

POPULUS ZION (ADVENT 2)

December 5 2021

Malachi 4:1-6

Romans 15:4-13

Luke 21:25-36

Standing...

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Let us pray. These are Your words Holy Father. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Sitting...

I was not raised with the knowledge of Advent.

In most Southern Baptist churches this special time of year
leading to the birth of our Lord was and is completely non-existent.

However, over Thanksgiving I attended
the church I was raised in with my parents,
and what do you know?

They are now observing Advent! Ha!

Slowly but surely, Baptists are coming around.

In another 100 years, they might observe Lent...
or not.

Now, just because a church has Advent on the calendar,
doesn't mean they know or accurately teach what it means.

For Advent is the season of repentance and joy—
joy because we meditate on how the Lord Jesus comes to us—
and this is our delight.

It's a reversal of how one normally thinks.

Most think it's their business to get to God;

their responsibility to climb Jacob's ladder,

their goal to build their own Tower of Babel

and clamber themselves into God's heaven.

This is the basic doctrine of every other religion in the world:
getting to heaven by one's own efforts.

Yet, against this, Christianity—and even Advent make it clear,
No—God comes to you.

First, Christ Jesus came long ago.

This was Christ's first Advent and it involved...

The angel Gabriel speaking into the ear of the young girl, Mary.
The eternal God becoming mortal, born as a child in Bethlehem.
It involved Him going to the Temple and teaching rabbi's and priests.
It also included John the Baptist appearing out of nowhere saying,

"Messiah is near!"

"Get ready to meet Him!"

"Repent and be baptized!"

It included His Triumphal Entry to the shouts of Hosanna.

It involved Him suffering and dying to save the world,
and bodily rising again from the dead...

All of that is His first coming—His first Advent.

His Second Advent is His return—on the Last Day, in the clouds of glory.

No longer covered in humility,

but shining with a brightness that'll make the sun look like a dimly lit bulb.

It's where He comes to judge the living and the dead,
as we confess in the Creeds.

To raise the dead to life and transform those alive in an instant.

Giving all who trust in Him eternal life

as well as, condemning those who refuse His salvation.

So, during Advent we observe what has taken place in the past,
and keep an eye on what will take place in the future.

More on that in a moment...

However, there's another theme of Advent...

it's what the Southern Baptists know nothing about,
for if they did, they'd be Lutheran.

It's the theme of Christ coming among us today—in the present.

This is the glorious thing about coming to church,

about hearing the Gospel preached into your ears,

about having your sins forgiven,

about receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord.

Jesus comes among us today—now—in His Word and Sacraments to feed us,

to nourish the faith He has given us and to shepherd us.
 No—it's not as glorious as His second Advent will be,
 nor is it as gritty and earthy and His first Advent was.
 Nevertheless, it's how He comes to us in the present.

This three-fold theme of Advent is seen in Revelation 1:8 where Jesus—
 the ascended and resurrected Christ declares,
*"I am the alpha and the omega—
 the One who is, who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

This morning, we specifically, look to the future...to the Advent of Christ's Return.
 But, wait a minute—didn't we just do that, as the Church Year drew to a close?
 We did—for three weeks.
 But that was Christ's Advent from St. Matthew,
 where being ready calls for faith,
 trust in His Word,
 trust in the promise that all our sins are covered
 by the blood of Jesus.
 However, today, on *Populous Zion*,
 we hear what the end will be like
 from the prophet Malachi and from St. Luke.

Malachi simply calls it, "the Day."
 Luke records the Lord Himself calling it,
"the Kingdom of Heaven drawing near."
 That, beloved, you be ready,
 that you prepare for that day,
 that you order your lives to meet that day,
 and that you not be confused or shaken when it comes,
 the Lord gives His disciples the signs of the end:
 signs in the sun, in the moon and in the stars;
 and on the earth distress of nations,
 with perplexity,
 the sea and the waves roaring;
 men's hearts failing them from fear
 and the expectation of those
 things which are coming
 on the earth, for the
 powers of the heavens
 will be shaken.

We know that from the time Christ ascended into heaven until the Day He returns, there will be troubles in the world—troubles that Jesus calls signs.

Meaning, they are supposed to teach us something, indicate or point to something.

Like a sign on the highway that reads,

Next Rest Area, 17 Miles Ahead.

Or, **Last Free Exit before Toll.**

Jesus calls the troubles of this world

“signs” because they tell us something.

They tell us, He’s going to return.

In our lifetimes we have seen all these signs.

We have seen solar eclipses, “blood moons”, supermoons, shooting stars, and stars burning out: signs in the heavens.

And what of the distress of nations?

It’s all around us.

Wars, famines, plagues, oppressive and corrupt governments, which have marked every generation since our Lord uttered these words.

And now we have fallout from a pandemic along with terrorism, both international and domestic.

What of perplexity?

Men are more confused now than ever.

God has been driven out of our schools, our society, and our entertainment.

