

In Expectation

Simeon the prophet was waiting in Jerusalem to see the promised Messiah. Anna the prophetess spent night and day in the temple praying and speaking about the child to come. Zechariah finally recognized that the promised salvation was coming to Israel when his own son was born. When the people heard John, the one who came preaching and baptizing, they were "in expectation" wondering if this John was the Messiah, the one who was to come to save them.

Yes, many in Israel at the time of Jesus' birth and ministry were expecting the coming Messiah, the one who had been promised by the prophets of old. Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, broke forth in a song of praise when he finally held his son:

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us-- to show mercy to our ances-

tors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." Luke 1:67-79

Throughout the Old Testament there are promises and prophecies that a special person would come to save his people. Abraham was promised that all nations would be blessed through his offspring. David was promised a son who would reign from David's throne forever. Daniel was promised that after times of trouble he would rise from the dead to see his inheritance. Isaiah prophesied about a time when all nations would see the righteous savior

who will rule from Jerusalem.

Zechariah as a priest in the Temple was trained in the Old Testament scriptures and knew these promises and prophecies. He was overjoyed to know that his son, John, would be the one to prepare the way for the Messiah, the Anointed of God, the Christ. Notice that he speaks of David and Abraham and the prophets. Notice that he speaks of salvation from their enemies, serving God in holiness and righteousness, and giving the people knowledge of salvation through forgiveness of sin.

We know that Jesus is this promised Messiah, the Christ. We know that he came and brought forgiveness of sin for all those who repent. But has he fulfilled all the promises made about him? Even after his resurrection Jesus' disciples seemed to think that some more needed to be done.

Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Acts 1:6 NIV

They understood that not all the prophecies had been fulfilled and Jesus was in agreement. He told

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them the time had not yet come:

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. - Acts 1:7 NIV

Two thousand years later has the time come? Is 2020 the time when the promise of his coming will be fulfilled? Will we see Jesus return in glory?

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were look-

ing intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." - Acts 1:9-11 NIV

"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what

is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. - Luke 21:25-31 NIV

Waiting in Hope

When Jesus was born in Jerusalem more than 2000 years ago, the people of Israel were in expectation of the coming of their Messiah. As Zechariah in his inspired song of praise declared that his people would be redeemed, would find forgiveness, and be saved from their enemies. They looked for the time when David's son would rule forever:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. ... And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever." - 2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16 RSV

When the angel told Mary that her son would be the promised

king, she understood that this was the promised Messiah who would save her people.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." - Luke 1:31-33 RSV

Jesus' disciples had followed him understanding him to be the Messiah. They knew the prophecies concerning his kingship. When they saw him crucified they could not understand what happened.

And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,

and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened. - Luke 24:19-21 RSV

After three years of his ministry, in just a matter of a few weeks, Jesus had been brutally crucified, buried and then raised from the dead. He showed himself alive to many and then went with his disciples to the Mount of Olives. He prepared them for his departure – he was to go to His Father in heaven. It was at this time that the disciples asked the burning question:

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" - Acts 1:6 RSV

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Waiting in Hope

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Jesus told them that only God knew when the time would be right. And then he left them. They could see him going up to heaven. Immediately afterwards they received a promise. He would return as they had seen him go.

And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." - Acts 1:10-11 RSV

This verse is just one place in the New Testament that promises that Jesus will return to the earth in the same way that he was taken up into heaven. His return will be visible, real and with great power. Jesus himself made the promise to his disciples when he spoke to them concerning the latter days:

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30)

He made the promise again in the very last verses of the book of Revelation: "Yes, I am coming soon."

There is no doubt that the New Testament teaches and the First Century disciples expected Jesus to return to the earth. The question is this: if the good have gone to heaven and the wicked to their punishment when they died, what is the purpose of Jesus returning to the earth? Here are three things that the Bible teaches con-

cerning the purpose of Jesus' return to the earth:

He will raise the dead who belong to him:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16: According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Corinthians 15:20-24: But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

John 6:40: For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

He will judge the world in righteousness:

Acts 17:31: For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

Matthew 25:31-33: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

John 5:28-30: "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

He will be king over the earth and rule in righteousness:

Luke 1:31-33: You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Revelation 11:15: The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

Psalms 2:4-8: The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,

"I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."

I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son;

today I have become your Father. Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

The Apostles and the disciples in the first century were looking for Jesus to return to the earth. They were *waiting in hope* for their Lord to bring the promised king-

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Waiting in Hope

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dom over all the earth.

In Jesus we receive forgiveness of sin. In Jesus we have hope of eternal life. He will come again. This time he will not come as the lamb to be sacrificed but as the King to rule over all. This is our hope.

And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ died once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him. - Hebrews 9:27-28 NLT

And now the prize awaits me--the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing. - 2 Timothy 4:8 NLT

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A Thousand Years Are As A Day

Another year, another decade has gone by. Will the promises of God made thousands of years ago ever be fulfilled? Jesus was born more than two thousand years ago. Abraham whose story is told in the first book of the Bible lived two thousand years before that. Perhaps the Bible is just another history book and the promises made are just fanciful stories. Who can be trusted? What can be trusted? In a world filled with lies and false promises how can truth be known? So much time has passed.

