

## **ADVENT: IN FAITH WE WAIT EXPECTANTLY FOR THE LORD**

**First Sunday in Advent  
December 3, 2006**

**Jeremiah 33:14-16  
Psalm 25:1-10  
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13  
Luke 21:25-36**

### **Beyond the End of Time**

The first Sunday in the season of Advent presents us with a paradox – the beginning of a new church year and a gospel lesson that reminds us of the end of time. The return of the Son of Man, “coming in a cloud with great power and glory,” (Luke 21:27, *CEV*) will be marked by cosmic disturbances (21:25). The eschatological imagery calls to mind a number of Old Testament passages (see Isaiah 13:10, Ezekiel 32:7; Daniel 7:13, 14; Joel 2:10, 30, 31).

Today’s gospel reading offers us words of judgment and redemption that come from Jesus’ apocalyptic discourse with his disciples, following Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (21:5-8). The disciples seek to know “when these things are about to take place” (21:7, *CEV*), and they ask for a “sign” (*semeion*). Subsequently, Jesus describes the “signs” (*semeia*) that will take place in the heavens (21:25). In contrast to those who will be frightened at these events, Jesus offers words of deliverance for the faithful (21:28), with the assurance that redemption is at hand.

The discourse concludes with a warning to “watch out” and an exhortation to “keep praying” (21:36, *CEV*). We are to guard ourselves against being distracted by the worries of life. Vigilance and prayer are our watchwords while living each day in loving service to one another under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul prays that, “when our Lord comes,” may our hearts be made “pure and innocent in the sight of God” (1 Thessalonians 3:13, *CEV*).

Beyond the end of time stands Jesus, our Lord and Savior. As we live “in between advents,” we wait in faith and with hopeful expectation for the time when Christ will come again in power and glory at the close of the age. We need not cower in fear; rather we can “stand up straight and be brave” (Luke 21:28, *CEV*) and be ready to receive God’s promised redemption.

Amen! Come Lord Jesus!

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

+ + +

**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Senegal –**

With thanks to God for resumption of work on the Fouta Toro Bible and for the completion of the Sereer Bible, and with prayers for continued growth in the distribution of Portions and Selections for TAZI audiences and for the ongoing literacy work;

**Lesotho** – With thanks to God for Bible work with visually impaired people, and with prayers for resources to produce Braille Scriptures in local languages, that the Youth Bible will touch young people's hearts, and for efforts to restore the use of Bibles in schools;

**Swaziland** – With prayers for programs aimed at those affected by HIV/AIDS, including young people and caregivers, and with prayers for wisdom in developing effective Scripture engagement programs;

**Sahel Project** – With thanks to God for Bible work in the countries that make up the Sahel Project, and with prayers for the audio products designed for TAZI audiences, for the cross-border Mandinka literacy project in The Gambia and Senegal, with prayers for the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit and subsequent Muslim-Christian dialogue taking place in Senegal in December, and with prayers for peace in Guinea-Bissau, for the young people in Cape Verde, and for God's blessing on Mauritania.

**Activity Corner:** Advent Scripture Calendar (By participating in this activity throughout the weeks in Advent, your household will be able to mark the time up until Christmas.)

Supplies needed: Bible; white drawing paper and marker or photocopy of December wall calendar; pen/pencil; star stickers (optional).

While waiting for Christmas, make your own Advent Calendar. Photocopy the month of December from a wall calendar or create your own on a sheet of white drawing paper.

Copy the following Bible verse citations from the first and second chapters of Luke's Gospel in each of the 25 boxes for the first 25 days in December: 1:5-7; 1:8-10; 1:11-13; 1:14-17; 1:18-20; 1:21-22; 1:23-25; 1:26-28; 1:29-33; 1:34-38; 1:39-45; 1:46-50; 1:51-53; 1:54-56; 1:57-58; 1:59-60; 1:61-62; 1:63-64; 1:65-66; 1:67-68; 1:69-71; 1:72-75; 1:76-80; 2:1-7; 2:8-20. Read the assigned Scripture each day and affix (or draw) a star (from a sheet of star stickers) in each day's box. Conclude each day's reading with prayer.