Fallen men blinded by secular doctrine reject the creation, and the God-given order of the creation,

so much that men don’t know if they’re a man or a woman.

Perplexity abounds and confusion multiplies.

This fallen world is backwards and upside-down.

As one of our shut-ins said recently,

“I just don’t understand this world anymore.”

Why did she say that?

Because she knows what is sinful and wrong is touted by fallen men as normal and right.

What about the seas and waves roaring?

Well, we’ve seen that too.

Tsunamis and tidal waves and floods wipe out large portions of cities.
 And fear and failing hearts are on the increase,
 as the de-evolution of our society continually pushes
 men further and further from God.

And with all this, with all of the signs having already been fulfilled, men refuse to repent.
 And to them what the prophet Malachi says is,
 this Day will be burning like an oven...
 and all who do wickedly will be stubble.
 The Day which is coming shall burn them up.

Have you noticed how there's very little fear of judgment these days?
 What frightens us is being away from our iPhone or it running out of juice,
 or losing our retirement or looking silly before others.
 For the most part, we fear neither death, nor what follows.

But this shouldn't come as a surprise.
 The Scriptures are full of examples of men refusing to repent
 in light of impending judgement—

Remember the days of Noah?—
 How the Bible says, "*the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every
 intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Gen 6:5)?
 No one believed Noah—the preacher of righteousness (II Peter 2.5),
 even as he and his family, along with the animals entered the ark.
 And when the Lord brought the flood waters down,
 those outside the ark didn't have a chance.

Or consider the citizens of Sodom—
 Their desire for pleasure so overpowered them—so controlled them,
 that when sulfur and fire rained down from heaven,
 they went up like smoke—
 with only Lot and his daughters making it safely out.

Then there's the firstborn of the Egyptians and the crossing of the Red Sea;
 Rahab in Jericho;
 Jeremiah among the Babylonians;
 and on and on and on.

It's always the same.

The Lord sends forth His word, but who believes it?
 Church, if you have grown apathic to the Lord's return in glory, repent.
 If you live like He's not going to return at any moment, repent.
 If the daily grind has lulled you to sleep so that you're not ready for His return, repent.
 It's like Jesus is splashing us in the face with the water of our baptism,
 and He says remember repentance, remember sin, receive forgiveness
 and trust in what He has promised.

For those who believe His promise of deliverance,
 are rescued just as the Word says.
 They're whisked off like Lot to a nearby village,
 or protected from the waters in the ark with Noah,
 or pass through the sea on dry ground with Moses,
 or saved by the scarlet cord hanging from the window
 as the walls of Jericho fall.

However the Lord chooses to save His people—
 sparing them from the judgment He brings against the ungodly—
 there's always a remnant, and that remnant have a way of escape.

But beloved, Jesus doesn't give these signs to weigh us down,
 or to lead us into dissipation or drunkenness.
 Hear it again: *"When these things begin to take place,
 straighten up and raise your heads,
 because your redemption is drawing near."* (Lk 21:28)

When Jesus comes again, He comes as your redemption.

Think of it:

It's not your destruction is drawing near.
 Nor is it your punishment that is drawing near.
 Not even your damnation is drawing near.
 No—your Redemption drawing near.
 Yes, it's the Last Day, but not the Last Day for you.
 For the One who comes in the cloud
 is the One who came in the manger.
 The One who comes in glory
 is the One who gave up everything for you,
 the One who bled and died on the cross for you.
 That is Who is coming,
 so there's nothing to be afraid of.
 It's the Day of your deliverance.

It's the Day of your redemption.
 Yes—the world is coming to an end,
 but you are not.

Listen to how St. Peter describes this Day, *"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."*

On the other side of the Last Day, is a New Day—a new creation.

The new heaven and new earth, and it's for you—the baptized,
 where there's no sin, no death and no dying...

where there's no Devil, no sinful world and no sinful flesh.

You'll finally able to look upon the face of God without being destroyed.

Thus, your posture needs be open arms—open arms to receive your gift—
 for, your King comes to you, and when He does,
 you escape all of this trouble, and you will stand.

Jesus comes as the One whom you've always waited for,
 bringing all the things you've ever wanted—
 peace and holiness, hope and joy and love.

And to show you that Jesus is not One to be feared, the Church has Advent.

Where every year at about this time, we start all over—

telling the story from beginning to end.

And at the beginning, we see that the sky is not falling—
 rather it's crisp and clear—

with no hint at all of any chaos or terror.

The sounds you hear are the sounds of the favored flesh and blood of St. Mary,
 giving birth to the holy flesh of Jesus our King—the second person of the Trinity.

The only tears are those of joy.

And if anybody's fainting, it's only from being overwhelmed by the notion
 that the God of heaven and earth has put Himself both into our cause and
 into our care.

But this little baby Jesus will one day tell us all that—
 everything, everything will come undone.

It will come undone to be redone—into new heavens above a new earth.

For God's chosen people—you—who have been redeemed in Him,
get a fresh start in the Eden to come.

Come soon, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Standing...

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.