



There's  
a New World  
Coming

An Advent Journey

John van de Laar

Sacredise

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Sample Version

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# The Advent Journey

## Introduction

The season of Advent, along with Lent, is one of the two great journeys of preparation in the Church Year. Both of these important seasons were, historically, times of preparation for baptismal candidates - which indicates something of their importance for the work of spiritual formation in the life of Christ-followers. As such, the weight that these two seasons carry, both in making the Liturgical Calendar “effective” in its transforming work, and in providing opportunities for personal reflection and examination for individual spiritual growth, is significant. While Lent is arguably the more prominent of the two seasons, leading as it does to the key festivals of Holy Week and Easter, it falls to Advent to start the journey of the year, giving it a particular significance in laying the foundation for the year’s journey ahead.

With this in mind, the need for creative, theologically responsible and liturgically meaningful resources is very clear. ***There’s a New World Coming*** is designed to meet this need, creating a continuous journey in communal and personal worship from Advent Sunday to Christmas Day. Based on the readings for the Revised Common Lectionary (Year B), offering thoroughly researched, preaching-focussed commentaries on both the Old Testament and Gospel passages for each Sunday, and providing theme-based liturgies, daily devotions and small group guidelines for each week, ***There’s a New World Coming*** gives preachers and liturgists everything they need to ensure that the Advent journey is meaningful and transforming - in one complete package. ***Please note: Permission to photocopy the daily devotionals and/or small group guidelines for congregational use is included in your purchase of this eBook.***

My prayer is that ***There’s a New World Coming*** will be used widely for congregational worship, and that it’s impact will be felt, not just during the Advent season, but throughout the year to come. May God bless you as you plan and facilitate worship encounters in this festive, but profoundly challenging, season.

Grace  
John

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**PLEASE NOTE:**

This sample is intended to give a feel for the full resource which is available from [Sacredise.com](http://Sacredise.com). The complete resources is delivered in a zip file including the full pdf version of the resource book and the twelve full size graphics files.

Advent Sunday

**The Motivation**

## Readings:

### Isaiah 64:1-9

<sup>1</sup> Oh, that You would burst from the heavens and come down! How the mountains would quake in Your presence!

<sup>2</sup> As fire causes wood to burn and water to boil, Your coming would make the nations tremble. Then Your enemies would learn the reason for Your fame!

<sup>3</sup> When You came down long ago, You did awesome deeds beyond our highest expectations. And oh, how the mountains quaked!

<sup>4</sup> For since the world began, no ear has heard, and no eye has seen a God like You, who works for those who wait for Him!

<sup>5</sup> You welcome those who gladly do good, who follow godly ways. But You have been very angry with us, for we are not godly. We are constant sinners; how can people like us be saved?

<sup>6</sup> We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind.

<sup>7</sup> Yet no one calls on Your name or pleads with You for mercy. Therefore, You have turned away from us and turned us over to our sins.

<sup>8</sup> And yet, O LORD, You are our Father. We are the clay, and You are the potter. We all are formed by Your hand.

<sup>9</sup> Don't be so angry with us, LORD. Please don't remember our sins forever. Look at us, we pray, and see that we are all Your people.

### Mark 13:24-37

<sup>24</sup> "At that time, after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light,

<sup>25</sup> the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

<sup>26</sup> Then everyone will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with great power and glory.

<sup>27</sup> And He will send out His angels to gather His chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

<sup>28</sup> "Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near.

<sup>29</sup> In the same way, when you see all these things taking place, you can know that His return is very near, right at the door.

<sup>30</sup> I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene before all these things take place.

<sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will disappear, but My words will never disappear.

<sup>32</sup> "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son Himself. Only the Father knows.

<sup>33</sup> And since you don't know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert [and pray]! <sup>34</sup>

"The coming of the Son of Man can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. When he left home, he gave each of his slaves instructions about the work they were to do, and he told the gatekeeper to watch for his return.

<sup>35</sup> You, too, must keep watch! For you don't know when the master of the household will return - in the evening, at midnight, before dawn, or at daybreak.

<sup>36</sup> Don't let him find you sleeping when he arrives without warning.

