



Devotions

Advent 2005



The Prophecy Candle

First Sunday of Advent

Each day light the first candle, say its name (the Prophecy Candle) and say together: "Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'" John 8:12

The Prophecy Candle reminds us of the prophets who expected and predicted the coming of the Messiah who would bring peace and love and salvation to the world.

COME THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

*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.
Israel's Strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.*

*Born Thy people to deliver, Born a child and yet a King;
Born to reign in us forever, Now Thy gracious Kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit, Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne.*

These words were written by Charles Wesley in 1744. As you learn them together, notice the things Christ came to do both for Israel and for us. He came to set us free, to give us rest and joy, to deliver, to reign, to rule, to raise us to Himself. Haggai 2:7 says, "The desire of all nations shall come." Let us make Christ's reign a desire in our lives. (Another carol for this week: O COME, O COME EMMANUEL)

Sunday —Isaiah 9:2,6&7

Approximately 750 years before the birth of Christ, God gave the Prophet Isaiah these promises about the coming Messiah. There are several important things to think about in these verses. We are walking in darkness and death until we experience the light of God's presence (9:2). Although Jesus was born as a baby, He is given several important names which show His divinity (that He is God), and His greatness. What are these names? What does each name mean? In



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what ways can Jesus make a difference in the way we live today? As we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth, let us remember that He will come again as King over all. What a privilege to crown Him King in our lives right now!

Monday—Isaiah 11:1-6-7,10

In this passage, Christ is pictured as a rod and a branch of Jesse, who was David's father. In the New Testament, Matthew begins his gospel by giving Christ's genealogy, or family line. Luke gives it in chapter 3. Why is this so important? We live in a mobile age, where family ties are not so important; but we must understand the vast importance this had for the Jews. Jesus identified Himself with the human race and was born into a specific family. He is the fulfillment of all God's promises in the Old Testament. God kept all His promises to the Jews, and He keeps His word to us today.

Note again and discuss the characteristics of Christ listed in these verses: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, reverence, righteousness, etc. And yet, He was willing to be one of us. What a great Savior—"born a child and yet a King!".

Tuesday—Isaiah 61:1-3

As we read in the New Testament, we see how Christ fulfilled the prophecy of these verses. God's Spirit was on Him; He preached Good News; He healed the broken-hearted, etc. But we must never say, "Well, that was O.K. for the people then." Christ is still working in our world through the Holy Spirit to do these things in our lives. This is a good time to discuss and think about the changes Christ wants to make in our lives. We have to confess our sin and let Him take it away before we can be free from it (1 John 1:9). As we understand who Christ is, we must receive Him; let Him heal our hearts and lives; be freed from the sins that bind us; receive His discipline and His love; be comforted; receive His beauty for our ugliness, His joy for our mourning, and His praise for our sadness, so that we can be like trees of righteousness, planted by the Lord for His glory. "By Thine all sufficient merit raise us to Thy glorious throne." What do you need from God today? Ask Him.



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Wednesday—Isaiah 40:1-8

The Scripture for today and tomorrow speaks of the comfort and Good News that the Lord brings. Many know this passage from Handel's Messiah. This musical masterpiece was written in 1741, in just twenty-four days. It has made the passage in Isaiah familiar to many, who may not even know it is from the Bible. The Messiah opens with Isaiah 40; so if you have the music, take time to listen to this section together. Much of the prophecy of this chapter is still to be fulfilled when Christ comes again. Verses 3-4 refer to preparation for a King. In those days before a King was crowned or came for a state visit, the entire country prepared for Him. Everything was cleaned, painted and washed. Even crooked roads were made straight. How fitting that we should prepare for the coming of the King of Kings into our lives. The Advent season is preparation. What do you need to make straight in your life so that His glory can be revealed in you? Think about specific changes He wants you to make. Too often we do all the shopping but still fail to prepare our hearts for the King.

Thursday—Isaiah 40:9-11

The coming of Christ is such Good News. He is our God come in human form. When He comes again, He will come to rule. It is so important that we be ready by submitting to Him as Lord now.

Many times Christ is pictured as our Shepherd. Look at the beautiful picture that is presented in verse 11. Christ is the One who feeds both our bodies and our spirits. He calls us to Himself and gently leads us. A sheep that doesn't follow its shepherd gets in a lot of trouble. It gives us great peace to know that our Lord cares for us and will provide for us, protect us and lead us. We can not make it on our own, and we do not have to.

Read the rest of Isaiah 40 for added appreciation of the greatness of our God. Again, listen to Handel's Messiah. Even those who are not musicians can notice and appreciate how the music enhances the Scripture.



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Friday – Isaiah 55:1-13

This beautiful chapter in Isaiah points out the satisfaction and joy that comes as we seek the Lord. The first part of verse 2 is a good warning about how we should spend as we work on our Christmas lists. Truly, we must reviewuete [review and evaluate] how we spend our time, money and labor. What a tragedy if we spend, spend, spend and find that it was all for nothing; that we were in such a frenzy that we missed the real point and the great joy and contentment of Christmas. Verse 4 says that the Lord came as a leader and commander for us. Let's submit to His Word and work in our lives. Verses 12 and 13 refer to the future; but in a way, this can be true in our lives now as we put Christ first. We can go out with joy and be led forth with peace. The mountains in our lives can break forth into singing, and we can find great joy. Especially during the Christmas season we should know joy and praise. Christmas comes and goes at such a frantic pace. How do you suppose the Lord feels about our sometimes begrudging attitudes? Have you ever thought: "Well, we'd better get them a gift because they gave us one last year."? Let us use Isaiah 55 as our motto today and in the days to come. Listen for His direction and leading and see what a difference this will make in your attitudes and actions.

Saturday—Ephesians 2:8-9

At Christmas, we think much about gifts: what we are going to give and what we will receive. Think about or discuss the best gift you ever received. How much did it cost? What made it special? Who gave it to you? Do you still have it?

Jesus Christ is God's gift to us. And He is the best gift any of us will ever receive. It cost God a great deal to send Christ to earth. The reason He did it is that He loves us so much. The only way we can have a gift is to reach out and take it. All those presents under the tree wouldn't do anyone any good if no one reached out to receive them. It is the same with God's gift of salvation. A Christian is one who has reached out to receive this gift. When we see God for who He is, we realize our great need for Him; we believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and then rose again. We confess our sin and we receive Christ into our life. Any child or adult who wants to, may do this. If you haven't done so, receiving God's gift of salvation will make this the best Christmas ever. If you have, why not thank Him again for His great love for you!

And by the way, if you want to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, the desire that is in you is also a gift from God.