

Advent Bible Study

Week 1
Westminster Presbyterian Church
Arlington, TX

Daily Scripture Reading Guide

To immerse yourself even more deeply in the Gospel of Mark during Advent, follow this reading guide to work your way through the Gospel's sixteen chapters in just a few minutes per day.

Because Advent can vary in length from twenty-two days (if Christmas Day falls on a Monday) to twenty-eight days (if Christmas Day falls on a Sunday), this guide offers an undated twenty-four-day plan so you can either begin on December 1 and continue through Christmas Eve, or start on the First Sunday of Advent and adjust the schedule as you desire.

Day 1	1:1–28	Day 13	9:2–29
Day 2	1:29–45	Day 14	9:30–50
Day 3	2:1–28	Day 15	10:1–31
Day 4	3:1–35	Day 16	10:32–52
Day 5	4:1–34	Day 17	11:1–33
Day 6	4:35–5:20	Day 18	12:1–27
Day 7	5:21–43	Day 19	12:28–44
Day 8	6:1–29	Day 20	13:1–37
Day 9	6:30–56	Day 21	14:1–25
Day 10	7:1–23	Day 22	14:26–14:52
Day 11	7:24–8:10	Day 23	14:53–15:20
Day 12	8:11–9:1	Day 24	15:21–16:8

The End of the World as We Know It: Advent

What is Advent?

- +countdown to Christmas
- +waiting for Jesus to be born
- +looking for Christ to come again
- +hope, peace, joy, love candles
- +not getting to sing Christmas hymns yet because Pastor Kate is an Advent grinch



The End of the World as We Know It: Anticipating the Coming of Christ

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

7 O come, O King of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease
and be yourself our King of Peace.

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

2 Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.



The End of the World as We Know It: Anticipating the Coming of Christ

When will the world end? What is it going to be like?

Read Mark 13:1-2; 7-8; 14-19; 24-27

In an era of space exploration, it's hard to take seriously that the stars will fall from heaven. Who is the desolating sacrilege figure? How does this sound after two millennia of waiting for the return of Christ?

What are the imperatives in these sections?



The End of the World as We Know It: Anticipating the Coming of Christ

Mark 13:7-8 - Isaiah 19:2 and 2 Chronicles 15:6

Birthpangs more like Jeremiah 4:31 than
Christmas

Mark 13:14 - Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11 -
horrifying desecration of the temple by Antiochus
IV - he erected a pagan altar to sacrifice pigs to
Zeus; in the future it is the ultimate opponent of
God - "Antichrist"



The End of the World as We Know It: Anticipating the Coming of Christ

Mark 13:24-27 -Daniel 7:13-14 (Son of Man) and
Isaiah 13:9-10 and Joel 2:10-11 (Poetry, not prose)

In Mark's apocalypse though, no mention of
vengeance or damnation of the wicked



The End of the World as We Know It: Eschatology

All of Mark's Gospel has an *eschatological* orientation - the entire Gospel deals with matters pertaining to the end times. Mark 13 is called his "Little Apocalypse." It was written to bring HOPE and encouragement to people experiencing great tribulation. It's not the end of the world but God's righteous *reordering* of the world. It's to answer two of their primary concerns: When will the Lord come? What are we to do in the meantime?

Is the world ending good news or bad news?

The End of the World as We Know It: Anticipating the Coming of Christ

“The idea of the world ending is more frightening for people living relatively comfortable lives, but for first century Jews, oppressed by the powerful and comfortable Romans, the idea of God’s intervention would be hoped-for good news. We can experience that hope by reflecting on the challenges of our own lives and world and working to right wrongs where we can.”

The End of the World as We Know It: Mark's Gospel Context

The context of Mark's Gospel is a harrowing story of unimaginable suffering. It was likely written around the Jewish uprising against the Roman occupation in 66-70 CE. Rome's excessive taxation, insistence on divinity of the emperor, and notorious cruelty cemented the people's animosity.



The End of the World as We Know It: Mark's Gospel Context

Internal divisions within the Jewish people weakened their opposition - radical Zealots burned Jerusalem's entire stockpile of food in an effort to force people to join the resistance. Some records indicate that the resulting starvation killed as many people as later would the Romans. When the Romans breached the last wall, they slaughtered women, men, and children. One million Jewish people died in the revolt and its aftermath. Thousands were enslaved. And the Romans burned down the Temple - believed to be God's holy dwelling place on earth.