<sup>37</sup> I say to you what I say to everyone: Watch for him!"

Despair is a devastating thing. This week I heard about a man who decided to end his own life. He had been hijacked and had never managed to get over the despair & depression that had resulted.

It is all too common to hear words of despair and cynicism in our world today. People - even people of faith - speak easily about the world being worse than ever, and moving toward a violent and traumatic end. For some God's coming is awaited as both the death-blow to evil and the final destruction of the world. But, I find the glee with which this idea is sometimes shared deeply disturbing. There is something cynical and desperate, I believe, in a faith that cannot see God as more than just another violent despot who uses aggression and destruction to achieve desired ends.

Which is why we need Advent and the message it proclaims. The Advent season begins with the vision of God's coming, and the restoration of the world that results. As is suggested by the fact that the first Sunday in Advent is usually called the Sunday of Hope, the message of this day is all about hope, not despair, and it reminds us that the world is moving toward a fulfilment.

In the excellent movie *Shawshank Redemption* the main character, Andy (played by Tim Robbins) locks himself into the Warden's office and begins to play a record of Mozart's music through the public address system. When the guards finally manage to break through the door, he is dragged off to "the hole" - the solitary confinement cell. When he is released, he joins his friends at lunch and they ask him about his time away. He explains that it was easy for him because he carried the music with him in his memory and his heart, and that this, and the hope that it gave him, is something that the system cannot take away from him. In response, Red warns him that hope is a dangerous thing for a prisoner, that it can drive people mad. But, in the end of the movie, it is Red, when faced with the uncertainty of life on the "outside" after his release, that expresses a strengthening, inspiring hope. Both of these clips can be viewed on YouTube ([Hope Is A Dangerous Thing](#); [I Hope](#) - note: both contain moments of profanity. Some simple editing of the soundtrack can make them useable in a church service though, should you decide to do so.)

Without denying the brokenness and evil in the world, without pretending that there is not a lot of healing that needs to happen, Advent reminds us that God's coming is more than a military conquest, or a destructive pushing of some cosmic reset button. Rather, the vision that we receive this Sunday, and in the weeks that follow, is of a new world being born within the old, destructive order. It's a vision that gives us an inspiring and sustaining glimpse into the heart of God, and that, if we can find the faith to believe it and the courage to embrace it, will sustain us through whatever struggles we may face, and enable us to contribute life, creativity, grace and healing to the world.

## The Advent Vision

A good starting point for us to begin to see this vision is the Lectionary passage from Mark's Gospel. After Jesus entered Jerusalem in the famous procession, he was confronted by the religious leaders and a debate developed in which they tried to trick Jesus, but he successfully answered all of their challenges, finally teaching that the greatest commandment is to love God and to love neighbour. Then, after issuing a warning about the corruption of the

religious leaders, Jesus and his disciples left the temple. It is at this moment that the disciples remarked on the magnificence of the building. You can imagine the awe and pride that was felt as they gazed on this icon of their faith, this bastion of their national identity and life. You can also imagine the shock they felt as Jesus began to speak about this magnificent structure being reduced to ruins.

What follows is a difficult and often misunderstood passage in which Jesus predicts destruction, trauma, violence and persecution. We do well to remember two important influences at work in the speaking and writing of these words. To begin with, the language Jesus uses here is apocalyptic, completely in alignment with the imagery and intent of the prophets and their proclamation of the "Day of the Lord". Daniel is particularly important here since much of the imagery is drawn from his prophecy. The image of the "Son of Man coming on the clouds with great glory," for example, is taken directly from Daniel 7:13 - which does not refer so much to a return of the Son of Man to earth, but his return to God after successfully completing his mission. As such, descriptions of darkened sun and moon and falling stars are not intended to be taken literally, but as indications of the significant, chaotic changes that are occurring.

