

# SHOULD WE FEAR HIS SECOND ADVENT? – LUKE 21:25-36

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<sup>25</sup> “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. <sup>26</sup> Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” <sup>29</sup> He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. <sup>30</sup> When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. <sup>31</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup> “I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. <sup>34</sup> “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. <sup>35</sup> For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

Chances are you haven't been in communist China where you need to be careful regarding what you say to whom. Many of us have not been in a combat zone fearing for our life. Chances are you haven't found yourself on 8-Mile in Detroit, or on the streets of Ferguson, Missouri this last week. Chances are you haven't had to go to sleep at night wondering if you'll ever wake up. These are some things that some people have dealt with or are dealing with. For many we can be thankful that comparatively speaking, our lives have been relatively calm. But that doesn't mean we haven't been afraid of anything. I'm not saying that we don't have genuine fears, but it seems like many of our fears aren't all that scary. Maybe we're afraid of spiders, heights, the dark, losing our smart phone. But I wonder, has anyone ever been afraid of Christmas?

I have never heard of anyone being afraid of Christmas. In fact, it's usually quite the opposite, people look forward to Christmas. And yes, you have the secular world secularizing Christmas, but still, they are not afraid of it. And yet in our gospel for this morning, we are taken back not only to Jesus' first coming, but also his second coming, and we see that there will be fear present. It may seem an absurd question to ask, but SHOULD WE FEAR ADVENT? SHOULD WE FEAR HIS SECOND ADVENT?

1. Not if you know
2. Not if you watch

(1)

Like our video stated this morning, the season of Advent is not only looking forward and preparing for Christ to come in the manger again, but also it is looking forward to another coming, another Advent – his second coming. And it was this coming that Jesus was referring to in our gospel for this morning. It was words he spoke during his last week on earth. They were words line which up very

closely with his first Advent too, when he came as a baby. And so today, as with the rest of the Advent season, we will take a look and compare the similarities between Christ's two advents.

We first ask, did the Jews FEAR THE ADVENT of the Messiah? Really, they should not have feared the coming of the Messiah. Why not? Because they knew. God had told them about the coming of the Messiah, ever since Adam and Eve ate forbidden fruit in the garden, the promise of the Messiah was passed down from generation to generation – to Abraham and Lot, to King David, through the prophets God sent to his people. They didn't know when the Messiah would come, but they knew he would. God even gave them signs to watch for. He would be from the tribe of Judah, from the line of David. He would be born in Bethlehem, but would be called a Nazarene (a northerner), he would be born of a virgin.

But yet, even with all of these signs, even though many of the Jews knew the promise of the Messiah, how did his birth come about? His birth came about in obscurity. Mary and Joseph hustling to Bethlehem, not finding room in an inn, God having to send angels to shepherds nearby to tell them. Even when the wise men came two years later, Herod and the rest of Jerusalem are stunned to find out they were searching for the Messiah. You could even argue the people who did know about it, were just as shocked as those who didn't. Mary was humbled that God chose her, Joseph didn't believe it until he had a dream. The shepherds whom the angels told, they cowered in fear at the sight of a legion of singing angels.

But we see the different response between those who knew and believed, and those who knew and didn't believe. Mary and Joseph humbly followed the angel's instructions. The shepherds, after they heard the message, went to find this child they were told about. While Herod, when he heard from the wise men, was terrified that a little baby would usurp his power and did whatever he could to exterminate the threat. Those who knew and believed had a response to Christ's first advent which was the same as to what Christians would have to Christ's Second Advent.

