

# Advent 1

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December 2, 2001

## Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Protect us by your strength and save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## Isaiah 2:1-5

{1} The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. {2} In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. {3} Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. {4} He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. {5} O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

The passage is in poetic form. Note the parallelism of verses 2, 3a, b, c, 4a, b, c. Verses 2-3 are also found in Micah 4:1-3, 4.

1. *Isaiah son of Amoz*: The son of Amoz was probably born in Jerusalem around 760 b.c. He was called to be a prophet by Yahweh in the year King Uzziah died (Isaiah 6:1), about 742. He was married and refers to his wife as "the prophetess" (Isaiah 8:3), which probably indicates that she also was also inspired. He prophesied during the reigns of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah.

"Isaiah 2:2-5 is a collage of Zion themes that we encounter in all sections of the book: Jerusalem as cosmic mountain at the center of the world..., with the temple as its epicenter...; the convergence of Gentiles on Jerusalem in different capacities: as pilgrims..., as participants in or observers of the final showdown or as escorts for Judean repatriates..., bearers of tribute, or *Gastarbiter* [guest workers], and slaves...." [1]

2. *In the days to come*: Literally, "in the end of days." The phrase indicates the remote future, but it is used by other prophets (Hosea 3:5; Ezekiel 38:16 as well as in Jeremiah 48:47; 49:39) in an eschatological sense to indicate the final age of the earth and the arrival of the kingdom of God. "It speaks of God's time, different in kind from ordinary time, and it signals immediately that there is no simple linear continuity between Israel's historical existence and the entrance of God's kingdom. Rather, into the old breaks the radical new." [2]

*the highest of the mountains*: Yahweh's majesty and authority will be visible to all, even those who serve other lords. Others will seek to learn the ways Yahweh so they may walk in his paths.

*all the nations*: Hebrew *goyim*, Gentiles.

3. *"Come, let us go up..."*: See also Psalm 122:1. "...seems to be a standard formula that was announced at the beginning of every pilgrimage...." [3] Here it is used by non-Israelites.

*instruction*: Literally, "torah." This is the word that is applied to the first five books of

the Old Testament; sometimes we translate it "law." Here it seems to have a broader meaning that embraces Yahweh's intentions and blessings for the "non-chosen" people who have come to the mountain of the Lord.

4. *He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples:* Yahweh will bring peace to enemies by his action as a judge and arbitrator.

*They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks:* The image of beating the weapons of war into the tools of agriculture is a powerful metaphor for the peace created by God. It is important to notice that peace is the not result of human effort, but the result of the judging activity of God. He will arbitrate the causes for conflict, and the people will respond by destroying their weapons. See Joel 3:10 for a reversal of the imagery.

5. *house of Jacob:* This verse is an appeal to Israel ("Jacob"), to "walk in the light of the LORD." For the people of Israel it would have meant that they put their trust in God, rather than in the power of their weapons to achieve justice in their international affairs.

## **Psalm 122**

{1} I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" {2} Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. {3} Jerusalem--built as a city that is bound firmly together. {4} To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. {5} For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David. {6} Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. {7} Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers." {8} For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you." {9} For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

1. *I was glad...let us go to the house of the Lord:* See Isaiah 2:3. This is a point of contact between the two passages. The Psalm is sung by one in the court of the Temple by one who recalls the joy of making a pilgrimage to the house of the Lord. The themes of judgment (verse 5) and peace (verses 6-7) also appear in both passages.

2-3. *O Jerusalem.... Jerusalem:* The city chosen by Yahweh as the place for his Temple is the subject of praise.

4. *the tribes...of the Lord:* This is a recollection of the tribal origins of the people of Israel in the Exodus, and importance of the Temple as the central shrine for the worship of Yahweh.

5. *thrones for judgment:* One of the building of Solomon was "the Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, the Hall of Justice" (1 Kings 7:7). This recalls "the function of the primitive king as the personal dispenser of justice coram populo... thus publicly vindicating the social order and the tradition of the community." [4] See also Jeremiah 21:12.

6-7: "...the singer calls for a petitionary prayer and a prayer for the blessing of Jerusalem.... The petitions are intended for the 'house of Yahweh,' which is the real center of Jerusalem (v. 1) and is revered as the place of the presence of God." [5]

## **Romans 13:11-14**

{11} Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; {12} the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; {13} let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy.

{14} Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

*11b: salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers.* This is all we really know for sure about when the end will come. Two things: it is nearer now than it was before, and it is *salvation*. Since that is the truth, then the admonitions of verses 12-13 are not for the sake of seeking God's favor, but rather a demonstration of our willingness to live in the light of the future. The exhortation to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh" is parallel to "lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" in verse 12. In baptism we are re-born children of God and heirs of his kingdom. See Galatians 3:27. Through baptism, the Christian has already put on Christ; we are to live as Christ.

### **Matthew 24:36-44**

{36} But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. {37} For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. {38} For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, {39} and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. {40} Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. {41} Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. {42} Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. {43} But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. {44} Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

Parallels are Mark 13:32-37; Luke 17:26-30, 34-36.

