

Advance Notice
Week 3: He Is Coming Again

I. Advance Notice -

Church you have heard it said that this is the most wonderful time of year as that popular Christmas song says: There'll be much mistletoeing, And hearts will be glowing, When love ones are near, It's the most wonderful time of the year. There'll be parties for hosting, Marshmallows for toasting, And caroling out in the snow, There'll be scary ghost stories, And tales of the glories of the, Christmases long, long ago, It's the most wonderful time of the year.

A. There are marvelous stories and tales told and rehearsed among our families and community.

Every Christmas you revisit Charles Dicken's "A Christmas Carol" with good old Ebenezer Scrooge and Tiny Tim.

We laugh at the antics of the mean old Mr. Grinch in his efforts to steal Christmas.

Every year we root for Ralphie Parker as he stands up to the school bully and as he prays for that "official Red Ryder, carbine action, 200-shot, range model air rifle, with a compass in the stock and this thing that tells time." You know that movie has caused countless boys to beg their parents for an air rifle. I succumbed to my son's pleading for that very thing, and against my better judgement, I gave my son Patrick a BB gun for Christmas. My neighbors looked at me like I had lost my mine. I gave my son him stern warnings about gun safety, but he nevertheless proceeded to shoot himself in the hand, shoot his sister, and shoot at the birds until I came to my senses and took it away from him.

And who in here has not seen the venerable, old, animated classic, "A Charlie Brown Christmas" by Charles Schulz with the cool jazz sound track by Vince Guaraldi. You know I listen to that soundtrack to this very day. The highlight of this story is reached when Linus, with his security blanket, steps onto center stage during the school play and reads the annunciation of Luke chapter 2. For me this was the first time I had heard the advent account and at 12 years old living at my grandparent's home on Howard in Washington D.C., I was gripped by Linus' reading. My guess is that many Americans of my generation first heard of the advent account through the annual presentation of "A Charlie Brown Christmas."

Yes, it is a wonderful time of the year for storytelling. And the advent account is a most heart-warming story of God's love revealed in the sending of his son that the world might be redeemed.

But how do you read it as Jesus would often ask the scribes and lawyers of his day. How do you read it?

Is it a well told fictional account like the story of Bob Marley and Mr. Scrooge? This is how most of the world reads it.

Or do you read it as a true story that has little more than historical significance and really has no meaning for my day-to-day life other than the fact it informs me about how the Messiah came. It is a wonderful thing that happened in the past. This is how most Christians read the story.

If this is how you read the story, then you have accepted a nostalgic reading of the advent account wrapped in the numbing gaze of sentimentalism neutered of the spiritual power necessary for the daily living down there in the grit and grime of life where it really counts. Can this story speak to me today as I battle physical illness and struggle to make ends meet? Can the advent account assuage my loneliness? Can it comfort me at the lost my dear family member? Can it soothe the anxiety I feel over the rising unrelenting turmoil I see in our country?

The highly holy season is more than sentimental stories. It is a restatement of the mission and of ministry of the Majestic Messiah through his church now. Today. We must not read advent account as a completed account. It is a story that remains in process, and you have a part in it. The book is not completed. The last chapter has been scripted but has not been acted out. We can know how it will end.

But if we are to understand how dynamic the advent account is to our lives today, we must go back to the future. Back to the time when the sovereign God, blessed be His name, explained what he was doing, in the

time of the prophet, by giving notice of what he was going to do in the future. To understand the relevance of this story one must understand the chapters before and after **the** first advent.

In almost every instance of a prophecy in the prophetic books there is a reference to the coming of the humble servant of God of the 1st Advent and the conquering, Everlasting King/Judge of the 2nd Advent. The prophets gave advance notice of the Messiah that was too spiritually advanced for them to understand. They were unable to reconcile the Suffering Servant of The Lord and the Conquering Everlasting King.

1. SLIDE #2 The Suffering Servant

2. SLIDE #3 The Eternal King

- a. Micah Prophesied in Judah during the same time that Isaiah prophesied to king Ahaz. This means that God raised up two prophets who gave similar messages to the people of Israel that was advance notice for their times, for the time of the 1st advent, and for the times of the 2nd advent. This is astounding.
 - (1) Both prophets give definitive descriptions of the coming of the Messiah during His 1st advent. Isaiah gives the most detail descriptions of The Messiah.
 - (2) Micah gave a clear description of the city in which the Messiah would be born. Bethlehem Ephrathah. Ephrathah was added to specify a different Bethlehem from the Galilean Bethlehem.
 - (3) Micah also alludes to the Assyrians as the current adversary of Israel and the empire in waiting, Babylon.

SLIDE #4 Micah 5:2 (ESV) But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

SLIDE #5 Micah 5:3-4 (ESV) - 3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. 4 And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

- b. How can this be that these men can utter predictions 700 years before their fulfillment. It is mind boggling to comprehend the prophetic accuracy of the Scripture. If I go back 700 years ago to 1321 most of us would not be familiar with any historical figure of that time. Let's imagine that a man of God predicted in 1321 that an empire of the east would rise up in 1945 and defeat A Germanic people and help to sponsor the rebirth the state of Israel in 1948. This would be an incredible prediction. The prophecies of the Old Testament and particularly that of Isaiah are even more specific, making it difficult for the skeptic to dismiss them. What is the skeptic to do with Isaiah 53?

