

## ADVENT: A TIME OF HOPEFUL EXPECTATION

**First Sunday of Advent**  
**November 27, 2011**

**Isaiah 64:1-9**  
**Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18**  
**1 Corinthians 1:3-9**  
**Mark 13:24-37**

### **Watch Out and be Ready!**

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.*

Latin Hymn (c. 9<sup>th</sup> cent.; pub. Cologne, 1710)

Today, the first Sunday in the Advent season, marks the beginning of a new church year. It is a time for rejoicing as we await with anticipation the birth of God's most precious gift to us—his Son, Jesus. As we prepare for this event, we are reminded, too, that Jesus will indeed come again, not as a humble infant, but as a glorious King and Lord of all, at the end of the age.

“Then the Son of Man will be seen coming in the clouds with great power and glory. He will send his angels to gather his chosen ones from all over the earth” (Mark 13:26, 27, *CEV*).

Unlike at the birth of our Savior when a luminous star led the magi to the Christ-Child, and the angels sang “tidings of comfort and joy” (Luke 2:13,14), this Second Coming will be marked by chaotic events in nature that no one can explain. Our comfort, however, lies in this: If we have accepted God's plan of salvation through his Son, Jesus, *we* will be among “the chosen ones” whom the angels will gather together.

How then shall we live...and wait? In a discourse with four of his disciples—Peter, James, John, and Andrew—Jesus tells them a parable of a man who goes away and leaves his servants in charge. None knows of the time of their master's return, but he orders them to be alert and not to sleep on the job.

How are we waiting? Like the servants in the parable, we are left in charge, so there is obviously work to be done. The church, the emissary of Christ, needs to be about our Father's business—seeking out the lost and sharing the gospel of Christ. We must

adopt a sense of urgency as we do so because Jesus himself tells us to “watch out and be ready!” since we “don’t know when the time will come” (Mark 13:33, *CEV*).

What is the posture of our hearts while we wait? Are we forgiving those who have wronged us or repenting of our own wrong actions? Are we loving those who others deem unlovable? Are we praying fervently for the sick and those who need God’s loving hand of mercy? Are we making our best efforts at fulfilling the will and purpose of God in our lives? Or...are napping?

We have the greatest window of opportunity to share the gospel right now, not so much by what we say, but by how we lead our lives. Like the hymn writer asserts, we who live in a sin-ravaged world wait for the appearing of “Emmanuel” so we can indeed have “God with us,” both at the Advent of Christmas and the Advent of Christ’s Second Coming.

For this, we wait patiently—and in joyful expectation. Even so, Lord Jesus, come!

*This week’s Reflection was prepared by Dorette Saunders who served, until retirement, on the staff of American Bible Society as Senior Editor of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship. Dorette continues as a consultant to ABS.*

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**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Costa Rica** – with thanks to God for his presence throughout the economic recession; and with prayers for cultural and economic change to the country; also pray for the projects designed to help the secular world to read the Bible; **Nicaragua** – with thanks to God for his loving care; and with prayers for guidance in the search for new board members; also pray that the will of the people will be respected in this year’s presidential and parliamentary elections; and for the financing of projects that will continue to bless the country; **Panama** – with thanks to God for 100 new distribution centers and for the new premises used both as a warehouse and as a Bible training facility for up to 40 people; and with prayers for God’s help to establish three extra regional offices; for God’s blessing on all of this year’s projects, especially the completion of the Kuna translation in December; and for the media to become more friendly to the Bible cause.

**Activity Corner: Advent Mobile**

Supplies needed: Bible; wire coat hanger; 5-point star pattern (about 3” wide); construction paper (assorted colors); scissor; pencils/pens; marker; hole puncher; yarn, narrow ribbon, or string.

The first Sunday of Advent is the Sunday of Hope. Trace and cut out seven stars; on four of them write the letters **H O P E** (the other three stars will remain blank). Punch a hole at the top of each star. Each day, throughout the week, a star will be added to the wire

hanger to create a mobile\*. Use various lengths of string for each star to create a mobile effect. Read the Scripture passage indicated for each day of the week, and then add a star to the mobile. On the back of each star, write the Scripture citation. Conclude with a prayer and invite everyone to respond at the end, "AMEN! COME LORD JESUS!" (If you are using an Advent Wreath during family devotional time, light the first candle prior to the Scripture reading for the day.)

Scripture Readings for the First Week of Advent:

Sunday	Isaiah 61:1-11
Monday	Psalm 33
Tuesday	Psalm 130
Wednesday	Jeremiah 31:1-14
Thursday	Jeremiah 31:15-30
Friday	Romans 5:1-11
Saturday	1 Thessalonians 4:13—5:11

\*A new "mobile" will be created each week during the Advent season, and each week will have a different symbol. At the end of the Advent season, the mobile symbols can be removed from the wire hangers and used as Christmas tree decorations.