

## The Purpose of Christ's Advent

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We are once again approaching the Christmas season – the time when we commemorate the advent (the coming) of Jesus Christ. Of all the titles attributed to Jesus, the one that should warm our hearts most of all is the title *Emmanuel*, which means God *with us*. When Jesus was born, *God* became man. The One who flung the stars into space, came to earth and dwelled among men. The tiny arms of that Babe in the manger were the arms of the One who laid the foundation of the universe. The coming of Jesus Christ into this world was the time when God came to earth. God took on a human body and dwelled among us. Jesus came for several reasons:

### 1. TO REVEAL WHAT GOD THE FATHER IS LIKE

**John 1:18** says, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (**John 14:9**). **Hebrews 1:3** tells us that Christ is the express image of the person of God.

God is a great Spirit. He is invisible. He cannot be seen with the physical eye. All of us at some time or other have asked the question, “What is God like?” Jesus came so that men might be able to *see* God and to *know* what he is like. The Apostle John says, “**The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us**” (**John 1:14**). Paul says, “**For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone in . . . the face of Jesus Christ**” (**2 Corinthians 4:6**). Ever since the birth of Jesus nearly two thousand years ago, we have been able to see the glory of God.

A little boy (the child of missionary parents) was attending school in the United States some years ago. He hadn't seen his parents since the preceding summer, and wouldn't see them again until the next summer. A few (lays before Christmas, the principal of

the school said to him, “Jimmy, what would you like to have most of all at Christmas?” There was a picture (on the principal’s desk) of the boy’s missionary father. The boy looked at the framed picture for a little while, and then after a few moments. he said to the principal, “I want my father to step out of that frame.” And you know – this little boy voiced the cry of all humanity. The Greek philosopher Plato said many years ago that he hoped some day to see God walk down the streets of Athens. In Israel, generation after generation looked for the Messiah. Soon after Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden , they looked for the promised Redeemer. *And then one night nearly two thousand years ago, God stepped out of the frame of the universe, and appeared on earth in the Person of Jesus Christ.* Before this, the eternal God had never been seen by mortal eyes. Even the Old Testament patriarchs did not see God in his real essence, but only in angelic form (or in what is more properly called a *theophany*). Jesus came to this earth so that we might learn to know better what God is like.

## 2. TO ATONE FOR AND TO PUT AWAY SIN

**1 John 3:5** says, “Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins.” Jesus speaking of his death, said, “For this cause came I into the world.” Paul says in **1 Timothy 1:15**, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Jesus Christ came to Bethlehem primarily to die. He came to earth as the Baby of Bethlehem in order that he might later become the Christ of Calvary.

All men have sinned. Everyone of us has fallen short of the standard which God demands. *And our sin places a separation between us and God.* And the gulf is so wide (the separation is so great) that none of us by his own efforts is able to close it.

Many seem to think that the gulf between man and God can be closed by *good works*. If you say so many prayers, and give so many alms, or make a pilgrimage to some holy place -these things somehow are supposed to erase a sinner’s guilt. But this will never do. Take the person who drives his car faster than the speed limit. What can he do to atone for the wrong he has done? If he thinks good works will do it (if he thinks good deeds are going to atone for the wrong he has done), then he can diligently observe all the traffic laws for the rest of the day. But any policeman will assure you that this is not enough. There’s a penalty for disobedience, and no amount of carefulness *afterward*, will atone for *past* disobedience. If you fall short of God’s standard on Monday, you can never erase that guilt by walking straight on Tuesday! No person can erase his own guilt, and neither can any other human being erase it for him. Every person (no matter how upright and how morally clean he lives), still has come short of God’s demands, and thus needs to be saved. He cannot save himself.

Suppose a plane is flying toward a base in the continent of Antarctica, and suddenly it crashes into the frigid waters north of the continent. Three men are thrown into the ocean, and the plane sinks at once. Nobody is near the spot, and the closest land-area is the country of New Zealand, a thousand miles away. One of the men can swim for ten minutes; the second man can swim for two hours; the third man is the world's champion long-distance swimmer.

Which of those three men are going to reach safety? And the answer is obvious – none of them! The only difference between them is that the one man will drown in ten minutes, another in two hours, and the champion, a few hours later. *And this is a parable of human family.* The criminal is like the swimmer who is able to keep afloat for ten minutes. The average man is represented by the swimmer who can stay on the surface for two hours. And even the unusual man (honest, upright, and a good citizen), like the champion swimmer is still unable to reach land.