Isaiah 53:1-5 (ESV) - 1 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

- c. The prophets predicted that God would also preserve a remnant of his chosen people within each of these kingdoms until he comes to establish his everlasting Kingdom. The promise that God gave to Abraham and to David. This advance notice shows that our Lord is a promise keeper.

3. SLIDE #6 A Promise Keeper

- a. He keeps His promises. That the nation of Israel exist today shows God's faithfulness. The fact that Jesus was born 2000 years ago in that little back water of a town of Bethlehem means that God does not forget. Man forgets but God does not. Certainly, most of the people of Jesus day had forgotten, which is the reason John the Baptist was sent. When I reflect on this story my response is not to pine for something in the past as **our** culture loves to do during this time of the year. We should embrace and praise our Lord as the promise keeper that he is.

- b. He will not forget me. He will never leave me. He did not forget His promise to me. He will provide for me, and preserve me from the evil one and from those who hate me. He will walk with me and guide me. He will be my light in the midst of darkness. He will lead to green pastures and still waters and walk with me through the valleys. This season of remembrance should not be a cause for depression, as it is for man, but a time of hope because it the supreme record of the faithfulness of God. Emmanuel "God with us."

4. SLIDE #7 The Absolute Sovereign

- a. This prophecy also shows that God rules the nations. He creates and raises up states to position of power and prominence and He also brings them down and destroys them. There have been 34 nations created in the last 21 years. Each ultimately ordained of God. The modern state of Israel was called in to being by God. The United States was called into being and as great as it is He will one day bring it down.
- b. Through his prophecy in Micah God tells us that he rules the nations. Who can resist His will?
- c. We live **in a time** of great political turmoil and change in our country and all over the world. Nations **consider** the unthinkable, nuclear annihilation, and once again **it is** something that we are forced to contemplate. Can we have peace during this season of peace when we see all of these potential threats around us? If we, the children of the Prince of Peace, are unable to embrace peace, what hope is there for the world? We know that from these prophecies that God holds the future of nations and our nation in his hand. He tells us through the writings of the Apostle Paul that

1 Timothy 2:1-4 (ESV) – 1 ... supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- d. Our response to the turmoil of our day is to pray to the one who has the heart of the king and the nation in His hand.

5. SLIDE #8 The Divine Advocate for The Poor

- a. This prophecy is an advance notice that the Kingdom will be made up of the poor. The phrase Micah 5:2 (ESV) - But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.
- b. Refers to the suffering servant of the 1st advent. It is the "humiliation of the highest." Jesus identified with and associated with the poor and the common people. He was born in the hick town of Bethlehem that did not even have a population of a thousand to constitute a clan within a tribe. He was born into a very poor family. Mary was a 15 year nobody. The characters of the 1st advent account were all lowly. Zechariah and Elizabeth were a poor couple who had reached their senior years without children. Simeon was an **an** obscure, devout man of God. Anna was widow who was married for 7 years and then pursued a ministry of prayer for 84 years. The men whom Jesus called to be his disciples were not **from** the religious elite. They were not the wise, and the wealthy. They were not the beautiful people. The people who were accepted and acclaimed. They were the common men and woman. The fishermen, the sinners, the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the last, the lame, the lowly the lost, least, the less, the limited, the left, the leveled, and the last. The key to the kingdom is not found in what I do, or who I **am** or who I know. The key is simple faith that comes from an impoverished soul.

"Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of God." [Matt. 5:3 (ESV) - Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Luke 6:20 (ESV) - ... "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.]

- 6. The term "Advance Notice" may be used as a legal term. It a term to announce, warn and alert the recipient of a notice in advance as required by law or contract. The advance notice of the prophets is connected the promise of the Davidic covenant that the Messiah would come through the line of David, His kingdom would reign forever, and his dominion would be total and absolute. It clear that he rules over the nations from the foundation of the world. He will judge the nations.

SLIDE #9 Avenger and Judge

a. Micah prophesied that he would judge both Assyria and Babylon for their wickedness and their cruelty to His chosen people. History demonstrates that Micah was a true prophet because The prophet puts the nations and every person on notice that they will be accountable to Him **(God)**.

(1) For the righteous this a notice of future blessing and peace. He will avenge the righteous for all of the persecution done against them. Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute you. The judgement of God will inevitably come to them.

(2) For the unrighteous the advance notice is a warning of judgement and condemnation. It is a notice of impending action by the king against those who have stolen the widow's house, oppressed the poor, defrauded the sojourner, move the ancient landmark to steal land. It is a warning to those who eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. It is an advance notice that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. The Apostle writing the Holy Word says:

I Corinthians 6:9b-11 (ESV) – 9 ... Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

b. To the righteous and the righteous remnant of Israel Micah gives an advance notice of the coming blessing of the Lord when the suffering servant of the Lord will come a second **time** riding on a war horse not a donkey, **not** announced in the fields to the shepherds near an obscure village but **with** the worldwide blast of a trumpet and the shout of an arch angel when at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

B. This is a story that matters. It is a story we would do well to rehearse. There is no sentimentality here but a guide light, a beacon in the midst of this world that will lead me to the King so that I might worship Him and offer the living sacrifice of a transformed life that is willing to be a suffering servant!