

I. Advent in Biblical Perspective  
*From Christophanies to Epiphanies*  
“From Christophanies to Epiphanies”  
Titus 2:11–15

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This is our first study in the advent series and we are in Titus 2. We will look at about three passages in this study. This is the Word of God. It's the Truth. Titus 2:11–15 says *[11] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. [15] Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

In this advent season I'm going to be doing a series starting in this study from Christophanies to Epiphanies and this isn't something invented here at Briarwood or in the PCA. Actually the advent season by in large has been celebrated by evangelical churches for 2,000 years but it has come to be celebrated somewhat differently than it was first inaugurated. The advent celebrations were initially inaugurated and designed to celebrate both the first advent of Jesus 2,000 years ago and celebrate the anticipated advent of Jesus when He comes again to bring to consummation what He accomplished in His first advent. Why was that done?

If you go back to the Old Testament you'll see the promised advent of a Messiah where God from heaven would send a Messiah. The New Testament phrase for Messiah is Christ and means the Anointed One, meaning the One who will come to fulfill the three anointed offices of the Old Testament – Prophet, Priest and King. Jesus would be The Prophet who would fulfill the Word and give us the Word. He would be The Priest who would not only bring the sacrifice for sins but He Himself would be the sacrifice for sins and He would be The King of Glory. This is the Glorious King that will bring His people from all the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Light and Life forever and ever. That is what this Messiah would do – He would come down from heaven, the Advent of the Messiah.

In the Old Testament it was very clear that the Advent of the Messiah, when He came, would accomplish two objectives. Number one He would save His people from their sins and deliver them from their enemies. Secondly, He would bring divine justice against the enemies of God to bring them under the eternal condemnation of God's judgment. So those are the two things that the Messiah was promised and prophesied to accomplish from the Old Testament. Now we come to the New Testament and the coming of Christ.

We now find out that it is not one advent to accomplish two objectives but two advents, each one to accomplish one of those objectives. In the first advent He comes to save His people from their sins and defeat all their enemies. So He comes into the world to go to the cross and defeat our enemies – sin, death, hell, the grave and Satan – and to deliver us from the presence and power of sin. He comes in one advent to bear our judgment that we might be delivered from our sins and delivered from our enemies.

Then we find out the second objective will be accomplished by a second coming – His coming again. When He comes again He will receive His people to Himself. The people who He has delivered from their sins and their enemies, when He comes again He will receive them to Himself and then bring eternal judgment upon all of His enemies who have stood against Him in rebellion and cosmic treason against the God of Glory, raising up their idols, self-worship and false worship and man-made religion against Him.

Over the 2,000 years we tend to begin to focus on the first during the advent season and we forget to remind ourselves that the advent season is also the celebration of the sure hope of the coming of Christ. Why is that a sure Hope? It's a sure Hope because His first advent assures His second advent. Because of His victory in His first advent that assures His second coming to consummate that victory into a new heavens and a new earth. The second advent also assures us that the first advent will be brought to completion and consummation that the two are intertwined.

In the Christmas season we sing about both advents in Christmas hymns. You will see that both advents are in the hymn *O Come O Come Emmanuel*. His first advent is to bear our judgment and His second advent is to receive us and bring judgment. You can also see this in the hymn *Joy to the World* because it talks about both. Some of our hymns at the advent season emphasize one or the other but originally they were both designed to celebrate both. Here are the lyrics to the four verses of *Joy to the World, the Lord is Come* by Isaac Watts, 1674–1748:

*1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!*

*Let earth receive her King;*

*Let every heart prepare Him room*

*And heaven and nature sing. (first advent)*

*2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ,*

*While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains*

*Repeat the sounding joy.*

(He has ascended and we are to worship and bear witness throughout all the earth.)

*3. No more let sins and sorrows grow*

*Nor thorns infest the ground;*

*He comes to make His blessings flow*

*Far as the curse is found.*

(Now we're looking at the last advent, where not only sin but all of its consequences are removed in the consummation of the second coming.)

*4. He rules the world with truth and grace*

*And makes the nations prove*

*The glories of His righteousness*

*And wonders of His love.*

(Here are the glories of a new heavens and a new earth.)

