

ARE YOU LONGING FOR THE LORD'S RETURN?
Published in *The Morning Sun* on Saturday, December 2, 2006

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

“Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful” (1 Corinthians 1:7-9).

Tomorrow, the Christian Church begins a new church year with the season of Advent. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin *adventus* and means “coming” or “arrival,” and was used to signify the approach of someone of dignity, power, and glory; someone who has the power to bestow favor or exact penalties. The coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ is, *par excellence*, such an *adventus*. Thus, the Christian Church established the season of Advent, which always begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, to focus on the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Usually, we associate Advent with Christ’s first coming at His birth. We view this season as a time for us to look upon the precious baby Jesus in the manger; a time to sing Christmas carols, drink egg nog, decorate our homes, go shopping, exchange gifts, and so on; a time to get together with family and friends and celebrate the birth of our Savior. In short, we often view Advent as being all about Christmas.

However, the season of Advent is not only about Christmas. It’s also time for us to focus on Christ’s second coming. In fact, you may not be aware of this, but Advent is really a penitential season, like Lent. It’s a time of personal examination and reflection; a time for us to examine whether or not we’re eagerly waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed, both as the Infant Savior born in the manger and as the Triumphant King who will come in glory on the Last Day. An oft overlooked question we should be asking ourselves during Advent is, “Are we longing for the Lord’s return?”

If we are honest with ourselves, most of us will not be able to answer that question with a firm “Yes.” Our sinful human nature gets in the way of a completely affirmative answer. We Christians want Jesus to return, no doubt, but just not yet. We enjoy our earthly lives too much. We have things to accomplish, goals to achieve, children to raise, and so on. Even though we have the promise of God’s Word that when Christ returns He will bring us into an eternal kingdom that will be far more glorious than we can possibly imagine, we still cling tenaciously to our earthly lives. As I said, we want Jesus to return, but just not yet. If we had our way, Jesus would return after we had lived a long life on this earth and are just about to breathe our last.

But thanks be to God our salvation does not depend upon the level of eagerness we have for our Lord’s return. If that were so, we would all be lost! But, as believers in Jesus Christ, we are not lost. Jesus has done everything necessary to accomplish our salvation. Through the God-given faith we have in Jesus, we are saved. And now, through faith, there is a part of us that does long for the Lord’s return. A New Man was created in us at baptism who desperately longs for the return of our Savior. And, even though our Old Adam (our sinful human nature) battles daily with the New Man in us, we have this promise: God has called us into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our

Lord and, because He is faithful, He will keep us strong to the end, so that we will be blameless on the Day when Jesus returns in great glory to judge the living and the dead.

Friends in Christ, use this Advent season to examine how eagerly you are waiting for the return of your Savior Jesus Christ. Rejoice in the celebration of your Savior's birth and all the festivities and traditions that accompany this time of the year, but take some time also to reflect on your Lord's glorious return, which is your "blessed hope" (Tit. 2:13). As you engage in the hustle and bustle of holiday preparations, rejoice in the fact that you know there is a Day coming when all the busy-ness of earthly life will be replaced with eternal joy, peace and comfort. Rejoice in the fact that you have been called by God into fellowship with His Son and that you will one day dwell with the Lord forever in Paradise, which is so beautifully described for us in the last two chapters of Revelation. In Jesus' Holy and Precious Name. Amen.

In Christ,

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