The second influence to be remembered here is that Mark was writing his Gospel in about 70 AD when the Jewish rebellion brought Rome's wrath down on the nation, resulting in the destruction of the temple. His purpose is almost certainly threefold:

- 1) To show Jesus as a true prophet who had predicted these things, in order to comfort and strengthen his readers. This is why Mark can confidently quote Jesus saying that this generation would not pass away before these things had happened (Mark 13:30) - they were living through the fulfilment of Jesus' prophecies as Mark was writing!
- 2) To encourage them to continue to trust God's purposes and activity in their lives and not fall into the temptation to join the rebellion.
- 3) To remind them that all these traumatic events are used by God to reach out to people with grace and love. Mark stresses God's gathering of people to God's self, and the grace and invitation that this demonstrates. As such, Mark is seeking to inspire hope in his readers, and provide the resources they need to avoid the temptation to despair.

## The Motivation for God's Coming

The motivation for God's activity in the midst of the world's chaos, then, is not so much judgement or destruction, but grace and restoration. This is a key truth to remember whenever we speak about the "Last Days", which, according to Mark, were ushered in by Jesus' resurrection.

In the set reading from Isaiah for Advent Sunday the message of Mark is reinforced. This passage, written, most scholars believe, by the Third Isaiah to the recently returned exiles who were struggling to rebuild their lives after all the destruction and displacement of the last few decades, also offers dramatic visions of God's coming. The movement here is from an image of God's glory and mighty deeds of old, and a longing for a repeat of such a return, to acknowledgement of the sinfulness of the people and the judgement they deserve, to grateful recognition of God as "Father" and "Potter" and the people as "God's people".

**(Continued in the full version. To purchase the full version of *There's a New World Coming* go to [Sacredise.com](http://Sacredise.com))**

**Resources**

**Liturgy**

*The liturgies offered here are set out in a modular form allowing for the various elements to be rearranged according to the needs of the local church or the particular service in which they are used. The basic layout as provided here provides for the four-fold shape of the liturgy - Gathering / Listening (or The Service of the Word) / Response (which may or may not include the Service of the Table) / Sending.*

*The Service of the Table is provided as a separate liturgy at the end of this section, and can be slotted into the liturgy of any Sunday where it is required.*

*Suggestions are also offered for response stations to be incorporated into the service. These stations are designed to give worshippers the opportunity to reflect and respond on their experience in the worship, and can be made as simple or as elaborate as the setting may require. It is not necessary to use all of the station ideas each week, but only those that will work well in the particular service in which they are used. **Please note: Each week, the lighting of the Advent Wreath is included as one of the response stations, but can easily be shifted to other parts of the service if required.***

*Some hymn suggestions are offered for each Sunday, but they are not placed within the liturgy in order to allow for greater freedom of hymn choice and service design by local liturgists.*

***NOTE: This sample gives only some of the elements of the Advent Sunday liturgy and of the Service of the Table. In the complete eBook, every Sunday has prayers for all four movements of the service, and the complete Service of the Table liturgy.***

# Advent Sunday

## Gathering:

**Call To Worship:** (*The following prayers can be changed and adapted from the stanzas below to fit the setting in which they will be performed. Options are provided for both Northern and Southern hemisphere churches, and for those who include a hanging of the greens and those who don't*)

*For Northern Hemisphere churches:*

Though the world may seem bleak and cold

***We proclaim our hope in Christ***

Though all around us is lifelessness

***We remember the life that always waits to be born in us anew.***

*For Southern Hemisphere churches:*

Though the world is filled with warmth and light

***We proclaim a greater hope that will not be dimmed***

Though all around us life is active and vibrant

***We remember the source of all life,  
and the life that always waits to be born in us anew.***

*For all churches (use only those sections that apply to your particular setting):*

And so, in faith and hope and celebration

we decorate this sanctuary with evergreens

with cedar, fir and pine,

with holly and ivy

***To remember the One who, in dying,  
transformed all life***

***and made real the promise of a new world  
of love and justice for all.***

As we prepare our hearts for this season of God's coming

we place a wreath of green and of lights

where it will remind us of the One who comes to us,

where it will point us to the new reality which that One brings to birth,

and where it will inspire us to worship and to follow that One.

