

# CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series: Advent  
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Pastor/Teacher

Text: Hebrews 3:1

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## HE WHO WAS SENT

**W**hat does Advent mean? It refers to the advent (from the Latin *adventus*, to approach, to come) of Christ into the world. It is a term that historically was used to mark the liturgical season of preparation for Christmas. It thus marks the start of the Christian liturgical calendar.<sup>1</sup> *Advent* proclaims that there has been a divine breaking into human history and this should bring us great comfort (Isaiah 40; 1, 2) because the Lamb of God has come to accomplish redemption. He is God's dear Son, His envoy, messenger sent on a mission by the Father. Over and over again in John's gospel we read of the Father sending the Son (3:17, 34; 7:16; 8:26; 12:49; 14:24; 16:5; 17:3, 8, 18; 20:21).<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 3:1 calls Jesus the "Apostle...of our confession." This is the only place in the New Testament that refers to Jesus as an Apostle. What is an Apostle? How is Jesus an Apostle?

### I. GOD SENDS THE SON INTO THE WORLD

The text tells us that Jesus is really an Apostle. The APOSTOLOS refers to one who is commissioned and sent for a specific task. The Son did not come of Himself, but was sent by the Father (John 8:42; 7:28). In Heb. 10:5-10 Christ announces at His birth the reason for His coming. Hughes explains, "If the Psalmist could say, *Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God*, he could do so only falteringly, because of his sinful inadequacy before his Creator. But on the lips of Christ these words are uniquely and preeminently appropriate, first of all because in terms of promise and prophecy he supremely is the Coming One, the messianic deliverer whose advent has been longingly awaited; and, secondly, because the predominant purpose of his coming was to do the Father's will. Hence his declaration: "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (Jn. 6:38; cf 4:34). This divine will was the salvation of our sinful humanity. "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance," Paul assures Timothy, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15); and our author is saying the same thing here when he affirms that *by that will we have been sanctified*, for in the terminology of this epistle sanctification, involving the purging away of sin and access into the holy presence of God himself, is synonymous with the whole experience of salvation (see commentary above on 2:11). For the performance of the Father's will, moreover, the Son required *a body*, since the promised salvation demanded the offering up of himself in the place of sinners. As the Good Shepherd who came to lay down his life for the sheep he announces: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again...; and this charge I have received from my Father" (Jn. 10:11, 15, 17f). Accordingly, he condescends to our estate in the self-humbling act of incarnation, so that the Psalmist's words, *a body hast though prepared for me*, receive in him a fulfillment which is ultimate and universal in its evangelical significance. The body prepared for the Son was the body he assumed in the incarnation in which he obeyed the Father's will, even to the death of the cross (Heb. 2:14; 5:8; 12:2; Phil. 2:8).<sup>3</sup>

#### A. The Son was set apart for this task by His Father

He declares that the Father had sanctified Him for this purpose (John 10:36). Jesus *knew* that He had been sent by the Father (John 7:29 and that the Father was always with Him (John 8:29). The very works which Jesus performed bore continual witness to the fact that the Father has sent Him (John 5:36).

#### B. The Son was sent to accomplish the Father's will

He was sent to be the Savior of the world (John 3:17; I John 4:14). He was sent to gather the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15:24) and to bring in the lost sheep from among the nations (Acts 28:28).

#### C. The Son was sent to deal with sin

He was sent in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering (Romans 8:3) and to turn His people from their wickedness (Acts 3:26). The Son was sent to bring all of the elect to salvation (John 6:44). All that

the Father has given Him will come to the One the Father has sent (John 6:37, 65). “The Son was sent not only to proclaim the truth but also to manifest it (Hebrews 1:2, 3).”<sup>4</sup> He was sent to form or establish a *house* or household, a redeemed family (Hebrews 3:6).

## II. GOD SENDS THE SON (BY THE SPIRIT) INTO OUR HEARTS

What is our response to this glorious good news? We should *receive* Him; those who do, receive the Father (Matthew 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; John 13:20) and cry, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). If we would know the Father aright, we must first know the Son (John 12:45; 14:9).

### A. The Son was sent that we might have life

The Son has come forth from the Father in order that we might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

### B. The Son was sent that we might see

He was sent that people should not remain in darkness (John 12:44-46). Those who live in darkness hate light (John 1:5). They do not know the One that sent the Son (John 15:21). The Son was sent in order that people might believe (John 6:29). It is only true faith that receives, knows and beholds the Son (John 12:44, 45). The Son was sent to bring the elect to a unity of faith in order that the world might believe that the Father sent the Son (John 17:21, 23, 25).

### C. The Son was sent and He sends His own into the world

We read in John 17:18 these words of Jesus: “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.” Note this emphasis on sanctification as it relates to Jesus and His disciples. This does *not* mean that Jesus is increasing in personal holiness (an aspect of sanctification that is properly spoken only of believers). Rather, in this context it refers to being set apart unto a specific mission. “In John’s Gospels, such ‘sanctification’ is always for mission.”<sup>5</sup> The Lord Jesus dedicated Himself to accomplishing the Father’s will. To Him the Father entrusted the task of bringing in God’s Kingdom (His saving reign) and He serves in a unique sense as God’s priest (i.e., His mediator, cf. Acts 4:12; I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 12:24) and prophet (Hebrews 1:1-2), but, as Carson notes, “the purpose of this dedication is that his followers may dedicate themselves to the same saving reign, the same mission to the world.”<sup>6</sup>

**CONCLUSION:** “Herein is love,” writes the beloved Apostle John, “not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4:10). The Son came to accomplish the Father’s will (Psalm 40:7, 8 and Hebrews 10:5-10). Now consider Him that was commissioned by the eternal Father and was sent into this fallen world to save lost sinners—sinners like you and me, standing desperately in need of redemption. Let this theme captivate your heart, especially at this time of year, and cause you to rejoice with Paul in worship. “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” (II Corinthians 9:14). May God grant that we too take to heart our commission. Let us individually and as a church dedicate ourselves afresh to our calling to be Christ’s ambassadors.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Christian calendar, as it is often called, dates in its present form to the fourth century. Cf. *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. S.B. Ferguson and D.F. Wright (IVP, 1988), p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Altogether there are 46 references in the Gospel of John and First John that speak of God sending His Son. Cf. H. K. Moulton, *The Challenge of the Concordance: Some New Testament Words Studied In Depth* (Bagster, 1977), p. 1. This is a very helpful study tool and one that has proved very useful in this particular study. However, it must be used judiciously, e.g., his understanding of propitiation is seriously flawed.

<sup>3</sup> Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary On The Epistle To The Hebrews* (Eerdmann, 1997) p. 395

<sup>4</sup> R. Brown, *Christ Above All: The Message of Hebrews* (IVP, 1982), p. 76

<sup>5</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1991), p. 566.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*