

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary

Jeremiah 33:14–16 • A Branch of David

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Jeremiah 33:14–16 A branch of David
Luke 21:25–36 Signs of the Lord’s coming

Overview

This is the first Sunday in Advent—the season of our preparation for Christ’s coming into our world and into our lives. The lesson focuses on what is happening within us when the Lord is about to come into our lives, and how we can open ourselves up to that coming. Since the reading from Jeremiah is short, part or all of the reading from Luke can be used for this lesson as well. Both will be covered in today’s notes.

Key Points

- The Lord comes just when things are darkest.
- Darkness in us is when we feel empty of love and faith, and we are not doing good things for people.
- The Lord our God—and no one and nothing else—has the power to save us spiritually.

Example for Teaching Children

Do you ever wonder why Christmas comes right near the winter solstice—the darkest time of year? As we enter the Advent season (the four Sundays leading up to Christmas), the days are getting shorter and the nights are getting longer. There is less and less time in the afternoon to be outside playing, because it gets dark earlier and earlier.

Why doesn’t the Lord come when it is brightest instead of when it is darkest? Think about it. When everything is going well, do you feel you need the Lord’s help? It is good for us to be thankful for all the good things the Lord gives us—good friends and good times. But the time we feel the biggest need for the Lord to be with us is when we are sad and lonely, and nothing seems to be going right.

Both of our Bible readings today are about the time when the Lord comes into the world. During Advent, we prepare for the Lord’s coming as a baby. But Christmas is not just about that birth two thousand years ago. It is about the Lord Jesus being born inside of each one of us—in our hearts and minds.

Just as the days are getting shorter and the nights longer during Advent, we look forward to the Lord’s coming into our minds and hearts most when we feel the *inner* darkness of confusion, sadness, and lack of love and kindness. When we feel this way, some-

times we think we will feel terrible forever; we feel that things will never get better.

But our Bible readings tell us that if we can “lift up our heads” and look toward the Lord, we can think of these hard times as times of darkness in preparation for a new dawning of brightness in our lives: the “Son of Man” (the Lord) “coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Our church teaches us that this “cloud” is not a literal cloud in the sky, but symbolizes the spiritual “cloud” of the literal meaning of the Bible, which often seems to cover up what the Lord is really like, just as clouds often hide the sun from us. But if we are sad and lonely, we can think about what the Bible teaches us about the Lord’s love. Then we will know and *feel* inside of ourselves that the Lord can come and help us find happiness and love for each other again. This is the true promise of Christmas.

Basic Correspondences

- righteous branch = power of truth from goodness
- David = the Lord
- sun = heavenly love
- moon = spiritual faith
- stars = knowledge of spiritual truth
- coming in cloud = in the spiritual sense of the Bible

Thoughts from Swedenborg

Jeremiah 33:15–18 speaks of the coming of the Lord, who is the “branch of David,” and who will be called “Jehovah our Righteousness.” “Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety” means that people who love the Lord will be saved. “Israel will live in safety” means that people who are involved in kind actions towards the neighbor will not be harassed by evil and false things. *Apocalypse Explained* #444b.6

Matthew 24:7, 29 and Luke 21:25 refer to the condition that the church would be in when its last judgment happens. The “roaring of the sea” and the “waves” mean that heresies and controversies will be in an uproar throughout the church, and in every individual. The “sun” means love for the Lord and kindness toward the neighbor; the “moon” means faith; and the “stars” mean the ideas that form our faith. In the end times, all of these “will be darkened, will not give their light, and will fall from heaven”—that is, they will vanish away. *Arcana Coelestia* #2120