

Second Advent Sermon 2023

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, December 31, 2023

PRELIMINARIES

KEY – Allow me to note the following elements before we dismiss the Children’s Church, Nursery and volunteers:

2) Annual Business Meeting

The 2023 ABM will take place on Sunday, January 21, 2024, after service (January 28 in case of poor weather). The deadline for the submission of Ministry Leader Reports is today: Sunday, December 31. Lastly, a slate of candidates qualified to stand for election for the Board Office of Deacon has been posted in the Fellowship Hall. If your name appears on said list, please notify the Pastor of your intentions by next Sunday, January 7, 2024, and only after prayerful consideration.

2) Long Family Prayer

This will be the final Sunday the Longs will be with us for about one month. They are not leaving the church! Rather, the entire family will spend much of the month of January doing missions-related work in the D. Rep. Before the Longs depart for such an endeavor, this assembly does well to pray for their travels and work (**CALL**).

How many of you will keep the Long family in prayer when the Lord places them upon your heart? Thank you!

PRAYER

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SETTING THE STAGE

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you desire. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time. Today I want to touch upon some material I have not formally touched upon in years.

NOTE 1 – The Christmas Season is also known as the Season of Advent to a great many believers in our world. Advent—which means coming or arrival—celebrates the Coming of Christ nearly two-thousand years ago, when God took upon Himself human flesh and made His dwelling among men (cf. John 1:14).

NOTE 2 – However, Advent does more than look back to the Coming of Christ: it also looks ahead to His Return. Having addressed the reality and implications of His First Coming in the weeks leading up to Christmas, I want to spend the final Sunday of 2023 addressing the reality and implications of His imminent Second Coming.

THE REALITY OF HIS RETURN PT. 1

KEY – The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is clearly taught in the pages of Scripture. Let us consider the following:

1) Jesus Foretold His Reappearing

Matthew 24:29–30 (NIV) (Emphasis Mine) (cf. Mark 13; Luke 21)

29 “Immediately after the distress of those days [i.e., future period of tribulation]

‘the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ [cf. Isa. 13:10; 34:4]

30 Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man **coming** on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” [cf. Dan. 7:13–14]

2) Angelic Messengers Affirmed His Reappearing

Acts 1:9b–11 (Post-Ascension of Christ) (Emphasis Mine)

9 . . . [Jesus] was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, **will come back** in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

3) The Apostles and Inspired Writers of the NT Proclaimed His Reappearing

Titus 2:11–13 (Paul to Titus) (Emphasis Mine)

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the **appearing** of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:28b (Author of Hebrews, Emphasis Mine)

28 . . . Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and **he will appear a second time**, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Revelation 1:7 (John the Revelator)

7 “Look, **he is coming** with the clouds,”
and “every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him”;
and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.”
So shall it be! Amen.

FYI – The NT speaks of the Return of Jesus over three-hundred times. Clearly, I have offered a non-exhaustive list.

THE REALITY OF HIS RETURN PT. 2

KEY – This being said, we do well to consider that the prophecies concerning His Return will be fulfilled literally.

NOTE 1 – There are many who prefer to interpret biblical prophecy figuratively, as the idea of a bodily Advent seems but a fairytale. This, however, does a great disservice to the nature and the purpose of true prophecy, which is to foretell what shall take place in the course of time.

NOTE 2 – Moreover, if Christ literally fulfilled OT prophecy at His First Coming, why should we expect anything different at His Second? A clear and honest reading of Scripture demands that we take these many passages seriously and quite literally. He shall (really) come again!

Acts 1:9b–11 [Post-Ascension of Christ, Emphasis Mine]

9 . . . [Jesus] was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, **will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.**”

TRANSITIONS

NOTE 1 – Let us take some time exploring the nature and implications of Jesus’ Return...

NOTE 2 – In order to understand the Second Advent of Christ, it may be helpful to contrast it with the First (i.e., which we celebrated at Christmas). Allow me to offer seven points of contrast—seven being a good number:

CONTRAST #1

Whereas the First Coming Went Unnoticed and Overlooked, the Second Coming Will Be Universally Apparent:

1) The First Advent

The Christmas Story does contain the record of figures who celebrated the Birth and Coming of Christ. We could speak at length regarding characters like Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, the Shepherds in the fields, Simeon, Anna, Magi from the East, and beyond! Scripture chronicles events like the following:

Luke 2:8b–14 [Post-Birth]

8 . . . there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

KEY – However, the news of Christ’s Advent nearly two-thousand years ago went essentially overlooked. Ultimately, only a relative handful of people were made aware of or paid any attention to the Birth of Christ. However, this will not be the case at His Return:

2) His Second Advent

Matthew 24:29–30 (Post-Tribulation) (Emphasis Mine)

30 “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then **all the peoples** of the earth will mourn **when they see the Son of Man coming** on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” [cf. Dan. 7:13–14]

Revelation 1:7 (John the Revelator) (Emphasis Mine)

7 “Look, he is **coming** with the clouds,”
and “**every eye will see him**,
even those who pierced him”;
and **all peoples** on earth “will mourn because of him.”
So shall it be! Amen.

CONTRAST #2

Whereas the First Coming was Immediately Heralded, the Second Coming will be Both Sudden and Unexpected:

1) The First Advent

Those who lived immediately prior to the First Coming were made aware of the impending Birth of the Christ:

Luke 1:26–33 (re: Mary)

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Matthew 1:18–21 (re: Joseph)

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

2) The Second Advent

However, the Second Advent remains cloaked with mystery and shall remain unexpected until His Appearing:

Matthew 24:36b–42

36 “. . . about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. 42 Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”

KEY – Though we can study the signs of the times, no one can foretell or acc. herald the time of His Appearing!

