

## Advent 1 (2025)

Lord Halifax was a British statesman as well as a devout Anglican Churchman.

From 1940 to 1942, he served as British Ambassador to the United States. During this period, he and Lady Halifax visited Mississippi and were entertained at the Governor's mansion.

Prior to their arrival, a young black maid (the household staff at the mansion in those days came from the state penitentiary) was overheard asking excitedly, **“Has Jesus and wife come yet?”**

Well, it made sense! The only “Lord” she knew and acknowledged was the Lord Jesus.

So, when she heard that the Lord was coming, she of course assumed it was the Lord Jesus and was tremendously excited, as you might well expect.

She has something to teach us. Advent, the season we begin this morning, is a season of good news and great excitement.

“Advent” comes from the Latin *adventus* and means coming or arrival.

In ancient Rome, *Adventus* was a technical term for the glorious entry of an emperor into his capital city. This often followed a military victory. The crowds would come out and welcome him . . . just as the crowds came out and welcomed Jesus on that first Palm Sunday.

Advent tells us that the one who came, comes.

Indeed, His arrival, as Paul suggests in today’s Epistle, is nearer than when we believed.

He will put all wrongs to rights, abolish death and bring lasting peace to this tired old

world. Good news! Cause of great expectation and longing!

With that said, I know that over the years our Lord's Second Coming has been the occasion of much wild speculation.

In the 1940s, many were saying that Mussolini, the fascist ruler of Italy, was the anti-Christ.

In the 1970s, there was Hal Lindsey's *The Late, Great Planet Earth* in which he predicted Jesus would return in 1988. Obviously, he was wrong.

In the 1990s, there was a barrage of "Left Behind" books full of tales of people disappearing out of buses and planes. Silly stuff, nevertheless, these books caught the attention of many.

It is for this reason I am glad we have the season of Advent. These four Sundays allows God's people to explore what the Church really teaches on this important subject.

What does the Church affirm about the Second Coming?

First, **the Second Coming is an actual happening.** Jesus is coming again.

It is taught in the scriptures, affirmed in the ancient creeds, and proclaimed and anticipated at every Christian Eucharist: **“We eat this bread and drink this cup *until He comes.*”** It's a real happening.

Secondly, **it will be according to prophecy.** What do I mean by prophecy?

Well this: all the predictions pertaining to Christ's First Coming in the Old Testament were accurately and exactly fulfilled. We can

therefore expect those pertaining to His Second Coming in the New Testament to be fulfilled in like manner.

We find one prophecy pertaining to our Lord's First Coming being played out in real time in today's Gospel. Once Jesus arrives in Jerusalem after His Triumphant Entry, He goes to the Temple . . . not to sightsee, but according to prophecy.

Four hundred years earlier, the prophet Malichai had written: **“The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.”** On this day, the Lord, Israel's Davidic King, shows up.

Thirdly, **Jesus comes in judgment.** Upon arriving at the Temple, He overturns the tables of the moneychangers and drives out those who sold and bought.

Judgment will likewise be a part of His Second Coming. The only thing is that this judgment will be much more comprehensive.

When He came the first time, judgment began in the House of God. When He comes the second, it will expand to include all the living and the dead. All the kindreds of the earth will stand before Him on that day.

Before I go further, I need to say a word about ‘judgment’ in the Bible. We often think of it as being wholly negative.

There IS a negative aspect to it . . . it tells the sinner’s doom . . . but it also has a positive side. If some are declared in the wrong, others are declared in the right. If some are condemned, others are vindicated.

For Jesus’ believing people, they will be publicly acknowledged as God’s sons and daughters.

This vindication will NOT be based on their own righteousness, but on Christ's. They will stand before the great judgment seat wearing Christ's own seamless, spotless robe of righteousness. What is true of their King will be true of them.

So, in summary, the Church believes at least three things about the Second Coming.

First, it is a real event for which we should prepare and be ready.

Secondly, it will be according to prophecy. Not one of God's promises in the Old Testament was left behind. So, it will be for those in the New Testament.

And thirdly and finally, it will involve judgment. For Jesus' believing people, this will mean vindication and acknowledgment, as the writer of Hebrews tells us.

**“So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:28).**

This is what we believe and proclaim.  
Again, it is good news.

When we look out on our world, it often appears evil is winning. The poor are oppressed. Lies are celebrated and left unchallenged. The weak are pushed to the wall and have no helper. Death is relentless and continues to claim its prey.

The Second Coming says: help is on the way. A great reversal is coming. For this reason, the Church in every age cries out, **“Even so, Lord, quickly come.”**

But what about now? How should we live in this time between our Lord’s two comings?

Paul in Romans 13, the chapter from which today's Epistle is taken, gives us two helpful pointers.

As the chapter opens (before we picked up reading), he charges Christians in Rome to be good citizens . . . to obey lawful commands . . . not to get into debt . . . to pay their taxes . . . to be exemplary in their public and private conduct.

**“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,”** he says. Civil authorities (even pagan ones, as was the case in those days) derive their authority from God. Their purpose is to promote good and restrain evil.

**“For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are / ordained of God,”** he says.

However, he is not giving civil rulers a blank cheque. When they demand what God

forbids or forbid what God commands, then is civil disobedience not only permissible but required of God's people.

As Peter told the authorities in Jerusalem after they commanded them to not to preach in the name of Jesus: **“We ought to obey God rather than men.”** And that is what they did.

Nevertheless, on the whole, Christians are to be law-abiding citizens. In so doing, they bear witness to Christ and the Gospel to their unbelieving neighbors.

But Paul does not stop here. He moves from civil obligation to their interaction with their fellow Christians.

**“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law,”** he charges.

Leon Morris, commenting on this verse, writes: **“We may pay our taxes and be quiet. We may give respect and honor where they are due and have no further obligation. But we can never say, ‘I have done all the loving I need to do.’ Love then is a permanent obligation, a debt impossible to discharge.”**

Love – an active, doing love – must then be centerstage in the Christian fellowship as Jesus’ people await their Lord’s appearing at the end of the age.

As with being good citizens, living in love has an evangelistic dimension. When non-believers see Christians living in this manner . . . doing such things as respecting the property of others, not acting inappropriately to their marriage partners, not slandering others . . . their interest may well be piqued. They may say, **“I want to find out more about this group and their Christ, and perhaps even join their community.”**

Striving to be good citizens and making love the cornerstone of how we relate to others, especially our fellow Christians, are two ways we live productively and provocatively in this present age. No doubt there are many other things we can and should be doing, but these two are a start.

J. B. Phillips paraphrases Paul's closing words in today's Epistle like this: **“Let us be Christ's men from head to foot . . .”**

Well, there you have it! That is our calling in this present time. Am you one of those head-to-foot Christians? Am I? If not, we need to get on the program, beginning on this First Sunday in Advent.

In closing, we live in hope. Our salvation is nearer than when we believed. So, stay hopeful and busy. And, yes, be excited as you wait Jesus' arrival . . . with or with a wife in tow!