

# ADVENT: THE LAST THINGS by Caitlyn Wymer

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## WEEK 1: HOPE/DEATH

READING: (Read scripture aloud)

1 Peter 1:3-9

*"3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

## INTRODUCTION

Good morning, we're \_\_\_\_\_ and we're so excited to introduce our first theme of Advent.

Advent means "arrival" - it's a time when we celebrate the historic arrival of Jesus as a baby, where we look forward to the arrival of Jesus when He returns in glory, and where we participate with the Holy Spirit and rejoice in his moment by moment arrival in our own lives. If you look for Advent in the Bible, you won't find it. It isn't something that the Jews celebrated, but rather something that the Church instituted as a way of remembering Christ and preparing our hearts for His return. And we believe it's something that is needed all the more in this age of distraction. So this Advent season, in addition to lighting our candles each week for hope, peace, joy and love, we will also be addressing "the Four Last Things". Many of us may imagine that the four last things are Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Years' Eve. In fact, we're speaking of the four last things, cosmically, and they are: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. Traditionally these Four Last Things are the Advent sermon series of the Church. It doesn't sound like very cheerful subject matter, does it? But the message of Advent is that Christ has come and Christ will come again, and this time not as a humble baby, but as a conquering, eternal and cosmic King, and keeping these four last things before our eyes helps us to better prepare our hearts for his return. To paraphrase author and professor Sinclair Ferguson, these last four things lead us to look as through a telescope towards the age to come, rather than looking under a microscope at the things that are passing away.

## DEVOTIONAL

Our devotional this morning is also from Sinclair Ferguson, and his response to the lyrics of the famous poem by the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas, in his agony about the way his father died:

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Ferguson says, “How wonderful it is when the gospel of Jesus Christ bursts onto the stage as a message of hope as well as faith and love. How blessed the day when Jesus’ death drew the sting of death. How blessed the day when in His resurrection, death was defeated. And how blessed will be the day of His return, when He will finally destroy death – the day, as [Revelation 20:14](#) tells us, when death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire, never to appear again. That’s why for believers who die, death that is our enemy also becomes an entrance into life eternal with Jesus Christ, who has conquered death.

And friends, that means that when we breathe our last, we will be able to say to those we love in Christ: “I go gently into this good night to be with Christ. I love you, and I will see you in the morning.”

This week as we light the Hope candle, we consider Jesus, who is our hope in death, and who has taken the sting of death away. “ We hope for the day when death will be destroyed forever, and He shall wipe every tear from our eyes ( ). When “everlasting joy shall be upon (our) heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 51:11).

**LIGHTING OF THE HOPE CANDLE: Light The First Candle (Purple)**

## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

Now, we invite you to pause and reflect on this question with the Holy Spirit...

- Where do you need the hope of Jesus in your life right now? Take a moment and invite Him into that place.

Closing prayer:

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