CONTRAST #3

Whereas Jesus' First Coming was Characterized by Vulnerability, His Return Shall be Characterized by Power:

1) The First Advent

Consider the form that Christ took upon during His initial entry into the world: that of a helpless infant. Moreover, consider that this child would require both divine and human protection against earthly threats. Consider:

Matthew 2:1–15a, 16

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. . . . 16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

2) The Second Advent

However, He shall Return immortal, invincible, impervious, invulnerable and unrivaled (i.e., marked w. power):

Matthew 24:30 (Emphasis Mine)

30 "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with **power** and great glory."

CONTRAST #4

Whereas His First Coming was Characterized by utter Humility, His Second shall be Characterized by Exaltation:

1) The First Advent

Consider the humble nature of the Birth of Christ:

Luke 2:1–7 (Emphasis Mine)

1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria). 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in **cloths** and placed him in a **manger**, because there was **no guest room available** for them.

Q. And who directly attested to this event? What parties?

A. Local shepherds made aware of this happening (cf. Luke 2:8–14).

Q. Did you know that ancient Jews hated shepherds? Why were such figures despised?

A. Firstly, shepherds could not keep the ceremonial laws of Judaism. Since they could not abstain from work on the Sabbath—as sheep need constant care—they were deemed perpetually unclean. Thus, they were not allowed to attend worship in the local synagogue or the Temple in Jerusalem. Secondly, they were known for thievery and dishonesty. They would often steal, allow their flocks to graze on land that was not theirs and lie about their crimes. Their reputation was so poor in ancient Israel, they were not allowed to testify in court or hold public office of any kind. Shepherds were classed with tax collectors, prostitutes and other such rabble!

KEY – His Birth was not recognized by the great or elite of humanity! He was born into obscurity and humility.

2) The Second Advent

FYI – However, His humility will be rewarded with ultimate elevation and exaltation:

Revelation 19:11–16

11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.

CONTRAST #5

Whereas Jesus' First Coming Culminated with Crucifixion, His Second Coming Will Culminate with Coronation:

1) The First Advent

Q. What was the end result of the Birth of Christ?

A. Approximately thirty-years later He would be killed!

Luke 23:33 (Emphasis Mine)

33 When they came to the place called the Skull, they **crucified** him [Jesus] there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.

KEY 1 – The Christ who was born to save the world was ultimately crucified by the very ones He came to save!

2) The Second Advent

Yet the Risen Christ is not Coming to perish again, but to rule and reign:

Daniel 7:13–14

13 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Isaiah 9:6–7

6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

KEY 2 – In Revelation chp. 5, Jesus is portrayed as both a lamb that had been slain (6) and the lion of Judah (5).

CONTRAST #6

Whereas the First Advent Opened the Way of Salvation to the Faithful, His Return Shall Finalize their Salvation:

1) The First Advent

Jesus was sent to make a way for sinful humanity to find life through faith. Consider this most famous of texts:

John 3:16 (Emphasis Mine)

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever **believes** in him shall not perish but have **eternal life**.

NOTE 1 – For centuries the Church has been sharing the good news of Christ (i.e., that sinners might be saved):

Mark 16:15–16a

15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved . . .

2) The Second Coming

Jesus shall in time return to finalize the salvation of all who have trusted Him throughout both space and time:

Hebrews 9:28b (Emphasis Mine)

28 . . . Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, **but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him**.

Q. What “salvation” do the faithful have in store?

A. This speaks to our final deliverance from all earthly, spiritual, inward and natural forces which hinder/afflict.

1 John 3:1–2

1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

NOTE 2 – Moreover, He shall return to provide eternal reward to those who were the faithful. Please consider:

Revelation 22:12–13

12 “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. 14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”

NOTE 3 – And this does not even begin to address the impact His Return shall have upon the creation itself. What blessed things are in store for the faithful at His Return. It is our hope and should be the longing of every believing heart! We are those who proclaim, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

KEY – Yet there is a different fate in store for the wicked...

CONTRAST #7

Whereas His First Coming Made the Way of Escape from Judgment, Judgment will Come at His Second Coming:

1) The First Advent

God has made a way of escape from the penalty and power of sin for ALL who would believe upon Christ Jesus:

John 3:16–17

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Q1. Yet what of those who persist in rejecting this one way of escape?

Q2. What of those who resist the only means available to avert wrath?

2 Thessalonians 1:8–10

8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

Matthew 25:31–46

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ 37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ 40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ 44 “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ 45 “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ 46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

APPLICATIONS

You may be asking, “Pastor James, why are you ending 2023 with such a challenging sermon?” Please consider:

A1. You are not ready to live until you are ready to meet Him either at death or at His Coming. Are you ready?

Matthew 24:42–51

42 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ 49 and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. 50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

KEY 1 – Do not make the mistake of thinking His delay intimates He will not Return! Please consider this text:

2 Peter 3:3b–4, 8–10a

3 . . . you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” . . . 8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. . .

A2. To motivate us in our work as disciples of Jesus Christ. Note:

Matthew 28:18–20 (Emphasis Mine)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, **to the very end of the age.**”

KEY 2 – This age (i.e., this season of grace in which we exist) will in time end, shifting to a period of judgment. Let us reach as many as we can with the time we have been given. What if 2024 was the year of His Coming? Are there people in your orbit who are unprepared AND unwarned?

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM, WM & CYC).

Numbers 6:24–26

24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.