

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Special Messages		Pastor/Teacher
Text:	Hebrews 2:5-9; Revelation 5:5, 6		Gary L. W. Johnson
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OUR GLORIOUS LORD

What 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.¹ *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). John Murray made this important observation. "The word *advent* is an appropriate term to identify what we often speak of as *the second coming*. Though the New Testament does not use this latter designation in so many words, yet the idea is present in Hebrews 9:28 when it says that Christ *will be manifested a second time without sin for them that look for him unto salvation*. And since Christ came into the world and then ascended into heaven, his coming again to the world can properly be distinguished as his second coming, though in a different manner and for different purposes. It is significant, however, that, in respect of the term in Greek that corresponds to our word *advent*, the New Testament never speaks of the second advent. It speaks of *the advent*. This is true also of other terms that are synonymous with the advent as far as event is concerned. This is all the more remarkable when we find Peter using this same term *advent* with reference to Christ's first coming: *we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty* (2 Peter 1:16). We are compelled to ask why New Testament writers, when they refer to the second advent, do not need to specify it as the second but simply as *the advent* of Christ. One thing we can say is that New Testament believers were so intently occupied with the second coming of Christ, so absorbed were they with the hope it entailed and the consequences involved, that they did not need to characterize it as we do, but spoke and wrote of it as *the coming* of the Lord. The identity implied in his titles *the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* could not be conceived of apart from his first coming and all that this involved. So, when they spoke of *the coming*, it was the advent in glory that was in view. It is a pertinent and searching question: do we share the outlook that constrained this manner of speech? If not, we have diverged from apostolic example."² The book of Revelation is particularly suited to this purpose. "Herein no small part of the life of the Christian religion doth consist. The humbling of our souls before the Lord Christ, from an apprehension of his divine excellencies – the ascription of glory, honour, praise, with thanksgiving unto him, on the great motive of the work of redemption with the blessed effects thereof – are things wherein the life of faith is continually exercised; nor can we have any evidence of an interest in the blessedness which consists in the external assignation of all glory and praise unto him in heaven, if we are not exercised unto this worship of him here on earth."³

- I. ***THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST REVEALED IN HIS NAMES.*** "Names in Scripture, especially those given by Divine authority, describe, as a rule, the character of the thing or beings who bear them, and particularly is this the case with the names of God and Messiah."⁴

- A. ***The Lion.*** Christ is from the tribe of Judah, and this is how Jacob blessed his son (Genesis 49:9). The Lion is a symbol of royal majesty and power.
 - B. ***The Lamb.*** The Lamb is depicted as slain. What is the significance about this transition from Lion to Lamb? “You see, the assurance has been given that the Lion has overcome. But the question that is now answered by the appearance of the Lamb is: how and in what capacity has He overcome? Has He gone forth like a roaring Lion, to conquer the enemy by His royal power? No, the answer to this question is: the Lion of Judah’s tribe has overcome in the capacity of a Lamb. In fact, He has done so in the capacity of a Lamb for the slaughter.”⁵
- II. ***THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST IN HIS PERSON.*** The names revealed the unison of the diverse nature of the Lord Jesus.
- A. ***His infinite Person and His lowly condescension.*** The eternal Son of God, Creator of all, stoops to become a man.
 - B. ***Infinite justice and infinite grace.*** Christ is the righteous judge and also the one who takes judgment upon Himself. He is infinite in grace and mercy. He is judge and Savior.
 - C. ***Absolute sovereignty and entire reliance upon God.*** Christ has all power and authority and yet He is the most wonderful example of trust and submission to His Father.
- III. ***THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST IN HIS WORK.***
- A. ***In the Incarnation.*** This reveals His condescension (Philippians 2:5-11). He humbled Himself and became a man. Even in this, however, is His true dignity manifested. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).
 - B. ***In His Sufferings.*** “Christ’s humiliation was never so great as it was from the Garden to the Cross.”⁶ He manifested love for *both* God and man. His death manifested divine justice and love. Likewise, His own holiness is obvious and yet He suffers in the place of the guilty.
 - C. ***In His exaltation.*** Notice how He is described as the exalted Lion *and* Lamb. He is royal in His humility. He is *still* Lion *and* Lamb.

CONCLUSION: We looked last week at the Greek word *theōrosin*, to behold, to stare. There is another Greek word for *look* that is equally compelling. It is the word *atenizo*, a word that is not used of Jesus. Ten of its fourteen occurrences in the NT come in the book of Acts. But it is a word worth examining because it describes one of the ways of looking which the Christian has learnt through his Master. It is the fixed gaze of concentration, of single purpose, sometimes in giving, sometimes for receiving. It is the gaze of Stephen (Acts 7:55) looking into heaven with eyes for nothing but his Lord as he passes from death into life. It is the gaze of Cornelius (Acts 10:4), as he looks in astonishment, and yet surely with some premonition of what is to come, at the angel visitor appearing to put him in touch with the realities after which he has been groping. It is the gaze of Peter (Acts 3:4) and of Paul (14:9) on those whom they were about to heal, concentrating the whole power of the gospel on them, mediated through their attentive love. It is the gaze of Paul on the Sanhedrin (23:1), as he bends his whole mind to set forth the essentials of the gospel to those hardened religionists. But it began with the concentrated attention which Jesus Himself always called forth from those who listened to Him or watched Him. The word is used only twice to describe the way in which people looked at Him, but it is significant that the first occasion is at the beginning of His ministry, and the second describes the last physical sight of Him that men have ever had. Within these two the whole story is comprehended. The first is in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk. 4:20): the eyes of all are *fastened* on Him, determined

to let nothing distract them from missing a word, even though so far He has done nothing but read the lesson. Rarely, as readers or speakers, do we compel such attention or as hearers, give it. The second is at the Ascension (Acts 1:10), when the disciples are looking *intently* (NEB) into heaven as He is going, determined to keep Him in sight till the last, as we look after a train bearing away a loved one until long after the handkerchief waving from the window has been indistinguishable. The two men in white tell them that they need not concentrate so much upon the physical; this, after all, is not a last look. But there can be nothing but praise for the intenseness of their purpose.⁷

ENDNOTES

¹The 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.

²*Collected Writings of John Murray I* (Banner of Truth, 1976), p. 88.

³*The Works of John Owen I* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1976), p. 110.

⁴David Baron, *Rays of Messiah's Glory* (rpt. Alpha Publications, 1979), p. 153.

⁵Herman Hoeksema, *Behold He Cometh!* (Reformed Free Press, 1969), p. 687.

⁶*The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (rpt. Banner of Truth, 1972), p. 683.

⁷H. K. Moulton, *The Challenge of The Concordance: Some New Testament Words Studied In Depth* (Bagster & Sons LTD, 1977), p. 10.