Both of them are to be celebrated in this advent season—the one that has occurred that assures the second coming and the one that has yet to occur that is affirmed because of the first coming of Christ. So in the Old Testament it was seemingly one advent with two objectives and then when you get to the New Testament you find that each objective has its own advent. There is His first coming that saves us from our sins and delivers us from our enemies as He defeats all of His enemies and then there is the second advent when He receives us to Himself where He destroys, not defeats, the enemies that were defeated by casting them all into eternal condemnation.

This is what Paul is doing in Titus 2. Titus 2:11 says [11] *For the grace of God **has appeared**, bringing salvation for all people.* The word appeared here is the word for epiphany. The Greek word is *Epephanē* which means a sudden burst of glorious light. An example for us might be if you wake up on a day where the sun pops up on the horizon at dawn and it's very bright. This is looking at the first advent of Christ for it says it has appeared. What does this salvation do? It is salvation by grace, the grace of God, for this grace saturated salvation brings salvation to all of humanity.

Titus 2:12 says [12] *training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.* So secondly, it disciplines us to these things mentioned here. What is the present age? It is the age between the two comings of Christ. In the present age we have been delivered from its penalty and we've been empowered to kill sin instead of sin killing us. We can renounce it and live Godly before the Lord growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. That's not all with the first advent of God's grace appearing in Jesus Christ who comes into the manger, lives a perfect life, goes to the cross, dies an atoning death to save us from our sins and deliver us from our enemies and has risen and ascended and He is calling us to Himself from all humanity. When they come to Him they are fully forgiven of all their sins and can grow in grace living Godly, sensible lives and instead of living in sin they can kill the sin that is living in them but they are always looking forward, waiting.

Titus 2:13 says [13] *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.* This is the second advent and there is that word again, appearing, *Epephanē*. It is the epiphany of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Who is this One who is coming? It is the One who has already come and what did He do when He came the first time? Titus 2:14 says [14] *who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.* Christ has come and delivered us from our sins in His first advent. Then it gets us to look forward because the best days for a Christian are always in front of them, never behind them, looking for our blessed Hope which is the second coming that brings to consummation what the first coming achieved. It is the outburst of our Savior's second coming into this world. The One who came the first time to redeem us, comes the second time to receive us into a new heavens and a new earth in all of that glory.

Epiphanies – the first advent as Christ came and God's grace appeared to save us, deliver us and bear our judgment. The second epiphany is when He comes again to receive us to Himself and to bring judgment upon all of His enemies who stand defiantly against Him, denying the glory of God for the fabrication of the idolatry of man. So what does He do to connect those two? It's called the incarnation. How does God send a Messiah, the Prophet, Priest and King who has come and is coming again? He ties the two advents together by sending God, the Son of God, His Son, into this world for us His people and He does this through the incarnation – God in the flesh. You shall call His Name Emmanuel – God with us.

Now let's look at John 1. How does the grace of God appear through Christ in this world? It appears this way. John 1:14 says [14] *And the Word (title for Christ) became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Notice the Word didn't quit being the Word for He is still God but He takes upon Himself humanity that becomes flesh and dwells among us. In other words, the garden is now being restored. Genesis 3:8a says [8a] *And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.* Adam and Eve would hear the Lord coming as He made

them to dwell among Him and then they sinned against Him by buying the lie interestingly. What a fabrication that was believed!

Satan said, 'You can eat of the fruit and be like God.' All Adam and Eve had to say was 'Actually you're tempting us to be God but we're not, as to being like God, we already are for we are made in His image.' Buying the lie to put themselves in the place of God they ate and were driven out of the garden. Fellowship is lost in sin but God will save His people. To save His people He has to come among His people – more than come among them, He must become one of them. The Savior can't come from them because all who are born of Adam are sinners and need a Savior but it must be one of us because by a man came sin and death and by a man must come the resurrection of the dead and redemption. So God, when there was no way, made a way and that way is His Son Jesus Christ who comes into the world and in His deity lays aside His privileges but not the deity. He humbles Himself and takes upon Himself to become a man and now God is among us.

