

1302  
1747

Midday Prayers - 882  
29.11.82  
28.11.88

882

## ADVENT PREFACE I

Advent/dawn  
Antiphon

[Worship Com.  
Horn 2<sup>3</sup>]  
How far is it  
to Bethlehem  
"Once in"  
14

'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all' — these are the very last written words of the New Testament, the whole Bible in fact: the end of the only prophetic book in the collection we call the 'New' Testament, the Bk of Revelation, or the Apocalypsa. 'Come, Lord Jesus' is (it seems) part of a very early Christian hymn: and a familiar and common prayer of the first Christians. The Second Coming of Christ was something very real to them — some of them even believed it was an event about to happen very soon, in their lifetimes. | Now, it is the Christian season of Advent again — and that means The Coming, the coming of the Lord Jesus. There wasn't any Christmastime in the first centuries of Christianity: but, what has become our Christmas and Epiphany started off as celebrating the Coming of Christ — the one that happened in human space and time in Palestine 2000 years ago, and the Coming to which Christians look forward in hope and joy. "Come, Lord Jesus" — that's still our Advent prayer now: and maybe making that prayer a motif for these few weeks might help us make a better preparation for the celebration of Christmas this year, one that reminds us more that this time isn't only a remembrance of Bethlehem long ago, or even today. 'Come, Lord Jesus': and in your Christmas coming wake up or shake up our Christian hope and longing for your Coming in glory: put back the joyful hope that we tend to lose track of in our busy-ness about preparing for Christmas and in our ways of celebrating

your first coming among us. "Come, God-with-us, Emmanuel" — that's still an Advent song people sing today, one of the older songs of this season, based on a series of short, imploring prayers that for centuries have been part of the prayer of the Church in the time just before Christmas

Joy to the World  
2<sup>2</sup>

MUSIC (O Come Emmanuel)

## PRAYERS

"Waiting in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour" — isn't that quite different from the fearful anxiety that eats at the hearts of many people now, young and old, when they think about the future? Not just the "1997" question for Hong Kong people, but the growing concern about nuclear weapons and nuclear power, the vast arms-race the world's involved in, violence between people and nations. A recent popular novel linked the more-or-less present state of world affairs with the Second Coming of Christ, "The Clowns of God". The 'clowns' of the title was an apt choice: isn't that what Christians are who really believe in God's love, joyfully hope for His Coming, when others are despairing, frightened, without any hope at all? God's Coming, in Christ in Bethlehem, and in the fullness of human time surely should help us always remember that humanity isn't perfect, cannot save itself, in a world where there remains evil of all kinds and the power of evil. We who believe that Christ has overcome that power and the power of death should not be full of fear and anxiety about what may happen to our world, so much as to forget the joyful hope that's ours too. Of course

we're naturally concerned about our own futures, our families and friends; even anxious in that sense. And of course Christians are concerned about the stupidities of arms build-ups, wars, nuclear weapons, violence. But we do have hope in the Christ who said: "When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand ... stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man."

MUSIC (The Track from Above)

PRAYERS (Dennis)



closing music.

Nativity  
2<sup>3</sup> Once  
1/3 --