



*28 November 2021*

*First Sunday in Advent*

*Luke 2: 25-36*

*'What is the  
Advent Hope?'*

*Michael Brown*

## **Introduction**

The long languid lingering green Sundays of the Trinity Season are over. Yes, we are now in Advent. Today, and each day during this purple season, we can ask ourselves this question: **What is the Advent Hope?**

## **The Advent Season**

Advent is the richest season of the christian year. Not the most important, that is obviously Easter, or if you like, Lent & Easter as one season. Not the most popular, that is probably Christmas, but Advent is certainly the richest. In one season of just four weeks, following the candles on our new Advent wreath, we will have the themes of Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace. And on each of those Sundays, the Collect will remind us of the Return of Christ:

*'..when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead..'*

- ❖ What would the resurrection of Jesus mean to us if it didn't bring us hope?
- ❖ What would the resurrection mean to us if it didn't show us the love of God?
- ❖ What would the resurrection mean to us if it didn't fill our hearts with joy?
- ❖ What would the resurrection mean to us if it didn't bring us peace?

The answer to our question? - ***Our Advent Hope is that we will be judged by Christ.***

## **Judgment**

That may seem to be a strange answer. After all, judgment is not exactly a popular subject to think about. Who looks forward to being judged in an examination or in their annual work appraisal? Indeed, and as judgment is unpopular, let's change the subject and talk about something else. Let's talk about salvation.

There is a 19th century story of a young Salvation Army girl who found herself sharing a railway compartment with a bishop. Not lacking in courage, she enquired, 'Are you saved, my Lord?' Unbeknown to her, she was speaking to a great bible scholar who promptly replied in somewhat pedantic fashion, 'Do you mean: Have I been saved; Am I being saved; Will I be saved', and then went back to his reading.

The bishop had touched on a fundamental point of christian existence. Much of what we believe and what we do as christians has a past, a present, and a future aspect.

- The Past - God sent his Son into the world apparently as a judgment on the world.
- The Present - we are being judged each day by the way we live our lives.
- The Future - we will be judged at what is often called the return of Jesus.

Recalling some words from John's gospel, we can see that talking about salvation instead of judgment wasn't just changing the subject; it was actually illuminating it:

*'..God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him' (3:17).*

For judgment and salvation are but two sides of the same coin. What would be the value of judgment if there was no promise of salvation? What would salvation be worth if there was no process of judgment?

But in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, judgement and salvation have joined hands and are held out in mercy towards his world. And this happened in the past in the Crucifixion-Resurrection; it happens every time the Eucharist is celebrated; and it will happen in the future when he returns. And that is why Judgment is our Advent Hope and why our Advent Hope is Judgment by the Saviour of the World.

### **Return of Jesus**

Bible passages about the 'Second Coming', 'End of the World' are difficult for many people to accept today. It is essential to remember *both* that all such verses are symbolic *and* that the people who wrote them knew they were using familiar symbols from scripture to express the inexpressible.

Today a scientist might describe the end of the world in equations which are another kind of symbols. And she might find beauty in these equations - but she would not find a person. Behind all christian pictures of strange events is the conviction that the God who created this world will also be actively involved in the end of his world. And this means that our Lord Jesus Christ will be present in his glorious majesty.

**But we don't need the details; the hope itself is enough.**

<i>Advent 2021</i>	
<b>W E E K</b>	<b>Verses from Paul writing to some of the early churches - for <i>our</i> church to reflect on the weekly Advent themes of Hope, Love, Joy and Peace.</b>
1	'so that,...you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints.'
2	'And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another...'
3	'How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you?'
4	'And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.'

<i>Advent Acclamations</i>	<i>Advent Prayer</i>
Christ has died!	Lord Jesus Christ, open the ears and eyes of our hearts that we may hear and understand your will for us in this holy season of Advent. <i>AMEN</i>
Christ has risen!	
In Christ shall all be made alive!	

'May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.' (Romans 15:13)