

Rev 1:8
“The God Who Is, Who Was, and Who Is to Come”
Part 1- “The God Who Was”

I want to start this morning by sharing several excerpts from an article written by Ryan Reeves titled “The History of Advent”. He writes the following:

“In the early centuries of the church, Advent almost certainly arose as a result of the fixed dating of Christmas. Once December 25 became Christmas, it was the center of gravity for the later half of the year—a perfect balance to Easter in the first half. In this way, Advent took on significance the same way Lent did: both were preparation for the more significant season on the horizon.....Unlike modern Advent ceremonies, most celebrations of Advent in history had a twin focus. The Latin word *adventus* was the translation of the Greek *parousia*—a word used for both the coming of Christ in human flesh and his Second Coming. Advent, then, always tended to focus on both. For the first two weeks of Advent, the church would reflect on the Second Coming. Disciples would chasten their hearts, confess sins, and spend time hoping for the quick coming of the Lord. The last two weeks of Advent would then transition to focus on the first *parousia*, Christ in the manger. This double meaning in Advent history signals an important reality in the liturgical calendar: Advent and Christmas are never held as a full re-enactment of the life of Christ but point to our place between the Resurrection and Second Coming. Advent and Christmas are not merely about the coming of Jesus, but about everything since the birth of Jesus.....One notable lack in modern Advent celebration, though, is the twin focus of both the Incarnation and the Second Coming. Both of these themes make Advent

instructive, not only historically but also in terms of biblical theology. We are not a people who merely look to the one moment God broke into history. We await his coming again in glory, when the King's reign shall be on earth as it is in heaven."

His words regarding our modern Advent celebrations struck a chord with me. I have long recognized in our tradition what I would describe as a discomfort with or maybe even a willful ignorance of the dual meaning of Advent. Thus, it has always been an intentional move of mine to teach the congregations I have had the honor of serving the dual meaning of this season. Advent is not just the time of year for decking the halls and putting up manger scenes. Which by the way, I fully support and enjoy. However, we cannot get stuck at the manger. Jesus is no longer a baby. He is Lord of lords and King of kings. He is the one who sits at the right hand of the Father. And like God he is the one who is and who was and who is to come. So today I want to share three important truths regarding the God who was.

First truth, God has always existed. V8a "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God" **Before there ever was, there was God. This monumental truth is one no man or woman can be convinced of. The power that it takes to believe this is the same power it takes for one to call Jesus Lord. That power being God's Holy Spirit.** There are those who will say, "prove to me that there is a God", and I say to that, all the proof we need is in us and around us. But unless God opens your ears, your eyes and your heart you will not hear, see or receive it. So, if you struggle to believe this truth pray that God by His Holy Spirit will open your eyes, your ears and your heart. God has always existed, and God always will.

1 Cor 12:3 “³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.”

Heb 11:3 “³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”

Psalms 19:1 “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”

Romans 1:19-21 “¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

Second truth, like God, Jesus has always existed. 5b-7 “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.” If it isn’t obvious to us all, John is writing about Jesus the Christ, and he makes clear that he is coming back. He does so very specifically, “he is coming with the clouds”. Which makes clear he will be coming from above. Above being the habitation of God. This will not be his first coming but his second. His first coming was through Mary, by the Holy Spirit. Mary, who was a virgin, becomes pregnant by God’s Holy Spirit. And maybe you have never considered the question I am about to raise

but I have. What was Mary impregnated with? The answer. The living Word of God, who has always been with God, and who becomes Jesus when he (the living Word) takes on human flesh. Jesus was not a creation of God in response to the failure of humanity. Jesus is God and has always been with God, and apart him (preincarnate) nothing would exist. Like God, Jesus has always existed.

Luke 1:31-35 “³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God”

John 1:1-5, 14 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...¹⁴ And the Word 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.”

Col 1:15-20 “¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the

beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

Third and final truth, God/Christ hold sway over all things. V5b & 8b

“the ruler of kings on earth.... who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” Christianity.com writes the following regarding the second Sunday of Advent, the Sunday we light the Peace candle. “The peace of God allows us to look at others through heaven’s eyes and help guide the world to see God’s here and not-yet here kingdom. Peace from God, biblical peace, allows us to trust in God’s promises, through restful, tranquil faith, despite the dark, scary world around us.” Let’s be frank this morning. **There is much in this world to be afraid of, but only if you do not believe that God, Jesus holds sway over all things.** I would say that most don’t have peace because they are afraid of the wrong thing. There is a constant refrain in scripture to fear not and to fear God. Why? The things we tend to fear are temporary, but God is eternal, and thus He is the true power. When Jesus entered the world the first time the call was to rejoice, we notice here that his Second Coming will be filled with much wailing. V7b “and all tribes of the earth will mourn on account of him”. Never forget that Christ will have the last word.

Matt 10:28 “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” The God who was. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.