

Dear all,

Advent, this year beginning conveniently on December 1st, is the first and best argument for observing the Church Year. Surely there is no other reality or central teaching of the Bible, more forgotten or functionally dismissed, by even serious Christians, than the doctrine of the return of Christ.

Thankfully, Romans 13, the first Epistle for the First Sunday of Advent, almost like an alarm clock interrupts the peaceful repose which is our lives and begins the church year with these words; *"And do this, understanding the present time: the hour has already come for you to **wake up** from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."* (Romans 13:11).

It is no accident or should be no surprise that it is difficult to keep fresh a joyful anticipation of the return of Christ which drives us to a changed life in the light of Christ's return. Peter, in his second epistle makes it clear that the agenda of the evil one and the active and sometimes subtle mocking of the scoffer is to lull Christians into a kind of sleep about the return of Christ. Our flesh wants to sleep.

In 2 Peter 3:3-10, Peter says:

"Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation'. But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's Word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged, and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and Earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare."

Dear friends, I exhort you and encourage you to make use of the brief days of Advent not only to prepare rightly to celebrate the birth of Jesus but more importantly to prepare our lives for





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the glorious return of that same Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, lived and died on a Cross, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and soon, very soon will return, the culmination of all things and all his promises.

Let us ask ourselves questions, each day of Advent, as we go through the Scriptures: is it possible that I am asleep? In what ways am I, potentially, dozing off with regards to the return of Christ? What does "awake" look like in terms of the return of Christ? And how can I grow in being alert and prepared for his return?

The collect for Advent Sunday which is to be used every day and is based also on Romans 13 says this:

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, now and ever. Amen

My prayer for you and me is that this Advent we will awake to a the full meaning, real transformation of life and joyful anticipation of the Return of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ

If you would like to follow along please use the [Advent 2013 daily scripture readings](#).

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