

A reading from the second book of Samuel.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Now when David, the king, was settled in his house,
and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him,
the king said to the prophet Nathan,
“See now, I am living in a house of cedar,
but the ark of God stays in a tent.”

Nathan said to the king,
“Go, do all that you have in mind,
for the Lord is with you.”

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan:

“Go and tell my servant David:

‘Thus says the Lord:

Are you the one to build me a house to live in?

I took you from the pasture,

from following the sheep

to be prince over my people Israel;

and I have been with you wherever you went,

and have cut off all your enemies from before you;

and I will make for you a great name,

like the name of the great ones of the earth.

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel

and will plant them,

so that they may live in their own place,

and be disturbed no more;

and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly,

from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel;

and I will give you rest from all your enemies.

Moreover the Lord declares to you, David,

that the Lord will make you a house.

When your days are fulfilled

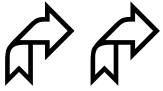
and you lie down with your ancestors,

I will raise up your offspring after you,

who shall come forth from your body,

and I will establish his kingdom.





FIRST READING [CTD.] – B ADVENT 4

I will be a father to him,
and he shall be a son to me.
Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me;
your throne, David, shall be established forever.”



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – B ADVENT 4

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

To the One who is able to strengthen you
according to my Gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ,
according to the revelation of the mystery
that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed,
and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles,
according to the command of the eternal God,
to bring about the obedience of faith—
to the only wise God,
through Jesus Christ,
to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL – ADVENT YEAR B WEEK 4

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The angel Gabriel was sent by God
to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,
to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph,
of the house of David.
The virgin's name was Mary.
And he came to her and said,
“Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.”
But she was much perplexed by his words
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
The angel said to her,
“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.
And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you will name him Jesus.
He will be great,
and will be called the Son of the Most High,
and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.
He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,
and of his kingdom there will be no end.”
Mary said to the angel,
“How can this be, since I am a virgin?”
The angel said to her,
“The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
therefore the child to be born will be holy;
he will be called Son of God.
And now,
your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son;
and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.
For nothing will be impossible with God.”
Then Mary said,
“Here am I, the servant of the Lord;
let it be with me according to your word.”
Then the angel departed from her.

The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

In series B the Gospel readings are taken from the Gospel of Mark, supplemented by the Gospel of John. This is necessary because Mark's Gospel, being the shortest, requires supplementing. Also, in the three-year cycle, John is otherwise read only on certain occasions (especially Lent and Eastertide) in series A and C.

Let us first remind ourselves of the structure of the Advent season. The theme of future eschatology—the Christian hope for the final consummation of history—dominates the concluding Sundays of the year and reaches its climax on the First Sunday of Advent.

On the following three Sundays, other themes preparatory to the celebration of Christmas and the first coming of the Messiah gradually take over. Thus, each succeeding liturgical season dovetails into its predecessor.

Reading I: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

This passage gives classical expression to the Davidic-messianic hope in the Old Testament. It is not the only type of the messianic hope, but it later became dominant in many circles, for example among the Pharisees, as we see from Ps Sol 17; among the covenanters of Qumran, who looked for both a Messiah of David and a Messiah of Levi; and among the simple pious folk of Judea and Galilee, as we see from the Lucan infancy narrative.

In its original intention, however, 2 Sam 7 was an expression of royal ideology. The promise was that the Davidic dynasty would last forever. Note how David's original intention is reversed by the prophet's later word. David indicates his intention of building a house for YHWH, that is, a temple.

At first, Nathan approves of the king's proposal but later corrects this in the light of a further word from the Lord received in the night. Instead of David's building a house (temple) for YHWH, YHWH covenants to maintain the "house" (dynasty) of David in perpetuity.

