

## **First Sunday in Advent 2014**

**For the past few years, it has become a tradition of advertising “Black Friday” as a way to kick off the Christmas season so the retailers can get a boost in “year end” sales. I think it is an appropriate title for it precedes the first Sunday in Advent. The world was in great spiritual darkness and chaos for there had not been a prophet sent to the Jews for over 400 years when Christ entered the scene. The Jews were under the oppressive Roman government and they desired relief from the cruelty of the Roman soldiers.**

**The Christmas season gets into full swing following Thanksgiving and the merchants gear up hoping to lure people to spend money at their place of business. Songs fill the stores of reindeer, Santa and chestnuts roasting on an open fire. The world culture does its best to undermine the faith of God’s people and to focus on the trivial aspects of life that have no lasting meaning. “Season’s Greetings” has replaced the greeting of “Merry Christmas” and even the schools are eliminating the phrase of “Christmas vacation” with “Winter break” in order to eliminate all reference to religion in our culture.**

**However, December is a reminder to the world that Jesus Christ came the first time just as the Old Testament prophets foretold and there are references to his second coming. In the New Testament, Jesus talks about his return in the future. His command is for us to work, prepare for his coming, watch and pray, and to look for his appearing.**

**In Mark 13, as Jesus left the temple and started walking towards the Mount of Olives, his disciples mentioned the magnificent stone buildings that surrounded them. They admired the beauty and the workmanship that went into producing those beautiful structures made by man’s hands. Jesus answered by prophesying that there would not be one stone upon another in the days ahead that would not be thrown down. Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple and the four disciples, Peter, James, John and Andrew began to ask him privately this question, “Tell us when shall these things be and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?”**

**Jesus began by making this statement, “Take heed lest any man deceive you for many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ: and shall deceive many.”**

**He goes on to talk about the fact that there would be wars and rumors of wars, but we are not to be troubled about such things as they need to happen but the end is not yet.**

**Nation shall rise against nation; kingdom will fight against kingdoms; earthquakes will happen in various places; famines and troubles will be on the earth and these are the beginning of sorrows.**

**He goes on to speak about the personal troubles of the believers for they will be brought before the councils and will be beaten in the synagogues and shall be brought before rulers and kings for the sake of Christ. It will be held as a testimony against them in the Day of Judgment.**

And the gospel must first be published among all nations. Jesus told them that when they were brought before the councils that they were not to worry about how they would answer and not to premeditate about it for the words would be given to them in the hour that they were needed for it would not be their words, but the Holy Ghost would speak through them. He went on to say that family members would turn against each other for Christ's sake and would cause each other to be put to death. And believers would be hated of all men for Jesus' name sake but he that endures to the end the same shall be saved.

Over and over again, the Scriptures warn us against deception. In our day, I watch how Satan is deceiving people and leading them into his traps. We are being bombarded from all sides to compromise the truth of God's Word and to accept lifestyles that are contrary to God's design and commandments. We are encouraged to accept false religions in an effort to unite all people into one world religion. Jesus words, "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation," is a warning to each of us that call ourselves Christian.

The disciples didn't understand what was going to take place in the short 3 ½ years that Jesus had to teach them that they might build on the foundation that he put in place by his Father's plan. Judas, his most educated follower, was the only one that Satan took full control over and Jesus said of him, "It would have been better for him if he had not been born." See Mark 14:21

In Mark 8:34, Jesus said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Those who stand on the truth of the Scriptures and refuse to compromise what they know to be true words of God will not be accepted especially as the days of Jesus return draws closer. In 2 Timothy 2:15 it says to "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Paul goes on to speak about those who teach things that are not according to Scripture and he likens those words to a cancer that eats away healthy cells. Those who proclaim words that err from the truth will cause some to lose their faith. Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal. The LORD knows them that are his. And let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Paul admonished Timothy to "Watch in all things, endure afflictions, be an evangelist and make full proof of his ministry". Paul continued by saying that there is a reward for those who love "Jesus appearing". He looked forward to eternity and the second appearing of Christ. Are you willing to take a stand for Jesus Christ or will you follow the crowd like those who cried out "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" It takes courage to stand for Truth as it comes with a price. It may cost a job, friends, popularity, but love demands a decision!