John 1:14 has an interesting phrase – and the Word become flesh and dwelt among us. 'Dwelt among us' is actually a noun made into a verb. The noun is temple or tabernacle. They took a noun and made it into a verb. We do this all the time when we say things like 'would you *friend* me' which is Facebook language today. The word friend is a noun but when used this way it's a verb. That is what they are doing here where they take the word temple or tabernacle and turn it into a verb. You could read John 1:14 this way; the Word become flesh and templed or tabernacled among us. Now we don't have a temple in Jerusalem with a measure of God's Shekinah glory but now we have the temple fulfilled, Christ with the unmeasured glory of God in grace and truth before us – the glory of the Father.

He is incarnation so He takes upon Himself humanity and in that body will go to the cross to bear our sins for all of eternity. In that body He will live a perfectly righteous life to cover us with righteousness. In that body we will be buried and then that body will be raised. Then that body will ascend transformed, glorified, incarnate body of Christ which Jesus will have forever. In that body He will come again to receive us. In that body we will be with Him for all eternity so you might be able to see God. If He didn't have that glorified body you wouldn't be able to see Him for even the perfect angels cannot look upon Him. You will be able to look upon the God of glory because He is veiled in that transformed body and we shall see Him and be with Him forever.

That is what the incarnation accomplishes and in that incarnate body He came the first time to redeem us and deliver. In that glorified incarnate body He will come again to receive us and stand in judgment over all that is against Him with divine justice that is perfect for all of eternity in the place called the lake of fire. In that body we will fellowship with Him in a new heavens and a new earth. His presence will be so glorious that we won't even care about moons, stars or suns or anything. The light of His presence will be with us forever and ever. That is what the Old Testament anticipated.

The Old Testament anticipated it by precepts with symbols. The ark is pointing to that Christ who will deliver us from sin. The wave offerings, burnt offerings and other offerings will point to Him. The temple, tabernacle and the tent of meetings point to Him. The prophets, priests and kings pointed to Him. Everything in the Old Testament, its trajectory is to Christ who will come in these two advents and gloriously save His people and then receive them into a new heavens and a new earth. Not only by precepts with types, symbols and shadows pointing to Him but also with prophecies. Over 60 plus prophecies are pointing to the fulfillment of the advent of Jesus Christ.

Another thing in the Old Testament that anticipated the epiphany of Christ was pre-incarnate epiphanies (appearances) of Christ. The theological term we use is Christophany where Christ made specific appearances for a moment in time in the Old Testament to communicate something anticipating the incarnation epiphany that is coming. The advent season is five Sundays even though I'd like for there to be thirteen Sundays and the reason why is that there are thirteen Christophanies in the Old Testament pointing to Christ and I could do one each week. Most of the time they are depicted in the Bible with the phrase 'the angel of the Lord' and the reason why we know these are pre-incarnate appearances of Christ are because of the careful phrasing. It is not an angel but the angel, the messenger, the word of the Lord. We know this also because of divine prerogatives. Every time the angel of the Lord shows up they were to remove their shoes because they were standing on holy ground. God is here. Then they worshipped Him.

When they worshipped the angel of the Lord you know it can't be a regular angel because in the book of Revelation where John twice falls down in front of an angel and the angel says to him 'get up, don't worship me for I'm a fellow servant.' Don't worship the angels but this Angel not only allows the worship but calls for the worship because this angel of the Lord is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ and you'll also see divine titles – the Lord, Yahweh. You'll also see New Testament trajectories. There are the three visitors to Abraham. Two angels and the Angel appear to him and we know it's the Lord because it says the Lord appeared to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre. Jesus would also later say that Abraham rejoiced to see Me. Before Abraham was I Am.

We know this is the Lord who comes because He gives two insights toward the incarnation. He tells Abraham his wife is going to have a seed that was promised and there will be a miraculous birth. Anyone who has a baby who is over 90 years of age, that is a miraculous birth but it is anticipating the unique birth of the virgin. It's not just the seed through which the Messiah would come but it is anticipating the seed which is the Messiah Himself who will save His people from their sins. Then He communicates the judgment that will fall on the cities of the plains of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their immorality and rebellion against God. The Messiah delivers and brings judgment.

The angel of the Lord is all over the Old Testament. There is the time that Jacob wrestles with the angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord is in the wilderness with Israel. The angel of the Lord stops Balaam in his apostasy. The angel of the Lord twice comes to Gideon. Then there is the angel of the Lord from the burning bush. There is the rock in the wilderness where the book of Corinthians says that rock was Christ. There is the pillar of fire and cloud from which the Lord speaks to His people as He dwells in their midst. There is the tent of meeting which was in the midst of the people and the angel of the Lord would speak with Moses in the tent of meeting. Joshua encounters the angel of the Lord as the captain of the Lord of hosts. Then the Son of God appears in the fire to deliver Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. In this advent season we won't have time to look at all thirteen Christophanies but we will look at three of them and in the next study we'll look at the burning bush. All these appearances point to the incarnation.