Strictly speaking, then, this is not a messianic prophecy in the later sense, for it does not speak of the coming of the ideal Davidic king. But after the destruction of the Davidic monarchy, this promise could only take the form of the coming of a Davidic Messiah, and in Christian perspective the promise has been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus the Christ, whom the New Testament (as in the Lucan Annunciation story that forms the gospel reading today) proclaims as the Son of David.

Responsorial Psalm: 89:2-3, 4-5, 27-29*

This psalm makes a perfect response to the first reading, for, as the Jerome Biblical Commentary points out, the two passages should be read in conjunction. Only the second and third stanzas deal directly with the Davidic-messianic hope.

The first stanza comes from the opening of the psalm, which is a general hymn of praise to YHWH. But the first stanza is not unrelated to the messianic hope, for the faithfulness of YHWH is exhibited precisely in his faithfulness to his covenant with David. Note how the second stanza refers quite specifically to the covenant of 2 Samuel.

Reading II: Romans 16:25-27

In the manuscript tradition, this doxology appears at three different places: after Rm 14:23; after Rm 15:33; and in its canonical position here. Some have thought that it is a Marcionite gloss, for it seems to assume that the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ had been silent through the Old Testament period, as Marcion taught.

However, this is untenable for two reasons. First, Origen explicitly informs us that Marcion did not read these verses in his text. Second, Marcion would never have allowed that the writings of the Old Testament prophets were instruments through which the Christian revelation was proclaimed, even in the Christian era.

The doxology actually has close affinities with the style and thought of Colossians and Ephesians (cf. especially Col 1:26-27; Eph 3:9-10) and is therefore probably the work of a Deutero-Pauline editor of Romans.

Judging from the various places where it appears in the manuscript tradition, it was probably added as a conclusion to Romans in the three different versions that were current in early times—ending respectively with chapters 14, 15, and 16.

The statement that the revelation was kept secret before Christ does not mean that the Old Testament God is a different God from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Marcion thought, but that it is only with the coming of Christ that the Old Testament prophecies acquire their full meaning. The movement from silence to revelation is a good Advent theme.

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

Annunciation stories are a regular literary form of Scripture. There are a number of such stories in the Old Testament (for example, the births of Isaac, Samson, and Samuel), and of course Luke has already recorded the annunciation of John the Baptist.

We should make full allowance for this literary form in assessing this narrative. The purpose of annunciation stories is to acquaint the readers with the role that the person about to be born is to play in salvation history. It is thus a device to effect this end, not a historical narration.

At the same time, there are elements in the story of Jesus' annunciation that surpass the other annunciation stories.

The usual situation is that of a miraculous birth granted to a barren couple—in the case of Isaac, to parents who were even past the age of begetting and bearing children. In the case of Jesus, it is an annunciation to a young woman without a husband. The emphasis rests on the creative act of the Holy Spirit rather than on the virginal conception per se, which is its presupposition.

All that the historian can say with certainty is that the basic elements in this tradition are earlier than Matthew or Luke, for the name of Mary, her virginity, and the function of the Holy Spirit are common both to Matthew and Luke, who are otherwise entirely independent of one another at this point.

Many would also argue that these traditions can be traced back to the earliest Palestinian stratum of Christianity. Beyond that point, however, the historian qua historian cannot go. The exegete must deal rather with the meaning.

What is the kerygmatic thrust of the Annunciation? It is that the history of Jesus does not emerge out of the stream of ongoing history. As Adolf Schlatter put it, it expresses the transcendental origin of the history of Jesus. Or, as Sir Edwyn Hoskyns put it, the Incarnation is “a dagger thrust into the weft of human history.”

Our response to the annunciation story should be not to accept it as an entertaining story or even to insist merely on its historicity and leave it at that. As such, it would still be “flesh,” which profiteth nothing. Our response should rather be the affirmation of faith in the transcendental origin of Jesus' history.

The role that the Child to be born is to play in salvation history is defined in terms of Davidic messiahship. Thus, the gospel reading is linked with the Old Testament reading. Christian faith sees the promise to, and covenant with, David fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ.

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