

## **A new perspective on the Advent, by Rev. Courtney Arntzen**

INTRO: The advent of Jesus Christ is not only as it seems...There is more going on than we imagine...

Voice #1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Voice #2: This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,

Voice #3: "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Voice #1: All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

Voice #2: In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Voice #1: A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born.

Voice #3: While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.

Voice #1: She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.”

Voice #3: She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Voice #1: And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God.

Voice #2: And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

Voice #1: Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Voice #2: An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

Voice #1: Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah.

Voice #3: And the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid.

Voice #1: For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

Voice #3: And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid.

Voice #1: They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

Voice #3: And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

Voice #1: Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!

Voice #3: And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Voice #1: But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

Voice #3: And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Voice #2: Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

Voice #3: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Voice #2: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

Voice #3: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he

asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written.

Voice #1: When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach. Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent.

Voice #3: Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

Voice #2: After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Voice #3: An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Voice #1: But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

Voice #3: And then I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

Voice #1: “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.

Voice #2: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Voice #1: They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

Voice #2: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Voice #1: 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Selected verses from Matthew 1; Luke 2; John 1; Revelation 12; and Revelation 21, all scripture taken from the *New International Version*.

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