

# The Advent Way

## Isaiah 25:7-9 NKJ

***“And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. And it will be said in that day: “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”***

Sometimes when I’m struggling with a book or realize I’m trying to read it too fast and skimming over what it has to say, I start reading from the back. Thankfully I find I’m not quite alone in this habit, because in the established western church the first Sunday in Advent is the START of the liturgical year. Yet it’s traditionally been devoted to the RETURN of Christ the King, so the sacred story itself has been started at its conclusion! But we can understand Jesus’ first coming so much better when we know that it leads to the fulfilment of God’s purpose for his creation.

Long before the end-time vision of Revelation was written Isaiah recorded the visions he was given of the end of this era of our history. He propels us forward in Isaiah 25:7-9 to a time of joy and celebration when God lifts for all time the veil of sin and separation that darkens our minds and the covering of mourning and despair that lies over the whole world. It is the time when death has vanished – as Paul reiterates - swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:54). It is the time when God dries our tears – the tears of regret and shame, the tears of sorrow and loss and the tears of frustration and when a wearied, needy world that waited so long for this day acknowledges, “Behold, this is our God.”

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War in Britain road signs were turned round or removed altogether to confuse an invading army. Street lights were turned off and a blackout enforced at night as Britain was plunged into darkness. Without a map, the lack of directions made travelling unknown roads difficult; in the darkness people stumbled and got lost and injuries and accidents increased. But those who put together the traditional calendar for the church year planted a clear signpost at the beginning of Advent that points back from the future Coming down the well-lit Holy Way. It’s a road on which it is impossible to get lost (Isaiah 35:8-9) and it leads us straight to the Incarnation.

And so at the end of the weeks of Advent, when we commemorate the coming of the Son of God to our world, we find another signpost, this one pointing the way ahead to his Kingdom. It is only through Jesus’ life, death, resurrection and ascension that it is possible for us, as Isaiah tells us, to go home along the road to Zion, singing the songs of everlasting joy, to the place where all sorrow and all sighing will be gone forever and only joy and gladness will remain (Isaiah 35:10). For as Jesus said in reply to Thomas: ***“I am the Way,”*** **John 14:6.**