***Praise be to the God who comes!***

***Praise be to the God who gives life!***

***Praise be to our God who even now sustains and nurtures us!***

As we remember the sacrifice of Jesus

who refused to allow death and evil to have the last word,

and whose life would not be quenched,

we give thanks for the Christmas tree

and the symbols we hang on it;

***We give thanks for the gift of sacred memory!  
We give thanks for Christ's resurrection!  
We give thanks that we can encounter Christ's resurrection world even now!  
Amen.***

**Confession:**

Great God of Life  
Forgive us that we are too easily convinced  
by those who tell us you have forgotten us;  
Forgive us that we are too easily unsettled  
by those who say that your promises are empty;  
Forgive us that we allow ourselves to be distracted  
by the signs of death and evil around us;

***Remind us again, O Christ,  
that you are always present with us,  
that your promises continue to sustain us and give us hope  
even when we lose faith in them,  
that your life cannot be quenched,  
and that your reign cannot be stopped in its coming.***

As we prepare our hearts for you again in this Advent season,  
may your word sink into our souls,  
may your love soften our hearts,  
and may your life re-awaken us to the eternal reality  
which exists within us and among us even now.

***Amen.***

To those who have stumbled and fallen,  
to those who have failed and sinned,  
God is forever gracious and forgiving.

***We thank you, O God, for restoring us again in Christ,  
and for welcoming us into the new world of your reign.***

***Amen.***

**Listening:**

**Illumination:**

Jesus Christ, Word of God,  
As we open the Scriptures which speak of you  
as we meditate again on your promises and truths,  
May these words ignite our imaginations  
giving us a vision of the new world  
which you proclaimed and lived.

***Amen.***

## Responding:

### Response Stations:

The following stations may offer opportunities for people to engage more deliberately with the message of this service. They can be organised in as simple or extravagant a way as your resources will allow. You may choose to use all three options, and set them up in different parts of your sanctuary, or just use one, but even if you choose the latter, ensure that there are enough stations available for people to participate worshipfully and reverently.

#### *Station 1:*

Light the first candle of the Advent wreath (the Candle of Hope) using the prayer below (or some other appropriate prayer). Then invite people to come up and receive a small candle of their own, which they can then light from the Advent wreath, as a symbol of the hope they are praying for this Advent.

#### *Candle of Hope Prayer:*

Like light in the darkness,  
like warmth in winter  
or coolness in the heat of summer,  
like water to the thirsty  
and a touch to the lonely,  
So, O Christ, your Hope beckons to us again.

***As we light this first Advent Candle,  
may our hearts find joy in your promise,  
and may our lives reflect your reign. Amen.***

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## Service of the Table

*This liturgy is intended to be used on any Sunday during the Advent season at which the Eucharist is to be celebrated. It can easily be placed in the **Response** section of any of the liturgies above (after the intercessions would be best), or wherever the officiating liturgists feel is appropriate.*

### Thanksgiving:

*Isaiah 65:17-19 (CEB)*

Look! I'm creating

a new heaven and a new earth:

past events won't be remembered;

they won't come to mind.

Be glad and rejoice forever

in what I'm creating,

because I'm creating Jerusalem as a joy

and her people as a source of gladness.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem

and be glad about my people.

No one will ever hear the sound

of weeping or crying in it again.

***We celebrate you and give you thanks, O God,  
because in the midst of darkness and despair  
you create a world of light and hope;  
in the midst of hatred and war,  
you create a world of love and peace;  
in the midst of a world that is passing away  
you create a world that grows and thrives forever!***

And so, with hope in this new world,  
and with faith in your presence and purpose  
we join with all of creation to worship you.

***God of goodness and grace,  
you deserve all the devotion  
and adoration we can give,  
you have given life to us  
and to the entire universe;***

***When we lost faith and doubted your dream,  
you sought us out  
and won our hearts again,  
and you restored us to life;***

***And when we look to the future  
you have given us a vision  
of a new world of love and justice,  
and have called us to share***

*in bringing it into being!*

***We praise you!***

***Amen.***

### **Approach:**

God your dream inspires and challenges us!

We know that we don't have what it takes to make it happen;

nothing we can do can earn us a place

at the eternal banquet...

