

We have just celebrated Christmas, so we have come to the end of a period we call Advent, a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the coming of the Christ child born in a manger in at Christmas. To us this is a seasonal occurrence. We decorate our houses for Christmas and we get into the holiday spirit of hospitality and generosity and then the day after Christmas the decorations come off the tree, the tree is put out of the house or into a storage box for the next Christmas and we are back to life as normal. We looked to Christ's coming and we celebrated that but now the magic and wonder of the incarnation and the season are over and forgotten. I want us to linger for today and look at one more doctrinal Christmas hymn, *Come, thou long expected Jesus*.

Most of can remember having a sense of anticipation for the coming of Christmas. We remember counting down the days till we could open our presents. The coming of the Christ Child has so much more relevance to all of creation. There is a song, *I heard the bells on Christmas*. It draws on the poem "*Christmas Bells*" by American poet Henry Wadsworth.

*"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; the Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail, with peace on earth, good-will to men."*

The verses of this poem depict the coming King of the Jews, the King who would have victory over the grave. Paul wrote, *O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?* *1 Cor 15:55* The angel announced to the shepherds, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:14* They were proclaiming the advent, the coming of the *long expected One*, the King of the Jews. The gospel of Luke tells of a man named Simeon, *he was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Luke 2:25,26* He was waiting for the consolation of Israel (*paraklésis* - a calling to one's aid, encouragement, comfort) and when he saw the Christ child he knew the long expected one had come. He exclaimed, *"Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, and the glory of Your people Israel."* *Luke 2:29-32*

The long expected Messiah, the hope of Israel *with peace on earth, good-will to men*. As Isaiah had prophesied, *a shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit. Isaiah 11:1* Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel. This *long expected* had a purpose, a plan and a destiny. He came, *to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed. Luke 4:18* He accomplished this by His penal(penalty) substitution, Christ, by his own sacrificial choice, was punished in the place of sinners, thus satisfied the demands of justice so God can justly forgive sin. He accomplished this on the cross and then He rose from dead and ascended into heaven. As Christ told His disciples He had to go away. But He also said, *I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matt 28:20*

One of the ways this is that believers are given a comforter, the Holy Spirit. *16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. John 14:16,17*

*Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,  
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal spirit, rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.*

So the Messiah comes, *Then a shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit. Isaiah 11:1* The second stanza of Charles Wesley's hymn, *Come, thou long expected Jesus*, tells this story. There was born a deliverer, *a child and yet a King*. A king that would reign eternally, *born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring thine own eternal spirit*. Christ's rule was to be in the hearts of His redeemed people, *rule in all our hearts alone*. Rule us by Thy grace, *by thine all sufficient merit*, by His substitutionary atonement. And by that give us newness of life and the promise of eternal life, *raise us to thy glorious throne*.

But there is also the concept of Christ's long awaited Second Coming, *the Coming Glory of God's House*. 3 *'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not appear to you like nothing in comparison?'* But the Lord tells them, *Work! For I am with you, declares the LORD of Hosts*. 5 *This is the promise I made to you when you came out of Egypt. And My Spirit remains among you; do not be afraid.*" Haggai 2:3-5 There is a promise that God is still with them even though they have experienced the captivity. *We learn from Ezra 3:12, (where see the note,) that when the foundation of the second temple was laid, in the second year of Cyrus, many of the ancient men, that had seen the first house, wept to see how much this second was likely to fall short of the glory of it.*

Then Haggai writes in 2:7 of the Lord, *I will fill this house with glory*. The Lord says, *I will shake all the nations, and they will come with all their treasures, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of Hosts*. In 1744, Charles Wesley considered Haggai 2:7 and looked at the situation of orphans in the areas around him. He also looked at the class divide in Great Britain.[7] Through this train of thought, he wrote "*Come, Thou long expected Jesus*" based upon Haggai 2:7 and a published prayer at the time which had the words:

6 *For this is what the LORD of Hosts says: "Once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.*  
7 *I will shake all the nations, and they will come with all their treasures, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of Hosts.*  
8 *The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, declares the LORD of Hosts.*  
9 *The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former, says the LORD of Hosts. And in this place I will provide peace, declares the LORD of Hosts."* Haggai 2:6-9

Wesley adapted this prayer into a hymn in 1744 and published it in his "Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord" hymnal. Wesley wrote "*Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*" with the intent for people to remember Advent and Christmas as commemorating the Nativity of Jesus and preparing for the Second Coming.

*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.*

At this time may we be full of expectation as was the writer of Hebrews as we are prepare for the Second Coming

26 *And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN."* 27 *This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.* 28 *Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;* 29 *for our God is a consuming fire.* Heb 12:26-29