*36-37: that day: the Day of the Lord, the day of judgment, the last day:* A warning against speculating about when the judgment will arrive. One must always be prepared. The time of the end was known in the days of Noah, but it did not make any difference. Those who should have amended their lives and prepared for the end, ignored the warning.

*40-41:* No criteria for who is taken or left are given. Seemingly neither are prepared, both are going about their daily work. Yet, one is ready and the other is not. "for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

*43:* The second illustration of the need to be ready is found in a familiar situation—robbery by stealth. If one knows when the thief is coming, one will be ready. In fact, one should always be ready, then one will not suffer loss.

*42, 44:* Son of Man: The two verses are in parallel. The Son of Man in verse 44 is "your Lord" in verse 42. "That day and that hour" in verse 36 is answered by these two verses.

### **Reflection**

In the Psalm the Temple is a metaphor for the restoration of the created order to its first state. Peace is not just freedom from war and want, but the quality of wholeness and unity that existed between the Creator and the created. It is the promise of Yahweh's grace. "The NT, Christian application of the OT psalm must ... deal with what is expressed in v. 8: 'For the sake of my brothers and friends I want to wish salvation for you.' The assembled community, the friends who have come together in the name of Jesus Christ, understand themselves as the Jerusalem of the new covenant

and as belonging to the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16)." [6]

To "walk in the light of the Lord" means to put our trust in God and not in our own military might. Israel was not able to do that. Perhaps we are not able either.

The point is clear. No one knows when the end will come. In fact, no one can know, since only the Father knows. In the days of Noah, though there was ample warning, still many were unprepared. It will be like that again! The end will come suddenly and without warning, and those who are unprepared will not have time to get ready.

Our preparation for the celebration of the Incarnation of our Lord is only one aspect of our Advent preparation, and quite surely not the most important. We also remind ourselves of the need to be prepared for our Lord's return in judgment, and mercy.

### **Hymns [7]**

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), Hymnal Supplement 1991 (e.g. 725s) and LBW (e.g. 32).  
E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

32 --E--Fling Wide the  
321 --D--The Day is  
762v --I--O Day of Peace  
471 --P--Grant Peace, We  
414 --P--O God of Love,

725s --II--Hark! A Thrilling  
308 --II--God the Father,  
627v --G--My Lord, What  
31, 28, 38, 726s

### **Prayers of the People [8]**

P or A: Let us remember before God those who have gathered with joy in this house of prayer and those who are absent, those who are in need and those who have plenty to share, saying, "O, Son of Man," and responding, "Awaken our hearts in compassion."

A: For all who serve the Church, that we may see the needs and failings of others and tend to them with honest concern and thoughtfulness. We pray especially for our bishop \_\_\_\_\_, our national bishop \_\_\_\_\_ and all who serve with them. O Son of Man, Awaken our hearts...

A: For all peacemakers and peacekeepers, that we may see the day when swords are beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. Bless the land where Jesus walked with peace and quietness. For the sake of our sisters and brothers who love you, O Son of Man, Awaken our hearts...

A: For those trapped in addictions or behaviors which damage their lives and block off their future, that you may use us, your servants to bring those you send into the warmth and clarity of your light. O Son of Man, Awaken our hearts...

A: For any who suffer from illness or are facing death, we think of those especially with cancer or AIDS, may your touch bring them wholeness and healing. Help us to bring the sick your touch. O Son of Man, Awaken our hearts...

A: For all here present who are waiting on the grace and mercy of the Lord, show us the way to live lives prepared to receive you at any time. O Son of Man, Awaken our hearts...

P: O God who will gather the nations to worship on your holy mountain, hear the prayers we offer to you, trusting in your justice and mercy, through Jesus Christ, your Son who saves us. Amen.

**Or [9]**

*Presider or deacon*

As we keep awake for the coming of the Lord, let us offer prayers to God who prepares a light for our path.

*Deacon or other leader*

For the coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory.

For the coming of Wisdom to teach and guide us.

For the coming of Emmanuel, the hope of all the peoples.

For the peace of the world, and for our unity in Christ.

For N our bishop and all bishops, for the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

For the church throughout the world and the faithful in every place.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority.

For justice, peace, and freedom among peoples of the earth.

For travelers, for the sick and the suffering, for the hungry and the oppressed, and for those in prison.

For the dying and the dead. For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Joining our voices with the blessed Virgin Mary and with all the saints and angels of God, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

O Rising Sun, brightness of light eternal, sun of justice, come and shine on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Glory to you for ever.

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## Notes

[1] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 2000, p. 191.

[2] Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, p. 29.

[3] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, p. 433.

[4] John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (Second, Revised Edition). Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964, p. 179.

[5] Kraus, *Ibid.*, p. 435.

[6] *Loc. cit.*

[7] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rcla9899.txt>

[8] [http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter\\_a2.txt](http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_a2.txt)

[9] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>