Because what is it that we know. Yes, we know that Jesus, our Savior, was born in a manger in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, we know that he lived a perfect life in our place, and that he died on a cross for our sins. But what do we know about Christ's Second Advent? The same as his disciples. It's true, the disciples at this point in time, didn't fully understand Jesus' death only a couple days later, but they did anticipate and expect a time when Jesus would reveal his full power and glory, so they asked when this would be. Luke gives a summary version of the signs that would precede his Second Advent: **"signs in the sun, moon and stars...roaring and tossing of the sea...the heavenly bodies will be shaken."** In Matthew's gospel we also hear about **"wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes."**

Then we get a little bit of a picture about why someone might be afraid of Christ's Second Advent. And if some people were afraid of Christ coming as a little baby (Herod), how will some people react when **"they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory?"** We don't have to guess, Luke tells us how some will react, **"nations will be in anguish and perplexity...men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world."**

But why all this fear? As Christians we know full well why the fear, the Bible explains it clearly. **"No one can see me and live."** God says, imperfection or unholiness can have no presence in the holiness of God. We can argue it all we want, but that doesn't change the fact. Even if they don't acknowledge it, this is what all humans know. How else do you explain the innate desire to please a deity, to live a good life, to earn an audience with God? It is the same sin that Christians possess that makes us unworthy to

come in the presence of God, and no amount of goodness can balance out that sin. It is this that causes the anguish, the perplexity, the fainting, the apprehension.

This is precisely the reason why we remember and celebrate the First Advent of our Savior. It was his birth which was foretold from the beginning of the world to redeem us from our sins, so that at his Second Advent he could redeem us from this world into heaven. It was his humble birth in a cattle shed, with nothing to draw us near to him that showed us that he came for all, he would die for all.

Jesus used the parable of the fig tree to explain what he meant as far as the signs of the end of the world. In other parts of the country, where they actually have real winter with snow and everything, in the spring time the snow melts and leaves begin to grow again on the trees. This is a sign that summer is coming, that warmer weather is coming. For Arizonians, it might be the opposite...when the monsoons start in July, we see that as the first sign that cooler weather is on its way.

Just as we know when certain things will happen based on these signs, we know when the end of the world will happen, based on the signs God himself has given us. Signs that we see have happened, and are happening. So we know his Second Advent is coming soon. We have Jesus' guarantee – **“heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”**

(2)

It is because we know his Second Advent is coming soon that leads us right into our second point. Just because we know it is happening, doesn't help us if we are not prepared, if you are not watching for it. Because sadly, even though many Jews knew and still know about God's promise of a Messiah, many were not watching for it. Many did not pay attention to Mary and Joseph, and when they did, they would have glanced at them with looks of scorn for having a child out of wedlock. The only ones who showed up on the night of his birth were lowly shepherds. So many knew, but so many were not watching for it.

Christ himself knew the challenge and temptation this would be for Christians concerning his Second Advent as well. A challenge and temptation that is once again caused by sin. For just like the Israelites constantly complained for 40 years in the wilderness, Christians have complained for our years of “wandering in the wilderness of this world.” “When is Christ coming back?” “Why do I still have so many problems?” “What do you mean I have to wait?” In this “me-first” generation, it's even more difficult.

Which is why we should pay attention to Christ's words, **“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.”** If we are not watching for Christ's second advent, it is very easy to become focused on the things that don't matter, the anxieties of life, wondering why things are the way they are. We might try to find our own solutions to these problems, instead of focusing on his Second Advent. We can become trapped in this way of thinking.

But if we are watching and waiting for his Second Advent, **YOU DON'T NEED TO FEAR HIS SECOND ADVENT**. We don't need to fear the worries and anxieties of this life, we don't need to fear the signs in the sun, moon and stars that will terrify those who are not watching. Instead of being afraid of all of this, we can be confident in Jesus' words. We can be confident in sharing Jesus' words, and not just with those who know about him, but especially with those who don't. Because it's not just a matter of life or death, it's a matter of eternal life, or eternal death.

There may still be things that we fear in this life, and that's OK. But we should not let these fears overwhelm us to the point of doubting Christ's promises for us. We should not let these fears take away the excitement of celebrating Christmas – Christ's First Advent, and we should not let these fears take away the excitement of waiting for Christ's Second Advent. Instead, **“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”** Amen.