### **Preparation:**

Jesus, Our Loving Saviour,

You spoke to us of another kind of world,

a place where all are welcome,

all belong, and all are safe;

And you showed us what this new world looks like,

in every thing you did,

and in this very special meal;

On the night before you gave up your life for love's sake,

you took bread and blessed it,

then you broke it and gave it to your friends, saying:

***This is my body broken for you;***

***Eat this to remember me...***

### **Thanksgiving:**

The meal we have shared is just a taste of the new world

which God is bringing into being;

***Thanks be to God!...***

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Resources

Small Group  
Guidelines

# Advent 1

## Ice Breaker:

Have you ever had a time when your motives have been misunderstood? Describe what happened and how it felt for you.

## Worship Suggestion:

Begin by sharing your favourite verses about God's love, mercy and compassion, then spend a moment in silence allowing the words to sink into your hearts. Follow this by either singing or reading a hymn together (For example: *Love Divine All Loves Excelling* or *Here Is Love Vast As The Ocean*)

Spend a moment in confession for those times when you have doubted God's love and viewed God as angry, vengeful and unforgiving. Ask for God to change our view of God's character and purposes and then speak a word of forgiveness over the group.

As you move into a time of intercession, invite the group to share situations where people need to recognise God's presence and availability and receive God's grace and love. Pray for these situations together.

Close with saying the Lord's prayer together and, if you so choose, singing or reading a hymn like *Come Let Us Sing Of A Wonderful Love* or *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*.

## For Discussion:

### Read:

Mark 13:24-37

### Questions:

1. What are the events in Mark's Gospel that lead up to this reading? How do these events help you to understand what Jesus is trying to communicate here?
2. What does this passage have to say to those who try to predict "the end of the world"? Do you think this passage is about the "end of the world" or might Jesus be trying to say something else here?
3. In what ways do Jesus' words in this passage help you to live as a follower of Christ in your world today?

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Resources

Daily Devotional  
Guides

These devotional guidelines are designed in such a way that they can be completed in about five to ten minutes. The readings are based on the daily readings as supplied by the Revised Common Lectionary for Advent (Year B) and the reflections are intended to bring together each day's reading with the Sunday themes. The devotions for Monday to Wednesday each week flow out of the theme of the Sunday past, while the devotions for Thursday to Sunday prepare for the Sunday coming.

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## Week One

### Advent Sunday

#### **Reading:**

Mark 13:24-37

#### **Reflection:**

It's tempting to read passages like this as a prediction of God returning to earth as a military conqueror to destroy the people we consider to be evil and to establish a God-controlled empire on earth. But, to read Mark that way is to misunderstand both the Gospel writer and Jesus. Mark wrote at a time of war, when Israel was being conquered by the Roman Army, and he is reminding his readers that Jesus had spoken about this very thing happening. The language Jesus uses is the same as that of the Old Testament prophets - full of strong visual imagery, metaphors and symbols. It is not to be taken literally.

For us the key here is to grasp the heart of Jesus' message - no matter what you may see going on in the world, God is not surprised, God is always coming to us and calling us to participate in God's reign in our world, and, to do this, we need to be alert and mindful, always aware of the signs of God's activity even in the midst of the world's turmoil.

Where do you see signs of God's coming in your life? In what ways can you co-operate with God's activity? What can you do to be even more mindful and aware of God's presence and purpose in your life?

#### **Prayer:**

O God who is always present and always seeking entrance into my life,  
please give me the eyes, the ears, the heart and the faith,  
to see and embrace the signs of your coming,  
and to help others to see them & receive them too.

Amen.

## First Monday of Advent

### **Reading:**

Micah 4:1-5

### **Reflection:**

Micah's vision of God's reign is one of peace and prosperity, with worship at its heart. This aligns very closely with the vision that Jesus gives in his teaching and in his actions. It offers an encouraging message for us - when God comes, the motive is not to destroy, judge or conquer like a military dictator. Rather God seeks to restore and to reconcile.

As always, the challenge of these visions is that we can begin to experience and live out the values of God's reign in our own lives right now. So, take a moment to consider Micah's vision again, but this time, ask yourself how you can begin to embody this vision for yourself this Advent season.

