

# Study 1 - Come, thou long-expected Jesus



Jeremiah, Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, 1511

## Starting Point...

1. Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.

## Key verse...

'Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Saviour,  
and my hope is in you all day long.'  
(Psalm 25:5)

## Come, thou long expected Jesus

(Read Jeremiah 33:14-16)

The Book of Jeremiah is not the most cheerful in the Bible, and not written in chronological or topical order, so difficult to follow if read from beginning to end. There is plenty of bad news for Judah but also, within Jeremiah's prophecies, some good news as well. The Babylonians had overrun several Judean cities, and Jerusalem was in the closing period of an eighteen-month siege, its people helpless and in despair. But all is not lost because chapters 30-33, known as 'The Book of Consolation', foretell a glorious future and

a time when even Gentiles will be drawn to the truth, with a new and perfect King 'from the line of David' sitting upon the throne. And all this written while Jeremiah was in prison and with the city's population suffering both famine and disease.

So, in these verses, Jeremiah brings us a Messianic prophesy, God's promise of the restoration between monarchy and priesthood after the disruption of exile. Not immediately, but 'in those days and 'at that time', which is interpreted to mean 'in Christ'.

## Discussion...

Q) This reading is full of hope for the future, but the context is battle, blood and death. How important is context when we hear the set readings for Sunday read out from the lectern?

Q) What does this reading say to you?

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## Born to set thy people free...

(Read Psalm 25:1-10)

Written as an acrostic poem, each verse beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet (in order) can make for difficulty in developing a flow of thought, but we can pick up themes of forgiveness, freedom, guidance, and protection. The source of the psalmist's current anxiety is not clear, and it has become a psalm that many people can relate to when daily life becomes difficult and a source of anxiety.

The psalmist is encouraging his readers to put their trust in God, who willingly forgives

and forgets the sins of the writer's own youth and the rebellious young man he was and becomes his guide and daily source of wisdom.

The message centres upon the relationship between God and his people, here represented by one individual. It is an apt message for Advent, as we consider the wonder of a Messiah born not just for a nation but for all people.

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## Discussion...

Q) Trust in God is at the heart of the psalmist's thoughts as he writes these words, but what do those three words mean in your daily life?

Q) Do you find it useful to have in mind various Bible passages that can help in tough times and, if so, which have you found helpful?

Txrwhv

'I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.' (Charles Dickens)

'Once again, we come to the Holiday Season, a deeply religious time that each of us observes, in his own way, by going to the mall of his choice.' (Dave Barry)

'God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If he gives us the gift of Christmas, it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it.'  
(Pope Francis)

## From our fears and sins release us...

(Read 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13)

Psalms 25 underlines the importance of understanding the spiritual relationship that exists between God and ourselves as believers. Here, we find Paul praying that God and 'our Lord Jesus' might facilitate his meeting up with the Christian fellowship in Thessalonica, so that he can help build up their faith.

This passage has Paul acknowledging the unity of the Godhead, Father and Son, and in the description of overflowing love in verses 12 and 13 we glimpse how the power of God's Spirit might work in and

through the lives of the believers, moulding them into the people that God wants them to be, that is blameless, holy, and ready when Jesus returns.

Whilst in Advent we celebrate the coming of Christ as a baby, Paul reminds us of the Bible's teaching about the Second Coming, so vividly portrayed both in the Gospels (as we shall see in the next section) and the imagery of Revelation.

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## Discussion...

Q) How easy do you find it to think of both the Nativity and the Second Coming of Christ through Advent?

Q) This is a really encouraging word from Paul. Do we give enough thought to encouraging people in our own fellowship and the other churches across the towns where we live?

Q) How does verse 13 speak to you?

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## Let us find our rest in thee...

(Read Luke 21:25-36)

Most of chapter 21 concerns itself with Jesus' description of the temple and signs of the end times. Luke immediately follows it with Judas talking to the chief priests and the temple guard, with secret plans being made for Jesus to be handed over at a quiet moment in his life when no crowd was present. Whilst we are thinking of Advent, it is difficult to avoid the inevitability of Easter.

The commentaries call verses 5-38 'The Apocalyptic Discourse'. It talks of a time when enemies would surround Jerusalem, and a lengthy siege reduce the people to starvation and despair before the city fell and



*Destruction of Jerusalem, Book of Hours, Google Art Project, c1414*

slaughter began. Earlier, Jesus warns his hearers to flee to the mountains before this happens, and when the signs are there to be seen. Luke then talks of 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory' (v. 27). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all contain references to the fall of Jerusalem.

Commentators have argued whether Jesus did in fact talk of future events, or if the writers added all this detail after the actual fall of Jerusalem. All three writers place the events concerning Jerusalem within the 'present generation.'

Luke tells us that 'when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.'

Without getting too deep into the theology surrounding the Second Coming, perhaps it is enough to be certain that where Jesus is physically, and where Jesus's Word and Spirit lives on in the lives of believers (as we see post-Pentecost), then the kingdom of God is indeed near.

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## Discussion...

Q) There's a lot of imagery here. How easy do you find it to connect with Jesus's words?

Q) How would you summarise Jesus's words to someone unfamiliar with this kind of language?

Q) Jesus talks of the kingdom of God being near. How do those words connect with your faith?

Q) Look again at the first verse of Charles Wesley's hymn and consider its place in the Advent story.

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## Let's pray...

For ourselves, that through this season of Advent our faith and fellowship together might be strengthened.