



FORETOLD

**GOD HAS SPOKEN BY
HIS PROPHETS**



**ADVENT
2024**

‘In those days
and at that time
I will make a righteous
branch sprout
from David’s line;
he will do what is just
and right in the land.’

- Jeremiah 33:15 -

FORETOLD: GOD HAS SPOKEN BY HIS PROPHETS

The word 'advent' describes the arrival of something or someone new. Think of 'the advent of the Internet' for example. The advent of Jesus is no different. He came and made an indelible mark on our world. Yet, the season of Advent is more than just counting down the days to Christmas with your favourite beers/chocolates. Advent is practised as a time of preparation for the Good news of Christmas (the first Advent) and for Jesus' return (the second Advent). This year we're looking at how the biblical prophets were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah.

Jeremiah writes in the context of the fall of Jerusalem. God is justly angry with his people for their sins, and so appoints Babylon to carry them off into exile. Yet, as the siege of Jerusalem is raging around him, Jeremiah reaffirms God's everlasting promise: God will send a good and just king from the line of David to restore God's kingdom.

Malachi writes after the exile to a nation that has not learned its lesson. At the beginning of Chapter 3, God is answering the cries of his people asking 'where is the God of justice?'. He is coming, but first he will send a messenger. The Gospel writers agree that this is John the Baptist, who prepares the way for Jesus.

Zephaniah writes at a time before the exile, when Judah is on a collusion course with Babylon. He warns that God's judgement is coming to all the nations including Judah. Yet, that judgement will act like a refiner's fire, and God's people will pass through purified and will have great cause to rejoice when God is with them.

Micah writes to encourage Israel that after the exile God will restore Israel. Even better, there will be a new messianic king, born in Bethlehem and from the line of David. This new king will secure peace and security for all his people.

God bless,

*Rev'd Matt Skelton
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Warming up:

What do you look forward to in life and why?

Read: Jeremiah 33:14-16

1. How would you summarise Jeremiah's message here?
2. Who was Jeremiah? What was his mission? (See: Jeremiah 1:1-10)
3. What does v.14 tell us about God's character?
4. Why do you think God gives Jeremiah this message?
5. Who might v.15 be referring to? What does this verse tell us about they way they will live?
6. Why is it important that this sprout comes from David's line?
7. What does v.16 tell us about this person? Why are these places important?
8. How might vv.15-16 apply to Jesus' first and second coming (advent) at the same time?

Read: Luke 18:35-42

1. What does the blind man call Jesus? How does this apply to Jeremiah 33:14-16?
2. How does Jesus treat the man? What does he do for him?
3. When the man is healed, who does he praise?
4. This man was prepared for Jesus when he came. How can we prepare our lives for Jesus' return?

Rubber hits the road:

How can we remind one another of Jesus' return over the season of Advent? How can we live in anticipation of the second Advent?

WEEK 2

MALACHI - THE MESSENGER IS COMING

Warming up:

Have you ever asked yourself why God allows so much evil in the world?

Read: Malachi 2:17

1. What are the people asking of God?
2. Does God care about the evil and injustice in the world?
3. Why then is God weary of their questioning? (Hint: read 3:5)

Read: Malachi 3:1-4

1. Who is God sending?
2. Who do the gospel writers associate this messenger with? (Mark 1:2; Matthew 11:10)
3. If John the Baptist is the messenger, who comes in the place of the Lord as promised here?
4. What will happen after this messenger comes?
5. What is the meaning of the refiner's fire? How does this relate to God's judgement on injustice?
6. What is the outcome of the coming of the Lord?
7. How does Jesus accomplish all of the things promised here?

Read: Luke 1:68-79

1. How does this speak into the ministry of John the Baptist?
2. How does this reflect Malachi's longing for justice?

Rubber hits the road:

God really cares about justice. How can we prepare our hearts and communities for Jesus' second advent with this in mind?

NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / ETC.

Prayer

Loving God, thank you that you are a God of justice. Thank you that you do care for those who are oppressed and downtrodden. Help us to see when we are complicit in oppression and forgive us. Cleanse us, refine us, and create new hearts within us that we might with joy look towards your return. Amen.

WEEK 3

ZEPHANIAH - RESTORATION IS COMING

Warming up:

What's one thing you've looked forward to that took a long time to arrive? How did it feel when it finally happened?

Read: Zephaniah 3:14-20

1. Zephaniah 3:14 speaks about singing and rejoicing. Why is this command given right after passages of judgement? What does this tell us about God's character?
2. V.15 says, 'the Lord, the King of Israel, is with you.' How does the assurance of God's presence affect the people in the context of their struggles? How does it speak to us today?
3. In v.16, Zephaniah says, 'do not fear; do not let your hands hang limp.' What fears or burdens can make it hard for people to feel hope?
4. V.17 is one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible, describing God as 'mighty to save' and one who 'rejoices over you with singing.' How does this description shape your understanding of God's nature?
5. In vv.18-19, God promises to 'deal with all who oppressed you.' What might this have meant originally, and how might it apply to today?
6. In v.20, Zephaniah speaks of God gathering His people who have been scattered and bringing them back to their land. How does this image of gathering and return reflect the heart of Advent, where we anticipate Jesus' coming to restore and gather His people?
7. What similarities do you see between the promise of restoration in Zephaniah and the hope offered through Jesus' coming? How does Jesus fulfil this promise of restoration?

Rubber hits the road:

In what areas of your life or in the world around you do you long for restoration? What steps can you take during this Advent season to trust in God's promise of restoration, acting as an agent of hope and renewal?

NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / ETC.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the promise of restoration and the assurance that you are with us. As we journey through Advent, help us to find hope and joy in your presence. Remind us that you rejoice over us with love and that you are working to bring renewal, even in our darkest times. May we carry this hope into our daily lives and share it with those around us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

WEEK 4

MICAH - THE SHEPHERD IS COMING

Warming up:

What is your favourite Christmas carol? Why is it your favourite?

Read: Micah 5:2-5

1. What stands out in this passage for you? What questions do you have after reading it?
2. Bethlehem is a town in the region of Ephrathah. King David was from this town. Who might v.2 be referring to? What will he be like?
3. What does v.3 tell us about God's plans for Israel?
4. What can we learn about the Messiah from v.4? How did God fulfil this prophecy (see John 10:11-18)?
5. What can we learn about the Messiah from v.5?
6. What type of 'peace' is promised in this passage? (See Micah 4:3-5, Luke 2:14, and Colossians 1:19-20)
7. God's people waited 700 years for Micah's prophecies to be fulfilled. What can people waiting for Jesus today learn from this?
8. Micah's prophecy of 'seven shepherds' and 'eight leaders' is a symbolic way of telling us the Messiah will raise up good leaders when he returns to reign. 'The Assyrians' refers to empires of every age who oppose God's people. What does this mean for us?
9. Advent is about waiting. What's hard about waiting? What's good about waiting?

Rubber hits the road:

How does Jesus' promised return change the way you see the future?

How does the way we see the future change the way we live today?

NOTES / PRAYER POINTS / ETC.

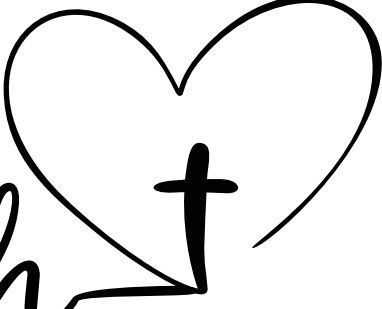
Prayer

Our Father in heaven, thank you that through Jesus we know the Prince of Peace. Lord, we long for your return when you will put all wrongs right. Please help us to wait for you with patience; in joyful expectation of all you bring. Holy Spirit, please help us to grow as people of faith, hope, and love. In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen!**

‘He will stand and
shepherd his flock
in the strength
of the LORD,
in the majesty
of the name
of the LORD his God.’

- Micah 5:4 -

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