Here is the takeaway. The Incarnation is a work of God's grace whereby God Himself has come to us to be among us and become one of us in order to save us from our sins and will come again for us to be with us forever. The advent of Christ 2000 years ago was God's grace and mercy where He made a way through His Son Jesus Christ who comes to us to be among us and becomes one of us in order to save us from our sins. The second advent will be when He

comes again for us in order for us to be with Him and He will be with us forever. Christophanies are anticipations. I want to draw some distinctions on this before I give some closing words.

The pre-incarnate appearances of Christ, these Christophanies in the Old Testament, are appearances of Jesus. In the incarnation Jesus comes in substance, in the flesh. He takes upon Himself real human flesh. He has no sin nature but He has a body that bears the marks of a cursed world. He would have colds and sicknesses. He would face all of those things that our bodies face. He is a real man and therefore He is tempted in every point like unto us yet with no sin. He is really able to intercede for you because He knows what you face. He can empathize and sympathize with us. He was in the body. His deity was not set aside but privileges of His deity were set aside.

Philippians 2:8 says [8] *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* How does He humble Himself? This is the only case of subtraction by addition. He is subtracted from, not because He sets aside His deity, but because He adds humanity that humbled Him and He humbles Himself to the point of death. Then Philippians 2:9–11 says [9] *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* So in the pre-incarnation that is an appearance. In the Incarnation that is a substance that is not only for His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension but that body is His forever.

Pre-incarnation affirms deity. It affirms the eternity of Christ. He existed before His birth. It is a moment to point out our sin. His Incarnation adds humanity and comes to take our sin and pay for our sin. In His pre-incarnation Christophanies He is anticipating the Incarnation. In His Incarnation He is accomplishing the call for God to come and save us. In His pre-incarnation He is affirming the promises of God. In His Incarnation He is fulfilling the promises of God as the Promised One from God, God Himself. His pre-incarnations are multiple and repeated. His Incarnation is singular and unique, one of a kind. His pre-incarnations were for a moment in time. His Incarnation is for eternity and all time as He comes to save us from our sins. He was born a child but yet a King.

I have been watching the unfolding of the recent political campaigns for our next president and beyond that I like to watch how people in authority are functioning. It almost never seems to fail that once someone gains position and authority how it begins to corrupt. Once they are kings, presidents or some kind of leader they begin to control people and people are there to do their bidding but this King came to save His people. He did the bidding of the Father. The kings of this world are served by people. This King came to serve His people by becoming a sacrifice for them. The kings of this world promote themselves. This King humbled Himself. The kings of this world seek position and privilege. This King set aside His privileges and took the position of a slave. The kings of this world long to be admired and applauded. This King was despised and rejected, born a child yet a King and a King who is coming again for those whom He saved at the cross, for those whom He intercedes in glory, He will come to receive them.

I long for you to join His people and we will not walk in a garden and hear the sound of Him. We will walk in a new heavens and a new earth. We shall see Him no longer by faith, but by sight. I plead with you, in that advent do not be cast away with the enemies of God but be numbered with the enemies who have been saved by the grace of God and who now trust the

King and look longingly for His coming again. Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus. Let's pray and take a few moments in silent prayer.

Prayer:

God's people praise His Name. For those of you not yet belonging to Christ come to the King. Come to His cross. Come to the King and to Him alone cling. Gilded toys of dust, set them aside. Illusions of self-grandeur, set them aside. Religions of men, put them on the trash heap of the ages but there is a King who came for you and He is coming again. Receive your King. Father, I thank You for this advent season. I thank You for our Savior who came to set His people free, who is coming again to make all things new. Come quickly Lord Jesus, for I pray in the Savior's Name, Amen.

Power Point

**LIFE TAKEAWAY**

The Incarnation is a work of God's grace whereby God Himself has come to us, to be among us and become one of us in order to save us from our sins, and will come again for us to be with us forever.