The End of the World as We Know It: Already & Not Yet

The turmoil of Mark 13 is not simply some far off *future* event; it also described the real-time apocalypse the Jewish people were already experiencing. The apocalypse for Mark's community was both a present time of suffering as well as a greatly anticipated moment of divine redemption. In tragic times, we want a very big God who can do very big things - a God who can come down and deal with the chaos within us and within the world.



The End of the World as We Know It: Apocalypse Now

What “little apocalypses” have you experienced?

+Vietnam War

+AIDS epidemic

+9/11

+COVID-19 pandemic

+cancer diagnosis

+divorce

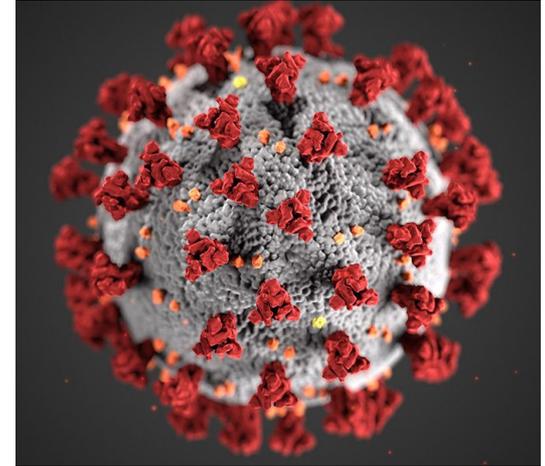
+loved one's death

+lost job

The End of the World as We Know It: Trauma & Theology

Think about modern-day widespread traumas. What effects have they had on people's outlook toward their world, themselves, and their understanding of God?

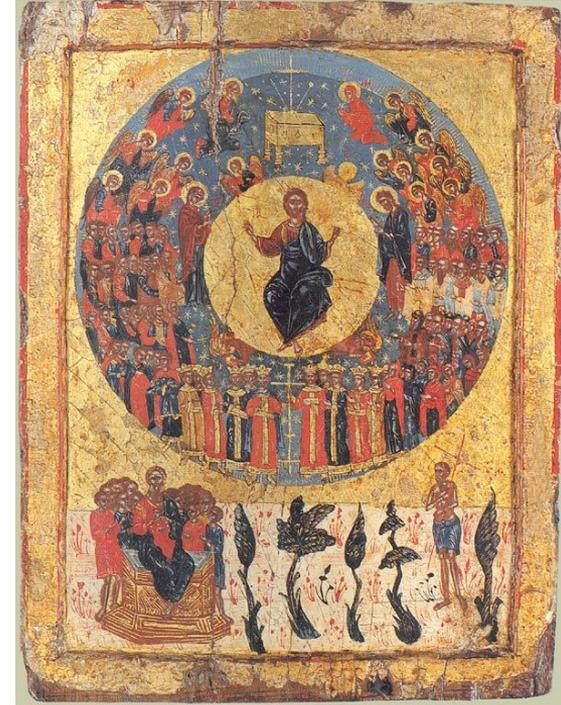
What have tragic events - 9/11, COVID-19, or other personal traumas - revealed or unveiled to you? What lessons can be learned from them? Did these events lead to any collective or personal reordering?



The End of the World as We Know It: Great Expectations

Can we know when the second coming is happening?
Consider the surprise of the first coming: vulnerable baby boy born to an unwed couple in a backwater town who grew up to be crucified like a common criminal.

