

MONDAY 25th DECEMBER

Christmas Day

Read: Revelation 22:6-21

'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! **Revelation 22:20**

"Christmas is coming." The Christmas countdown has been relentlessly ticking away. Longer than this Advent devotional. From the traditional rhyme, "Christmas is coming and the goose is getting fat..." to Coca-Cola's appropriation of the cheery red Santa: "Holidays are coming", we are left in no doubt that one day it will be Christmas. 100% guaranteed. And the day is finally here. It's Christmas Day! Happy Christmas. But this year's journey through the Book of Revelation as a Diocesan family has opened our eyes to glimpse the heavenly perspective, the bigger story, the real ending. It's not just that Christmas is coming, Jesus is coming. 100% guaranteed.

I found myself unexpectedly moved this summer when I attended an ordination at St George's, Chorley. The final hymn was "I cannot tell how he who angels worship". Usually, I enjoy a great sing with great words, and great tune - O Danny Boy. But this time my heart was profoundly stirred.

*I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
when, at his bidding, every storm is stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation
when all our hearts with love for him are filled.
But this I know, the skies will sound his praises,*



*ten thousand thousand human voices sing,
and earth to heaven, and heaven to earth, will answer:
'At last the saviour, saviour of the world, is king!'*

I found myself hiding tears, longing with all my heart – Jesus please come soon! The early Christians were certain that Jesus would return in their lifetime. We see Paul writing in 1 Thessalonians to address the disappointment when He didn't (1 Thess. 4.13f). As nearly two thousand years have passed, our hope can become faint.

The book of Revelation has been a heady mix of present and future, earth and heaven, good and evil, joy and pain. But we can be assured that one day God will call time. On evil, pain and death. Anyone who wishes can taste the 'water of life' (v.17). Jesus will return. 100% guaranteed.

I have been asking Jesus to teach me to pray with the faith of Elijah, who saw the heavenly reality and called it into being in the present (1 Kings 17-19). I am praying for giants of faith across Lancashire, who will "stand up and storm the gates of heaven" (to quote 5th century bishop, Augustine of Hippo). I am asking with all my heart for Jesus to come again. Soon. I know He will. 100% guaranteed.

The best Christmas present ever. For the Church, the world, and the universe.

'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!'

The Rt Revd Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster.

Images

Cover: Unknown Artist, *Christ in Majesty*, 1025–1050. www.getty.edu

Page 2: Duccio di Buoninsegna, *The Nativity with the Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel*, 1308–1311. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Page 28–30: Master of Imola, *The Nativity with Six Dominican Monks*, 1265/1274. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We really hope you've enjoyed walking through Advent with this booklet. If you're wondering how you can continue with this pattern of daily reading there are a whole host of resources available to you. For ease of access, many resources are now available either online or as apps. A few suggestions are:

Follow the Star

www.churchofengland.org/faith-calling/what-we-believe/advent-and-christmas/follow-star-join-song-resources-churches

Follow the Star: Join the Song is the Church of England's Christmas campaign. It highlights how singing can help draw us closer to God and each other through the journey from Advent to Epiphany with a range of resources for individuals and groups to use.

Lectio 365

www.24-7prayer.com/dailydevotional

Lectio 365 is a devotional resource that helps you pray the Bible every day, and is inspired by Lectio Divina – a method of Bible meditation that's been used by Christians for centuries. Written by leaders from the 24-7 Prayer movement, and produced in partnership with CWR, this resource helps you engage with Scripture to inspire prayer.

BIOY

www.bibleinoneyear.org

With BIOY each day you receive a Psalm or Proverbs reading, a New Testament and an Old Testament reading. It also provides daily audio and written commentary to walk you through each day's reading, to provide fresh understanding of the texts.

The Vine

The Vine Community is a simple and flexible framework for living out a Christian life; sometimes called a 'rule of life'. This isn't necessarily about doing something 'extra', but about giving yourself the space to be the person God has made, and to grow in your relationship with Him, with an active, practical response to the teachings of Jesus Christ. For more information: www.blackburn.anglican.org

Bible Podlets

www.beducation.org.uk/podcasts/bible-podlets

Bible Podlets is a Bible study and discussion podcast for primary aged children to do with adults. Each episode has fun games/activities, an engaging Bible reading in the form of a news story, and discussion, with places to pause and talk together about the topic. You can download discussion notes from the resources area of the site.

If you prefer a hard copy resource, Christian bookshops carry a large range of Bible reading material, from daily reading notes to study books on particular themes or books of the Bible.

In addition to these resources there will be regular Quiet Days and Retreats offered by Whalley Abbey: www.whalleyabbey.org