Actually these doubts are not new. Peter, one of Jesus' apostles, predicted that there would come those who would question and scoff:

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say,

"Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." - 2 Peter 3:3-4 NIV

Peter was concerned that the believers would be influenced by these unbelieving scoffers. He gave them reason to continue to believe that the scriptures, the Bible, the word of God was true and that God's promises would be fulfilled in God's good timing:

The promises of God have a purpose:

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and

precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. - 2 Peter 1:3-4 NLT

Peter and the other Apostles were eyewitnesses:

For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. - 2 Peter 1:16-18 NLT

The prophecies of scripture are from God:

A Thousand Years Are As A Day

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Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place--until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God. - 2 Peter 1:19-21

NLT

God's timing is not our timing:

But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. - 2 Peter 3:8-9 NLT

The precious promises of God have a purpose. God wants us to come to repentance. He wants us to come to Jesus. He wants us to become his children in righteous-

ness and holiness. He has given us his word in the scriptures to teach us these things. It is imperative that we read and know the promises of God in his word for what he has spoken he will do.

Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' - Isaiah 46:9 -10 ESV

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Daily Bible Readings for January, February and March

Read the Entire Bible in One Year

Day	JANUARY		FEBRUARY		MARCH	
	Old Test	New Test/Psa	Old Test	New Test/Psa	Old Test	New Test/Psa
1	Gen 1,2	Matt 1	Exo 11,12	Matt 28	Lev 23, 24	Acts 24
2	Gen 3,4	Matt 2	Exo 13,14	Psalm 9, 10	Lev 25, 26	Acts 25
3	Gen 5,6	Matt 3	Exo 15,16	Psalm 11,12	Lev 27, Provb 7	Acts 26
4	Gen 7,8	Matt 4	Exo 17,18	Acts 1	Provb 8-10	Acts 27
5	Gen 9,10	Matt 5	Exo 19,20	Acts 2	Num 1,2	Acts 28
6	Gen 11,12	Matt 6	Exo 21,22	Acts 3	Num 3,4	Psalm 19,20
7	Gen 13,14	Matt 7	Exo 23,24	Acts 4	Num 5,6	Romans 1
8	Gen 15, 16	Psalm 1,2	Exo 25,26	Acts 5	Num 7,8	Romans 2
9	Gen 17,18	Matt 8	Exo 27,28	Acts 6	Num 9,10	Romans 3
10	Gen 19,20	Matt 9	Exo 29,30	Acts 7	Num 11,12	Romans 4
11	Gen 21, 22	Matt 10	Exo 31,32	Psalm 13, 14	Num 13,14	Romans 5
12	Gen 23,24	Matt 11	Exo 33,34	Acts 8	Num 15,16	Romans 6
13	Gen 25,26	Matt 12	Exo 35,36	Acts 9	Num 17,18	Romans 7
14	Gen 27,28	Matt 13	Exo 37,38	Acts 10	Num 19,20	Romans 8
15	Gen 29,30	Psalm 3,4	Exo 39,40	Acts 11,12	Num 21,22	Romans 9
16	Gen 31,32	Matt 14	Provb 3,4	Acts 13	Num 23,24	Romans 10
17	Gen 33,34	Matt 15	Provb 5,6	Psalm 15,16	Num 25,26	Romans 11
18	Gen 35,36	Matt 16	Lev 1,2	Acts 14	Num 27,28	Romans 12
19	Gen 37,38	Matt 17	Lev 3,4	Acts 15	Num 29,30	Romans 13
20	Gen 39,40	Matt 18	Lev 5,6	Acts 16	Num 31,32	Romans 14
21	Gen 41, 42	Matt 19	Lev 7,8	Acts 17	Num 33,34	Romans 15,16
22	Gen 43, 44	Psalm 5,6	Lev 9,10	Acts 18	Num 35,36	Psalm 21,22
23	Gen 45, 46	Matt 20	Lev 11,12	Psalm 17,18	Provb 11,12	Psalm 23-25
24	Gen 47, 48	Matt 21	Lev 13,14	Acts 19	Provb 13,14	Psalm 26-28
25	Gen 49, 50	Matt 22	Lev 15,16	Acts 20	Provb 15,16	Psalm 29,30
26	Provb 1,2	Matt 23	Lev 17,18	Acts 21	Deut 1,2	Mark 1
27	Exo 1,2	Matt 24	Lev 19,20	Acts 22	Deut 3,4	Mark 2
28	Exo 3,4	Matt 25	Lev 21,22	Acts 23	Deut 5,6	Mark 3
29	Exo 5,6	Psalm 7, 8			Deut 7,8	Mark 4
30	Exo 7, 8	Matt 26			Deut 9,10	Psalm 31,32
31	Exo 9,10	Matt 27			Deut 11,12	Mark 5

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