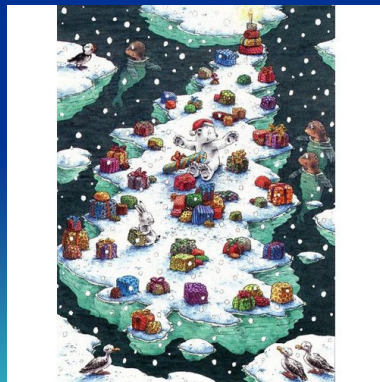
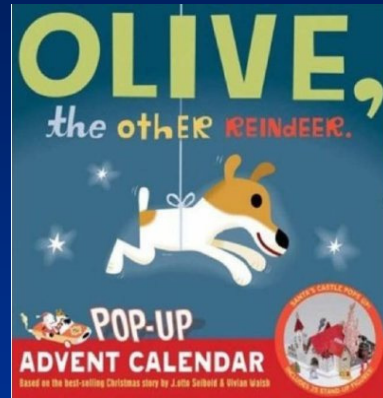


Advent

What are we waiting for?



Countdown Calendars



What Are 'We' Waiting For?

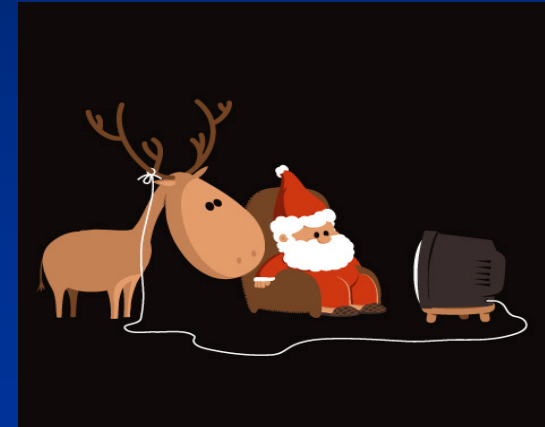
Presentmas



Foodmas



TVmas



Recovering Advent

- Wintermas is not Christmas
- Mad-spent is not *Advent*
- Mad-spent *lacks ambition* in what is hoped for
- Christmas and Advent are full of *ambitious hope*



Advent:

- ‘Advent’: Latin ‘*adventus*’ = ‘coming’
- Start of ‘The Christian Year’ in the Western churches – 4 weeks leading up to Christmas
- But Advent is not *just* a countdown to Christmas
- Advent focuses on the expectation of, and preparation for, *both* the first *and* the second comings of the Messiah



The Advents of Messiah

- ‘Advent’ invites Christians to imaginatively ‘sit’ in the place of Israel prior to Jesus’ first advent – anticipating the coming salvation
- Advent invites Christians to look towards the future advent of Christ with hope
- It invites us to see that these two advents are really just two phases of a single act of salvation



The Hope of Israel

Israel hoped for salvation:

- The return of Yahweh to his people
- a kingly/priestly Messiah to save the people
- salvation from her pagan oppressors
- an end of her exile
- a new covenant relationship with Yahweh
- the Spirit poured out on all
- a new creation
- the nations coming to worship Yahweh and joining God's people
- Global peace on earth



Jesus and the Hope of Israel

Luke 2:21-33

Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.

Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, *'If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD.'* So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—*'either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.'*

At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

'Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!'

Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him.



Israel's Hope & Our Hope

- I used to be unclear why Israel's hopes should interest me as a non-Jew
- But Israel's hope was bound up with *the hope of the world*:
- **salvation for all the nations**
- **peace on earth**
- **new creation**
- If Jesus fulfils Israel's hopes then Jesus must be the saviour *of the whole world*



Hope Fulfilled – Hope Deferred

- Jesus' first advent marked the *start* of a fulfilment of Israel's hopes
- Jesus' second advent will mark *the complete fulfilment* of Israel's hopes
- There is a single act of salvation stretched across history with two focal points (and we live in-between them)
- Odd thought: Christmas-as-eschatology. The End Times began 2000 years ago!



Why I thought Advent was Pointless

- Why imagine we are living before the Messiah was born and waiting for his coming when we are not?
- Pretending that the past (Jesus' birth) is still future is pointless spirituality



The Point of Advent

- But the dual-focus brings out the point. Our future (not just the past) *is* in focus
- (a) The second advent is our future
- (b) The first advent inaugurates that future



Advent and the Cultivation of Christian Virtue

Advent says:

- Look to the salvation *still to come*
- Know that ‘the God who is to come’ *is the same God* as ‘the God who came’: God-in-Christ
- Have hope
- Have patience
- Be dissatisfied with ‘the now’
- prepare your hearts for the coming of God in Christ



Have Hope

- Our culture cannot provide any foundations for real hope for the future
- So the future is a cause of individual and collective anxiety
- Thus many fix their hopes on the short-term enjoyment of this life
- Advent calls Christians to spurn despair and to embrace expectant hope



Have Patience

- Our culture often wants everything NOW
- So Mad-spent builds up to Wintermas and all our hopes must be met on that day
- Real Advent hope does not deliver fast
- It requires the cultivation of the counter-cultural virtue of patience



Be Dissatisfied With 'the Now'

- Our culture often looks (in vain) for satisfaction in that which cannot satisfy
- Advent calls Christians to refuse to accept anything less than the coming of God-in-Christ
- Advent helps us to see that all our blessings now are only incomplete anticipations of what is to come



Aching Visionaries

Advent is about training Christians

- to be dissatisfied with the present state of things
- to long for the coming of God
- to wait with expectancy, hope, and patience
- In sum: to be aching visionaries



O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel [God-with-us]
and ransom captive Israel

(that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear)

Rejoice!

Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel

