

# He is at the Gates

## *Advent Sunday*

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As I grew up, there was the book *Silent Spring*, which I had to read in one of the English courses that I did. It warns the world of the dangers of DDT and prophesied the end through its misuse. A little later, it was a book called *The Population Bomb*, which foretold the end through over-population. We can remember the store or Red's under the Beds and the communist menace. Then it was the Environmental Crisis, and the Nuclear Winter, Mutually Assured Destruction (or MAD) and the El Niño, and now we see global warming being replaced by climate change. All these prophetic ideas have dealt with the idea that there is to be an end of the world.

No doubt there is much truth in what is written, and many people here have amended their lives in accordance with the prophetic word in them. Many people believe in Global Warming, but there is little evidence for its occurrence.

I have spoken before about the great disappointment. How the Adventists, on the advice of William Miller, had waited first in 1843 and then again in 1844 for the great coming of the Son of Man. Needless to say, Scripture advises us that the end cannot be predicted. But it does also tell us that it can be expected. For as foolish as the Adventists were, how much more foolish are we if we deny the possibility of the end?

Although Advent leads up to our great celebration of the first coming of Jesus, it begins with the reminder that the first coming is the precursor of the second. Indeed, we are living in a unique period of History, the time between the first and second comings of Jesus. Scripture is kind to us on the subject in that it indicates what is to come. Only with the advent of nuclear weapons have we been able to understand the predicted devastation on a global scale.

Although we are ready to believe the human predictions that come and go, are we so swift to take Jesus at his word? There is in Scripture, the overwhelming sense that this is an interim period. This time of history between the two coming is a time that we are to looking for what will end. These things will end if not with the coming of our Lord, certainly in the coming of our death, for life itself (as we know it) is an interim period in preparation for eternity.

So this is an assurance, that all we know will pass away – and the new will come, so are we ready for it. Advent is our reminder of the transience of life in the

eternal framework and a warning for us that the significance of the first coming is demonstrated in the Second.

So what does this mean?

You and I, ought to live in expectation of something new. It is not that we cease to live in this world, or in this time, but we prepare ourselves for the new life to come and anticipate its superiority.

I could put it this way. I cannot really remember life before I was married. And I often am caught up thinking that Lou should remember something that happened before we met. I enjoy being married (well 95% of the time) and have in Louise a soulmate and close companionship that now makes me wonder how we could not be together. For a time, we were engaged and lived with the expectation that we would be married (although not soon enough). But life went on, but our lives were predicated on the fact that we would be eventually married.

This is what Advent is the reminder of. Things have not yet come to fruition, but the promise is there. If you like, this is like an engagement period. We then ought to live, you and I, in the anticipation of what it is that will come to pass.

Our Gospel this morning is the warning to take seriously these things, to anticipate their coming to pass. Whether the climate is warming or not, there is a more certain event – That the son of man will come. Are we anticipating it in the way we live?

*Therefore, keep awake —for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”*

**AMEN.**