St Mary's Church, Chilthorne Domer

***The Fourth Sunday in Advent, Christmas Eve, 24th December –
Matthew 2.1-12***

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

The story in Matthew of the visit of the Magi conforms much more closely with the prophetic vision of the Messiah. The wise men come looking for a king – although they find something different to what they expect; verse 6 quotes a prophecy from Micah 5.1 looking for a just king who will *shepherd my people Israel*; the worship of the Magi fulfils metaphorically the nations coming to pay homage to the God of Israel.

Pray – for All Saints’ Church, Yeovil Marsh

Christmas Day, 25th December – John 1.1-18

[Read the passage in the New Revised Standard Version](#)

The prologue to John’s gospel has little to do with the Jewish expectation of a Messiah but everything to do with the divinity of Christ. Here, writ large, is the Christian belief of a Christ, sent by God, who fulfils, but also far exceeds expectations of a Messiah. This is a God who acts not only to bring justice to his people, but a God who brings light in darkness and unites earth and heaven.

Praise God – for the birth of Jesus

Appendix

Baruch 5

Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem,
and put on for ever the beauty of the glory from God.
Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God;
put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting;
for God will show your splendour everywhere under heaven.
For God will give you evermore the name,
'Righteous Peace, Godly Glory'.

Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height;
look towards the east,
and see your children gathered from west and east
at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing that God has remembered them.
For they went out from you on foot,
led away by their enemies;
but God will bring them back to you,
carried in glory, as on a royal throne.
For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills
be made low
and the valleys filled up, to make level ground,
so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God.
The woods and every fragrant tree
have shaded Israel at God's command.
For God will lead Israel with joy,
in the light of his glory,
with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

Ecclesiasticus 48.1-4, 9-11

Then Elijah arose, a prophet like fire,
and his word burned like a torch.
He brought a famine upon them,
and by his zeal he made them few in number.

By the word of the Lord he shut up the heavens,
and also three times brought down fire.
How glorious you were, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds!
Whose glory is equal to yours?
You were taken up by a whirlwind of fire,
in a chariot with horses of fire.
At the appointed time, it is written, you are destined
to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury,
to turn the hearts of parents to their children,
and to restore the tribes of Jacob.
Happy are those who saw you
and were adorned with your love!
For we also shall surely live.

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