In what ways can you make your worship - the "mountain of God's temple" - the most important place in your life, and how can it be something that attracts other people to God? How can your life be used by God to bring mediation between those who are in dispute, or to reconcile those who are in conflict? How can you contribute to peace and prosperity in your community? These may sound like big expectations that God has for us, but small actions that respond to these promptings can have a significant impact, if we will just commit to living out our faith and hope daily.

### **Prayer:**

God of peace and justice,

May my worship of you give me a clearer vision of your reign. May my love for you be expressed not just in songs and prayers, but in working for peace and reconciliation, and for prosperity and security, for those with whom I live and work and play.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

## First Tuesday of Advent

### **Reading:**

Revelation 18:1-10

### **Reflection:**

Today we are again faced with the metaphorical, symbolic language of prophecy - this time from John, the writer of the Revelation. Here again, we might be tempted to view this only in terms of judgement and destruction, but there is a message of grace and justice to be found here as well.

The personification of Babylon is a powerful way to depict the temptation to ignore God's ways of justice and peace, and embrace, rather, the ways of power, accumulation and addiction. The excesses that are represented by this arrogant figure are prevalent in our economic, political, and entertainment systems today. We have fallen prey to exactly the dangers that this vision warns against - uncontrolled desire for wealth and power, and the constant, instant gratification of our every desire - and our world, and its peoples are suffering under the weight of our lack of wisdom and responsibility. This is why God calls God's people to distance themselves from this way of being. The reign of God calls us to be people of simplicity and generosity, not accumulation. The reign of God calls us to be people of service and humility not domination and control. The reign of God calls us to be people of discipline and restraint, not addiction and self-gratification. Ultimately, God's ways are really common sense, and lead to the best, most abundant, life. But, if we choose to go our own way, we will, eventually, have to face the consequences - as we are doing in our world now.

So, in what ways have you allowed yourself to become part of these "Babylonian" ways? Are there parts of your life that are still plagued by greed, or the hunger for power or self-gratification - even in small ways? In what ways can God's coming to you challenge you to release these ways, and embrace the ways of God's reign a little more? Choose one thing to practice in particular today.

### **Prayer:**

God of justice and mercy,

You always call us to life that is vibrant and full and that brings life to others. Teach me your ways of simplicity, humility and restraint, and use me, however you can, to bring more of your grace and wisdom into my world.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

## **First Wednesday of Advent**

### **Reading:**

Micah 5:1-5a

### **Reflection:**

The words of this passage are often quoted around Christmas time - the picture of Bethlehem, the least of the cities of a small, unimportant tribe, being home to God's sent leader who will restore God's people and bring peace.

It's a common theme in Scripture - that God uses the least and most insignificant to accomplish God's purposes. It's an important theme to remember, and it flies in the face of our world's view of importance and success - the meritocracy that applauds only the "best", the "richest" and the "most powerful". Once again, God's reign is revealed as an "upside-down" way of being, and the One who comes in God's name as a humble, peace-bringing Shepherd, as opposed to a grand, militant conqueror.

Which offers us a new possibility for encountering the God who seeks to come to us again in this Advent season: to find God in the small, the least, the unexpected, the peaceful, the caring and nurturing people and places. What are the unexpected places in your life where you would be surprised to find God? Can you look deeper in those places and see if you can find evidence of God's presence? In what ways can you embody the gentle, humble, peacemaking character of God's Sent One?

### **Prayer:**

Humble and Caring God,

Thank you that you choose the weak and small things of the world to accomplish your purposes. Thank you that I can be one of those things, and that in my small daily commitment to follow you, I can contribute to peace and grace in our world.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

**(Continued in the full version. To purchase the full version of *There's a New World Coming* go to [Sacredise.com](http://Sacredise.com))**

# Sample Graphics

The graphics shown here are low resolutions samples. The full size images are 1280 x 800 pixels at 600dpi. The full set includes one Seasonal Title Screen, five Weekly Title Screens, five Weekly Sermon Screens, and one Blank screen for displaying song lyrics etc.



Seasonal Title Screen



Weekly Title Screen



Weekly Sermon Screen



Blank Screen (for Song Lyrics etc.)

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