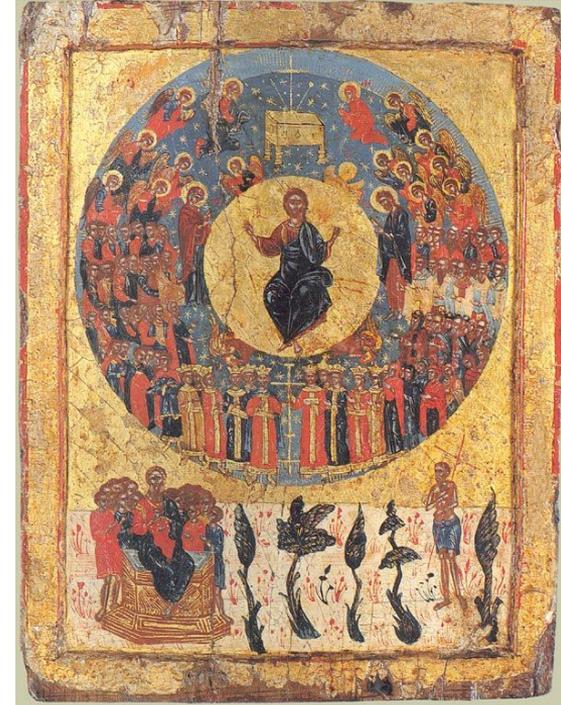
Jesus is presented as God's intervention into the apocalyptic situation of Israel, but his entry into the world at that time did not fix the world as people might have expected. How did Jesus' entry not match expectations? What can the incarnation of Christ teach us about our own expectations for how God ought to intervene in our lives?



The End of the World as We Know It: Great Expectations

Read **Mark 13:32-37**. These warnings underscore that God's apocalyptic activity was not just a future event marked by cosmic upheaval but was unfolding right in front of them. Jesus is the realization of God's radical reordering of the world.

Mark 14:62 echoes Mark 13:26. Crucifixion brings apocalyptic elements: darkness at noon; tearing of the temple curtain.



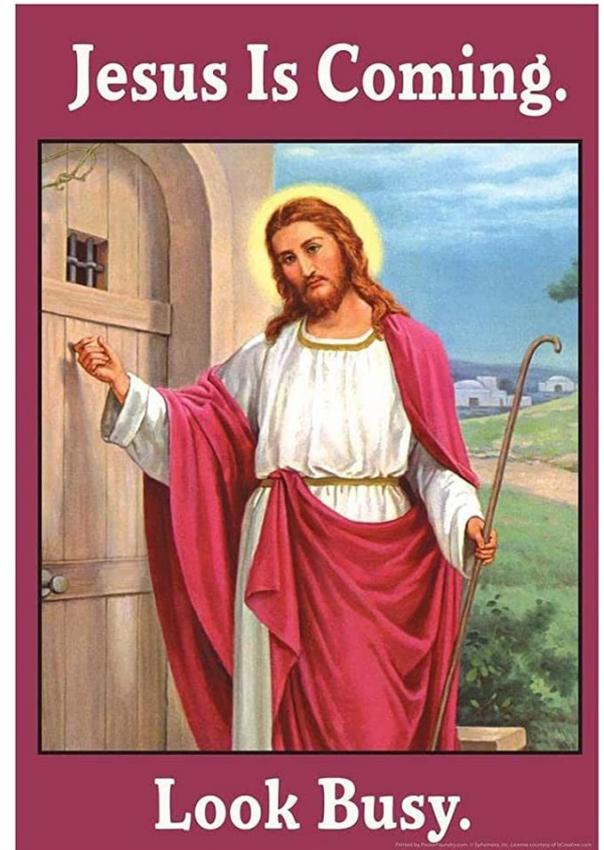
The End of the World as We Know It: Great Expectations

The reordered kingdom is not yet fully realized, so we live between the two Advents: the Advent of Christ's first coming as a baby, and the Advent of the second coming, where God's redeeming work will be fulfilled.

Our best indicator for what the future holds can be found in how God has acted in the past. In Jesus, God came in love; God came to transform, not destroy. Jesus' apocalypse reorders the world by transforming his enemies with love and grace - his ending was not destruction but redemption.

The End of the World as We Know It: Waiting

Advent is waiting - but not passively. Mark 13:34 - we're in charge, each with our own work. We wait and watch for Christ to redeem our lives and our world by doing the work Jesus gives us to do.







The End of the World as We Know It: Anticipating the Coming of Christ

When the medical professionals were asked why they would stay and work in an apocalyptic nightmare, they responded: this is the work we were given to do.

What is the work you have been given to do? Will you participate in Christ's radical reordering of our lives? Faithful anticipation in the coming of Christ is found not in calculating the exact time of the Messiah's return, but in witnessing to his hope and love.

Can you recall a time when you chose to enter someone's apocalyptic situation and you served as a witness to hope? What difference did it make?

The End of the World as We Know It: Apocalyptic Prayer of Hope

All biblical apocalyptic writing can be understood as a prayer for God to come and reorder our lives. Let us pray:

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus.