

“THE DAILY ADVENT OF CHRIST”

HEBREWS 9:24-28

DECEMBER 19, 2010, SUNDAY, 11:00 AM – DR. JACK GRAHAM

[applause] Well, thank you, Darren and Danna, choir and orchestra. Me, too! I worship the one! And I am so grateful for the time of worship that we have enjoyed and experienced together. And now to take God's Word and to speak to you once again on a Savior for all seasons.

There are three Old Testament offices, appointed and anointed offices. One is the Prophet. Last week we discovered that Jesus is the anointed Prophet, the Messiah, the One who fulfills the words of the prophets, and God has spoken to us in these last days through His Son. He is Emmanuel. Because God came in the person of Christ, was born at Bethlehem and lived and died and rose again, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, He is the Messiah and the Savior of all who trust and believe in Him, receiving Him as Lord.

The second office of the Old Testament is that of the Priest. And we're going to discover today that Jesus also bears that title of the high and holy and heavenly Priest of God. Just as there were Old Testament priests who prayed for the people, who offered sacrifices and who served in the place of worship, the Temple of the Tabernacle, Jesus fulfills the office of the priesthood and is now our Priest. He is credentialed as both Prophet and Priest. And the next time that we're together we'll discover the third office which is King... the anointed King of the universe.

Jesus is perfected humanity, who has now ascended into the highest and the holiest of places, heaven itself, the throne room of God. The Bible describes our Lord as being at the right hand of the Father, or seated on the throne of God. Today, this very hour, Jesus is appearing in the presence of the... of the Father at throne of God. Thus I'm going to speak to you about "The Daily Advent of Jesus."

We speak of the first advent of Jesus when He came the first time but Jesus appears continually before the throne of God. This is Christmas yesterday, today and forever. And the question is: What is Jesus doing now? Now that's an important question. The fact is that no other founder of world religions... no other religion has an idea as to where their founder is or what their founder is doing right now.

For example, those who practice the Muslim faith... they don't know what Mohammed is doing. Their writings do not clue them in as to what the prophet... they claim the prophet Mohammed is doing. They assume that he is in paradise but do not know what he is doing there today. The same could be ah... said of Buddha or of Krishna or Zoroaster. None of these religions teach the activity or the ministry currently of their leader since their leader has departed. But the Bible is full of important information as to what our Savior, our Leader and our Lord is doing right now!

So take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Hebrews in your New Testament which is a decidedly Jewish book in it's flavor, written to Jewish believers who have received the Messiah, and so the writer speaks often of the offices and the functions of the Old Testament, and in particular, of the priest and identifies Jesus as the Priest. And in Hebrews chapter 9... Hebrews chapter 9, we're going to begin reading at verse 24 through the end of this chapter. And here's what we discover about Jesus our Priest:

24) For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear... (that's the word advent) ...now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 25) Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26) for then He would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27) And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after this comes judgment, 28) so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him... to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.

Let me remind you that salvation in the Bible is in three tenses: past tense, present tense, future tense. I have been saved—that's past tense. There was a time, a place, a moment, a miracle in my life in which I have been forgiven, cleansed, and forever changed by the power of His grace and love. I have been saved! There should be a time... a moment in your life when you can say "I have been saved."

But the Bible also says we are being saved—that's present tense. And that's the process of sanctification; where we are made more and more like Christ. This is the growing part of our Christian faith, the maturing part of our faith. The Bible also says that we will be saved—that's future tense. We will be saved ultimately, finally, forever when we are glorified in the presence of God. When we are in His presence forever in heaven... glorification.

I have been saved—that's justification; I have been forgiven of the penalty of sin; I am being saved—that's present tense- sanctification, I am being saved from the power of sin; and I will be saved—that's glorification—when I will be saved from the very presence of sin! And so Jesus is saving us, and as our eternal Priest, He is representing, mediating, praying, interceding, counseling and guiding us. The Scripture says in 1 Timothy [1 Timothy 2:5] that there is "*one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.*"

The question of life is how do we gain access to God? How can man who is sinful know God who is holy?

The message of the Good News that was announced that Christmas, given to us throughout the pages of Scripture is that God took the initiative... [John 3:16] "*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son*", and God has provided access and the avenue... [John 14:6] "*Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Light and no one comes to the Father but by Me."* The Scripture says [Acts 4:12], "*There's no other name given among men whereby we must be saved*" but the name of Jesus. [Matthew 1:21] "*You shall call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins...*" Because He is the One Mediator, we now have this Person who is the pathway into the presence of God. And knowing God and knowing that you are known by God is the source of life's greatest peace and joy and hope!

So Jesus the High Priest entered... illustrated here in the text that we wrote (read)... entered here in the most holy place, speaking of the temple... the tabernacle, and the Holy of holies where the priest would enter once a year but throughout the temple the sacrifices were given and the blood was poured out and the temples... the... the temple priest... they never sit down. The High Priest himself was the only one allowed to enter into the most holy place to offer atonement from God for the sins of the people. And after all those multiplied millions of sacrifices and the priest who... who worked constantly through the years, Jesus came and when He died His blood was poured out and His sacrifice is sufficient to satisfy the holy demands of God and to save all who will come to Him.

When Jesus died on the cross the veil of the temple which separated man from the presence of God... the veil of the temple was torn into from top to bottom, as if God took it from the top and ripped it all the way through. So now because of what Christ has done, we may enter in freely into the presence of God. In fact, the writer of Hebrews says [Hebrews 4:16], "*We can come boldly to the throne of grace.*" Now when that happens Jesus our High Priest then mediates for us. This signifies the finished work of Christ and redemption. The Scripture says He sat down at the right hand of the Father, signifying that the mission is complete. He has ascended and now resides in heaven in the place of ultimate authority and the object of glorious and eternal worship by both the saints and the angels.

Now can you imagine what that is like at this very moment? If the angels rejoiced and celebrated when Jesus was born as a Man in His humanity... left His throne and came to earth... If the angels praised Him then, imagine how they must praise Him now! Having accomplished the work of salvation! He is now returned to His glory! And this celebration continues and will continue ah... into eternity and eternity and into infinity. "*Worthy is the Lamb!*" He is seated. As I said, the Old Testament priests never sat down because the work was never finished! But now the work is finished. He is not resting, but reigning!

Now the story of our Lord's coming to earth is a story of humility. The story of Christmas is a story of humanity and humility. The Scripture says that [Philippians 2:7] "*He made Himself of no reputation.*" God Himself emptied Himself, not of His deity... He remained deity... but of His dignity. Isaiah the prophet said [Isaiah 53:3] "*He would be despised and rejected of men.*" He emptied Himself of divine privileges and prerogatives and walked as a man. The Bible tells us that in His earthly life, He veiled His glory in His humanity.

Every now and then you might see a picture of Jesus, even the Christ child in the cradle with a little halo around his head with an angelic or deified face and... and perhaps you've seen these kinds of photo... ah... portraits of Christ that indicate that He looked differently than other people, but He did not. He was a man... and He was a man's man! He was not a guru wasting away but God in the flesh, full of the deity of God Almighty!

He knew tears. I love the carol of Christmas Away in a Manger, though Away in a Manger makes a mistake when it sings "No crying He makes." Oh, Jesus cried. He cried like any other baby cries and kept Mary up at night I'm sure. And Joseph said, "I'll be there later." [laughter] When His friends died... when He was brokenhearted over the lostness of Jerusalem, He wept bitter tears! Yes, He was tender, He was touched, He was veiled in His glory! And that is why in the great High Priestly prayer given to us in John 17, Jesus said in John 17:5... prayed that He would return to the glory of

His Father as it was before time began. His glory was veiled in His grace. He gave up His honor for humility.

He was hated and spit upon and mocked and murdered. Mary's little Lamb was butchered on the cross. Perfect Deity inhabiting perfect humanity! He died even the death of the cross... even the death of the cross. A death so brutal that one described it as to die a thousand times on a cross before you took your last breath. Even the death of a cross.

He gave up His riches. Second Timothy 8... or 2 Corinthians 8:9: "He who was rich... who owned it all, who made it all, who had it all... became poor. He was born into a family of blue-collar workers, Joseph, and He didn't have a place to lay His head and He had to borrow some money from a fish one day to pay His taxes. He had nothing when He had everything.

So the story of Christmas is God leaving His throne and coming to terra firma to celestial earth and He became one of us. Think of the humility of Jesus. Washing the feet of disciples whose minds He made! Humility, born in a filthy stable because there was no room for Him in the Inn. As God, living with the knowledge that He would one day, because of His mission, die on a cross. He lived under the shadow of this death for man's sin throughout His days. In fact the psalmist said in Psalm 88: 5 "I was afflicted and close to death from my youth up."

He lived among us, He dwelt among us. He shared our hurts, our pains, our tears, our temptation! And so because He now daily appears before the throne of God as our Mediator, connecting us to God, he is still engaged in our lives, stren... strengthening us, securing us, sustaining us. He shares in our life.

While there are times that God may seem to be silent, Jesus is never absent. [Matthew 28:20] "I am with you always!" We are vitally, essentially, eternally connected to Christ! He is our head in heaven! We are His body... His people on earth! And because He shared our real humanity, He now is a High Priest who is touched by the feelings of our infirmities. He knows our pain. He knows our personal struggle. He understands our problem. His holy presence by His Spirit is with us.

So what we need to do every day is to remind ourself of the nearness of our God! Imagine Him... because He is... right next to you, in the room with you, in the car with you on your way to the office. See Him there in the eyes of faith with the eyes of your heart, walking with you, going with you wherever you go!

Yes, Jesus is glorified! Yes, He is in heaven, but He has promised to be with us and His distance in heaven makes no difference. Heaven is a real place with real people and with a real Savior and God. But heaven is also around us. Heaven is nearer than you possibly can imagine! The Bible speaks of heaven as not only being a place, but heaven being an atmosphere. And heaven is very near.

Did you know the Bible tells us that angels desire to look upon our worship. Angels, no doubt, are here this morning. The presence of heaven... the powers of heaven... the life of God is all around us, and especially when we need Him the most. Jesus promised to come for us when we are dying and exiting this world as so beautifully illustrated in Acts chapter 7 when Stephen the godly deacon is martyred for his faith... stoned. And while he is praying and forgiving those who are killing him, he

looks into heaven and his face began to shine with the face of an angel. His countenance beams with the glory of God! And he saw One standing at the right hand of the throne of God... not seated this time, but standing. It is as though Jesus is standing in approval, applauding and welcoming His warrior home to heaven!

Yes, Jesus in life and in death is with us. He is at the throne of God. He's not so busy running the universe that He doesn't take notice of His servants on earth [tap]. He is not so enamored or preoccupied with the worship of angels that he does not join us when we worship Him, that He will not meet us at the point of our own needs. He is our Mediator. He is mediating for you, connecting you to God, feeling the gap that separates us man from God, bringing us to Himself, saving us, then mediating with us and for us, strengthening us, sustaining us and secure...

And then He is interceding. That means He's praying. Hebrews 7:25. The last part of Hebrews chapter 7, 25 is a text you should know: "*Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him (speaking there of our prayers), since He always lives to make intercession for them.*"

I learned a long time ago that prayer is really a circle. That the prayer that starts in heaven in the heart and mind of God comes to our hearts when we pray and seek Him, then returns to Him as we offer our request unto Him. The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts to heaven... in heaven. And that's the picture we have here in the 25... 25th verse. That we are drawing near to God, and as we are praying, He is praying for us. And the word *intercession* there means to pray specifically. This isn't general world-wide praying; this is specific personal praying!

Now imagine if you knew... if you knew that Jesus was right outside that door right now on His knees praying for you... I mean, nothing could hold you back. No problem that you... I mean, wouldn't you agree that if you knew... You believe that Jesus always gets His prayers answered? Sure He does! He said, "The Father always hears me." So if Jesus is right outside that door and He's praying for you, I mean you could charge hell with a water pistol, couldn't you [laughter], just knowing the strength in that prayer! There's so much strength in praying.

This past week Brent Trammell had very serious brain surgery, one of our fine men in the church and his wife Jenna Lee, three boys. I was so ... As a pastor I was so... just thankful as I was there, as their class came together to pray. Prestonwood Christian Academy... the boys are students at PCA. Others from the community were there... about one hundred of us in the fireside room on our faces before God, praying for Brent. There was such strength in hearing the prayers of the family, and hearing the prayers for the family. It was such a ... a powerful moment! The presence of God... you could have... the environment... the atmosphere was just charged with the presence of Christ!

[I'm] So thankful for the praying ministry of this church because that happens again and again in our groups, our classes, our ministries as we pray for one another, how we're strengthened in prayer. And the prayers of God's saints, the followers of Jesus are powerful.

But oh, the power of the prayers of Jesus! Think how you would be strengthened if you knew that Jesus was praying about your pain, your problem, your suffering, right now! He is! He is!

When I was a... I have a great friend by the name of Jack Eassa... E-A-S-S-A. He is a... lives in West Palm Beach. He was the chairman of the pastor search committee that brought me down to be the pastor of First Baptist of West Palm Beach in 1981. I was 31 years of age and ah... that group believed in me; called me as pastor. We had a great ministry there in the church through the eighties. And Jack is dearest of friends, almost like a father to me.

And I remember as a young preacher, I was preaching along about this very subject... about Jesus interceding for us. Now Jack and his family came from Lebanon and he's... he's excited... He's a great salesperson. He's just that kind of guy. But he walked up to me there with tears in his eyes. He said, "Pastor, I've been in church all my life (and he had) He said, "But I never remember hearing that. Jesus is praying for me." And it had dawned on him... The Spirit of God had just driven that truth into his heart. And... and he's never forgotten it. We've discussed in many times since. That sometimes the most simple of truths are the most powerful, aren't they?

And if Jesus is praying for you as a believer (and He is!), and if His prayers are always answered (and they will be!), you can trust Him with your life! He ever lives to make intercession for His saints. He has accomplished... You see, we don't need earthly mediators. I don't need an earthly priest to get me in touch with God. I don't need any man to connect me and my prayers to God! Jesus is my Priest! He is the High Priest! And He is praying.

And not only that, He is counseling. That's what He's doing right now. Isaiah in speaking of the Savior to come, spoke of the wonderful counselor. Look in your Bibles... turn a few pages back in Hebrews. Go to the fourth chapter, verses 14 to 16: *"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

Our High Priest is the heavenly counsel, the Royal Advocate in the presence of the Judge of the universe. And He identifies with us; He knows you. Been there, done that as a man, as a human being. He's been tempted; He's been tested. He faced problems and asked questions. He grew tired. He had aspiration and dreams. He was misunderstood and mistreated. All the human emotions! Jesus experienced all of this! Wonderful!

Thank God for counselors who take God's Word and counsel us in His Word. And there are times when therapy is needed, when we can talk through our problems and work through our pain. But as good as an earthly counselor may be, you can't take the counselor home with you. They can't wake up with you there in the middle of the night, or early in the morning.

But the heavenly Counselor can! He goes home with you every day! Every evening! He knows your tears. He knows your loneliness. Christmas and this season of the year can be a very lonely time for some people. Loved ones are absent, friends are gone, and many problems... we see it at the church. One of our security personnel was telling me that they're dealing with a lot of problems in people's lives particularly this season of the year. And so He is there in loneliness.

And while there may be times when you are lonely, you are never alone if you know Jesus. He is your Counselor. He speaks words; He whispers softly in the night; He brings peace in times of turmoil. When we struggle with our guilt and our sin, we open up to Him, He helps us deal with our guilt and the struggles of our lives. We can ask questions.

Don't hide things from God. He knows it anyway. And He will counsel you and help you and restore you and renew you. He knows you better than you know yourself.

Hebrews 4 ... you're there: look at the verse previously and verse 13... "*And no...*" Chapter 4 of Hebrews, verse 13: "*And no creature is hidden from His sight but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.*" We all give an account to God but He is our Counselor. He understands, He knows our temptation. He's promised to guide us and to walk with us into His will. And no foe shall charge us! Romans 8 [33] says, "*Who shall lay any charge to God's elect!*"

Another word for lawyer is counselor. So in effect, Jesus is our Advocate, He is our Lawyer when we are accused.

Several years ago, I was called upon to give a deposition on behalf of the church. There was a lawsuit going on and ah... they wanted to hear from me. So believe it or not, I'd never done a deposition. So I was a little nervous about that.

But Jason Graham who is our very fine son and lawyer, went with me to the deposition. And this was a complete mind-boggling role reversal for me. [laughter] because we're sitting in this room at a table. And the lawyer, I mean, I can tell, I mean he's going to go after me hard. And Jason sat down at the end of the table, seemingly without a care in the world: He's got a pencil and a pad. He's just kinda looking; writing things. And this guy's getting ready to go after me. I say, "Okay, boy, I hope you're ready." [laughter] Well, he was ready!

And it wasn't long, this lawyer asked me something and ah... before I could answer, Jason didn't even look up; he just kept writing. He said, "Dad, you don't have to answer that." So I didn't. [laughter] A little later on, another question came. Jason looked up this time. Said, "Dad, don't answer that." Looked right back down. I said, "What he said." [laughter] And it happened four or five times in the process. This guy would ask me questions that were out of bounds, they were not applicable and... and... and make some kind of an accusation ah... regarding this case and Jason would simply say, "Dad, don't answer that! You don't have to answer that." And we had a great result, by the way, on the whole deal. He's a good lawyer! [laughter]

When Satan accuses you... when your own conscience accuses you... when the devil himself, as in the case of Job, approaches the throne of God and says, "Look at Jack Graham right there! Look what he did! Look what he said! Look at his attitude! Look at his weakness! Look at his failure!" our heavenly... our heavenly Lawyer says, "Jack, you [strike] don't have to answer that!" [applause] Don't answer that!" Because He says to the heavenly Father, "He is mine. He is blood-bought and he is heaven bound! And no foe, no fault shall ever charge him or lay any charge to God's elect!"

So we are secure! This is why we can say, "I'm as sure for heaven as if I was already there!" because once and for all, with continuing and eternal results our great High Priest has poured out His blood

finally and fully for us! We belong to Him! He is our heavenly Advocate and Counselor mediating with us, interceding for us, preparing a place in heaven for us. That's something else He's doing, building His church. He said [Matthew 16:18], "I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it!" He's doing that today. He's our Priest!

When I was a boy going to church I learned an old, old song that I bet Todd Bell doesn't even know. [laughter] It's called Once, for All. "Once for all, O sinner, receive it! / Once for all, O brother believe it! / Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, But our God Christ has redeemed us once for all!" That's why the Scriptures say He saves to the uttermost them who come to God by Him. So the old preacher said, "Yes, He saves from the guttermost to the uttermost, [laughter] from here to eternity! In other words, he saves us all the way.

This is what Christmas is about.. that God is with us, He's the Prophet; that God is for us, He is our Priest and our coming King! We're so grateful for this message that changes our lives.

Amen? [Amen] Would you stand with me, please? Everyone standing together. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed.

I want to invite you to know Jesus. Come forward today and openly confess Jesus as your Savior and Lord. We're going to sing a hymn of invitation. I invite you to come. Our ministers are upstairs in the balcony; on the lower level, right here. You come... and just tell one of the ministers, "I want to give Christ my life."

Why wouldn't you want to give your life to a Savior like this who would do and is doing this much for you? It's not a matter of you holding on and doing the best you can. I think so many people hold out because they don't think I can live it... they just can't do it. Duh! You can't! But what you can't do for yourself, He will do for you, if you will come to him by faith. That's what I'm asking you to do today.

Others need to come for believer's baptism. As these were baptized this morning, you felt prompted [tap] to be baptized. Maybe you need to get your baptism on the right side of your salvation. That means you've been saved but you might have been dunked in water at one time or sprinkled a little bit, but you've never been baptized as a believer since you've truly followed Christ. Maybe you want to come and get your baptism on the right side of your salvation. Or be baptized for the very first time.

Others want to come and join this church. You believe as we believe. You... you're worshipping with us, you're participating. Why don't you come and belong with us as we give this message of Christ to the world.

Thank You, Lord, for these moments, these miracles in peoples' lives. [music begins] Thank You for Jesus who right now is also inviting. Who said [Revelation 3:20], "I stand at the door and knock and if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in." Lord, we know that You're inviting us to welcome You into our lives, so help us to do that now. And especially those who for the first time will welcome You as Savior and Lord. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.