

The Gift Worth Waiting For

Lesson 04 of the series, "The Gift"

I. When Jesus was born many people had been waiting for the advent of a savior for a long time.

"advent" = a coming into place, arrival.

"This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen." 1 Peter 1:10-12 (NLT)

II. Jesus is God's gracious gift to save us from the penalty of sin and the burden of the OT law.

"Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived. Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, 'If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD.' So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—"either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." Luke 2:21-24 (NLT) (see also Leviticus 12 & Numbers 18:15-16)

"Jesus" = "Jehovah is salvation".

Note: Jesus fulfilled all of the requirements of the Old Testament Law for us.

"Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose." Matthew 5:17 (NLT)

"For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are." Romans 3:20 (NLT)

"The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us..." Romans 8:3-4 (NLT)

"For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time. Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand."

Hebrews 10:10-12 (NLT)

Life Application: Good News! Jesus established a new covenant between sinless God and sinful people.

"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the *new covenant*, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'" Matthew 26:27-28 (NKJV)

"For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." Romans 3:23-24 (NLT)

"God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

III. An old man and an old woman had waited their entire lives for the advent of the "Messiah".

"Messiah" = the promised and expected deliverer of the Jewish people.

"At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. *He is a light to reveal God to the nations*, and he is the glory of your people Israel!" Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby's mother, 'This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, but he will be a joy to many others. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose

him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.' Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple... and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem." Luke 2:25–38 (NLT)

- a. Jesus came as a light to reveal God to the whole world.

"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." John 8:12 (NLT) (see also Isaiah 42:6)

Life Application: Jesus wants his light to shine out through me.

"You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father." Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

- b. People will always be divided over Jesus.

"Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him. But for those who reject him, "The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone." And, "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them." 1 Peter 2:7-8 (NLT) (see also Psalm 118:22)

Life Application: We must tell our friends and neighbors about Jesus whether the time is favorable or not.

"Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear." 2 Timothy 4:2-3 (NLT)

- c. While we are waiting for Jesus' second coming we should hurry it along.

"But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief... what holy and godly lives you should live, looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along." 2 Peter 3:10-12 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

1. For a number of centuries Christians have spoken of the three comings (advents) of Christ:
 - in the flesh in Bethlehem
 - in our hearts daily
 - in glory at the end of time. (Jesus' second coming)

How do the three advents of Christ impact our daily lives? How should they?

2. In your opinion, what is the biggest difference between the Old Testament/covenant between God and his people and the New/testament covenant through Christ? (See Hebrews 10:9-18 if you're not sure.)
3. Read Luke 2:22-28. What kind of people were Simeon and Anna? Who were they waiting for? How would you have responded if you had been present when they met Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus?
4. Read Isaiah 42:6 and John 8:12. Why do you think Jesus referred to himself as "the light of the world"? What does this mean?
5. Read Matthew 5:14-16 & John 12:36. Why did Jesus tell his disciples that they were lights in a dark world? Where/how did they get the light? What were they to do with it?
6. Discuss the following Christmas carol lyrics. (or listen to the entire carol via YouTube and sing along!)

"Come, Thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free. From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee. Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art; Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart."

"O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here. Disperse the gloomy clouds of night. And death's dark shadows put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel."

"Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Son of Righteousness! Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings. Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth. Hark! The herald angels sing, 'Glory to the newborn King!'"