



HERE WITH US...TO GIVE US HOPE!

ADVENT ONE

Day 1—What's Next?

When you hear the question, 'what's next?' what comes to mind: Christmas, the next chore on your to-do list, tomorrow's newspaper headlines, or something totally different? Our theme texts remind us that beyond Jesus' birth, death, resurrection, and ascension is Jesus' return. Is this something you await with eager expectation; does it create hope in your heart; are you afraid; do you even ponder his coming again? Pray the Spirit will enable you to hear God's word for you, today, as you read Mark 13:24-37; John 14:1-6; Acts 1:6-12; and 1 Corinthians 1:3-9. What do the texts teach us about how we should live today, in light of his coming again? Spend time in prayer.

Day—Look beyond the Manger!

Read Luke 2:1-7 and John 1:14 and reflect on Getty/Townend lyrics: "In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless Babe..." (*2001 Thankyou Music*) Do you stand in awe of God who became man because of an ineffable love for us? And yet, we mustn't linger indefinitely at the manger, gazing at the sweet, holy infant, for the cross was already looming. Read Simeon's words in Luke 2:21-35 and Paul's in Philippians 2:6-11. Paul's words not only look back to the cross but also speak of Jesus' glorification and exaltation. And there is more; read Job 19:25-27 and Revelation 22:20. Pray you will joyfully celebrate Jesus' birth and his promise to return.

Day 3—Do Not Be Afraid!

Sometimes we read Scripture passages that speak of tribulation, natural disasters, persecution, and things to come with fear and trembling. But hear Jesus say, "Do not be afraid" and allow God's promises to strengthen your heart as you read Matthew 10:28-31, 38-39; Mark 13:24-37; John 14:27-29; and 1 Corinthians 1:3-9. In what do you find your peace, hope, and security? Jesus warns us that life will not be easy (*John 16:33*) but he promises us his abiding presence (*Matthew 28:20; John 15:4*). Use Deuteronomy 31:8 and Isaiah 26:3-4 to guide your prayer.

Day 4—Hope!

For many, there is much anticipation as Christmas approaches, but are we excited and do we eagerly await Jesus' return? Are our hearts filled with hope for the future, not because of circumstances, but because of Jesus? Biblically, hope is not wishful thinking; it is confident expectation. Ponder this as you read Mark 13:24-37; Romans 8:1-4,14-25,31-39; 15:13; and 1 Corinthians 2:9. Consider memorizing Romans 8:24-25 and 15:13. Pray using Edward Mote's lyrics: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness...when all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay...On Christ, the solid rock I stand..."

Day 5—We Worship the King

Begin today's devotional time by praying Charles Wesley's lyrics: "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...Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring..." Read Matthew 2:1-2,10-11; John 17:1-5,24; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; and Revelation 17:14. Do you, like the Magi, seek Jesus, so that you might worship him? Do you, like Wesley, pray that Jesus will reign in your

life; do you honor Jesus as King and Lord? How does this affect our desire to heed Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1:4-9? Be alert and pray.

Day 6—How then Shall We Live?

It is easy to thrill as we consider the baby in the manger, but are we willing to be Jesus' disciples? What is the cost of discipleship? Read Matthew 5:43-44; 6:19-21; 10:38-39; 25:31-40; 28:18-20 and John 13:12-17,34-35; 15:8-13,16-17. How does this talk of discipleship relate to Jesus' exhortations to "Be alert!" or "Keep awake!" and "Watch!" (*Mark 13:32-37*)? How does your life reflect your response to Jesus' words, "each with his work/assigned task" (*Mark 13:34*)? Jesus is coming again; pray you will work and watch as you wait expectantly.

Day 7—"Come, Lord Jesus!"

What does Scripture say about God's promises in Isaiah 40:8; 55:10-11; Mark 13:31; John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 1:20; and Revelation 19:6-9; 22:6? Do you believe God's Word? When we read Jesus' words in Matthew 24:36,42-44; 25:1-13; Mark 13:24-37 and Revelation 22:7,20, do we pray, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."? Do we, do you, long for Jesus' return? Spend time in prayer, then sing or pray the 12th century Latin hymn, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel": "O come, Thou, Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by Thine advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight...Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel..."