Every person needs a Saviour (no matter how good he is). And the message of Christmas is this: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour” (Luke 2:11). The brightest message that has ever been delivered to mankind, is the glad news that in some mysterious way (which we will never be able to quite fully comprehend), Jesus Christ puts himself underneath our sin, and lifts it off from our soul, and takes it away. **1 John 3:5** says “Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins.” The phrase *take away* simply means to *remove the guilt and punishment of sin, by paying the price*. The angel said to Joseph, “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

### 3. TO DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL

**1 John 3:8** says, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” This message is a sentence filled with good news. The devil is a murderer and a liar. The Bible says he is lawless and deceitful and subtle. He alienates from God; he blinds to the truth; he promotes selfishness and jealousy and cruelty. But the Bible says that Jesus Christ came that He might destroy the works of the devil.

The word translated *destroy* is the Greek word **luo**. It doesn't mean to *demolish* or to *break up* but it means *to loosen one who is bound, or to set free*. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the tomb, He said, “Loose him and let him go.” The word *loose* is the same Greek word as the one translated *destroy* in **1 John 3:8**. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might loosen and set men free from the works of the devil.

Eddie Taylor was once a drunkard that slept-off his drunken stupors under the boardwalk at Atlantic City. He was about as far gone as a man can get. He staggered from tavern to tavern at the south-end of the city –and then after he had soaked himself with liquor, he flopped beneath the boardwalk, and slept off his stupor. He wrapped himself in old newspapers to keep warm. The devil brings men into a sorry state.

But one day Eddie Taylor responded to the Gospel invitation, and became a new man in Christ Jesus. Today beer and liquor no longer attract him. Jesus Christ has delivered him (loosened him from the power of drink). He hasn't touched alcoholic beverages for many years. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might loosen men from the works of the devil **(1 John 3:8)**.

One of the reasons Jesus came to Bethlehem was to destroy the works of the devil. And nothing that the devil has ever done, is too hard for Jesus to undo. If you find yourself living under the power of the devil's grip, remember that Jesus Christ who was born on Christmas Day, came to set you free. If you will give your life in surrender to Him, He will loosen the grip Satan has over you, and set you free from the bondage of sin. He will give you power to live a new kind of life. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy (set free from) the works of the devil.

#### **4. TO PREPARE FOR THE SECOND ADVENT**

Hebrews 9:28 says, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." At this season of the year, our thoughts turn with gladness to the first coming of Jesus. We're reminded of the songs that the shepherds heard, and of the hope that filled their hearts, and of the star that shone over the place where the Child lay. And yet we are all conscious of the fact that this present age cannot continue on like it's going. Sin abounds on every hand. Crime is on the increase. Lawlessness is sometimes encouraged. Peace and righteousness have not been established. Mankind threatens to wipe civilization off the face of the earth. Deep down within, we realize that something *more* is needed.

The main theme that recurs over and over again in the Bible, is the teaching that Jesus Christ is coming to this earth twice! Most people live as if life as we know it today is going to continue on like this forever. They say the grass is still green, cows give milk, hens lay eggs, and dogs bark at the moon. This is the way it always was. But remember, the Bible says that this same Jesus who came to Bethlehem *is going to come a second time*. Life as we know it today will come to an end.

The Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ is coming to this earth *on two different occasions* for two different purposes. He has already come on one occasion and accomplished the first purpose – that of paying the price for sin. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the Bible revealed that He would be born of the tribe of Judah; that His mother would be a virgin; that there would be a massacre of infants in Bethlehem. The prophet Micah named the very town where He was to be born. Hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth, all these things were foretold about Him. And just so, the Scriptures prophesy that this same Jesus will come to earth a second time.

Jesus is not coming this second time to put away sin. He's coming to complete our salvation. He came the first time as the Author of salvation; He's coming the second time as the Finisher of our faith. He came the first time to atone for our sins; He's coming the second time to execute judgment an earth. When He came the first time, there was no room for Him in the inn; when He comes the second time the whole world (and all the universe) is going to make room for Him -for the Bible says that every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus came the first time to deal with sin (and to pay the price for it); He's coming the second time to set up His kingdom on earth (and to bring peace and order to this tortured old planet). Every sign indicates that this world is ripe for the second advent. Our day is a time that might be described as "The night before the second Christmas." And on that second Christmas Day (when Jesus comes again), we are going to be like Him. Our redemption will be complete. Wars will cease and peace will reign on the earth.

As our minds go back across the centuries during this Christmas season, to the time and place and the setting where Jesus was born – let us try to remember the purposes for which he came. He came to reveal God the Father, to put away sin, to set men free from the works of the devil, and to prepare for a second advent. If during this Christmas season, we concentrate on these reasons for His coming – surely we'll love Him more and we'll be able to serve Him better.

Many a heart and many a home this Christmas will have no more room for Jesus than the Judean innkeeper had nearly two thousand years ago. But each of us has the power of choice, and the greatest thing you can do this Christmas (if you've never done it), is to accept God's unspeakable Gift into your life. He stands at the door of every heart, and seeks to enter – but you must open the door. It is not enough that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He must be born in our hearts.