

Part 1:

Anticipation: Expectant, eager, excited waiting for the Messiah (Christ) who was to set His people free and bring in the great Kingdom of God. That One who was promised: Immanuel – God with us. The saints of old endured greatly, waiting for His day. They pressed forward, longing to see His arrival. They mourned in exile, grieved in captivity, cried out to the Lord in the midst of their distress for the Savior, the Deliverer, the Redeemer that God had promised to Adam, to Abraham, and to Isaiah.

This promised Messiah was anticipated by the Old Testament saints, and so they patiently waited for Him to arrive to fulfill three promised roles: King, Savior, and Priest

The Savior-King Promised

(Isa 7:14) "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

(Isa 9:6) "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." (Isa 9:7) "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this."

(Isa 11:1-10) There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ²And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. ⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. ⁹They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples - of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

(Isaiah 53:5) "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed."

(Mat 1:21) "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.""

(Luke 2:11) "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

In the midst of this broken world, its harmony shattered by our rebellion, God promised a Savior-King to redeem his creation. Though he was the one wronged, it was He who promised His presence. For this Savior-King was to be God himself. "Immanuel!" "God with us." Herein was the great promise of the Christ. God is reconciling man back to himself at his own cost.

While anticipation tonight is great (my kids almost talked me into letting them open a gift this afternoon), what kind of excitement and eager expectation was there when God promised to bring the Healer of all nations, the Peace-Maker, God-with-us, the Savior-King whose beautiful garments smell not of holly, cedar, or peppermint, but of mercy, peace, and majesty. Here is your Savior-King. O come, O come Immanuel!

Part 2:

Anticipation: Jesus has made peace with God on our behalf. This gospel of which we sing songs and celebrate holidays, is about the glorious redemption of the sinful heart to the majestic and holy God who created all that has ever been. This gospel, anticipated by our former brothers and sisters, we rejoice for seeing it within history!

While Beckett remains waiting, Godot has already arrived, but not in the form that he was looking for. For the Christ was not glorious to behold when he walked the earth. He was not powerful in the world's sense of power. He does not rule with iron fist...yet. He came in weakness, in brokenness, to die a criminal's death and quietly whisper "Peace to you."

(Isaiah 53) Who has believed what they heard from us?¹ And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.³ He was despised and rejected¹ by men; a man of sorrows,² and acquainted with³ grief;⁴ and as one from whom men hide their faces⁵ he was despised, and we esteemed him not.⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;¹ when his soul makes² an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see¹ and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,¹ and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,² because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

He bore no beauty or glory that we would be drawn to him. He was rejected and despised, a man of sorrow and accustomed to grief. He was poor, yet purposed. His birth came silently upon the pages of history, barely a moment on the world's stage. Yet, through the life, death, and resurrection of the Christ, the pages of history are bound. This King rules hearts, turning them one by one into the redeemed and peaceful son-citizens of heaven. He moves quietly, yet powerfully, to make for Himself a people zealous for goodness and righteousness, all that was promised before.

His mighty Spirit, living and active, works through the power of His Word to effect peace, salvation with God through His blood, and with men as He humbles the proud and creates with this awesome power, a kingdom of humble and loving servants.

So, if you beneath life's crushing blow are toiling along the way. The angels have sung that the great Peace-Maker has been born. Let us humble ourselves under this God-Man King, the Almighty who died that we may live. Hush! And hear the quiet awesome trembling of the earth. The Peace-Maker has come. The Peace-Maker has come. The Peace-Maker has come.

Part 3:

You may be sitting here tonight wracked with guilt and frustration and despair because you are not the person that you want to be, or better, that you know that God wants you to be. You don't love as deeply as you desire; your compassion is often ruined by your selfishness; you find yourself burdened under the weight of your imperfect, sinful heart. Like Lenny, for reasons unknown you destroy the very relationships that you love the most, crushing them until all that you feel is the lifeless weight of despair. You have tried your hardest to make it right and fallen farther than you could ever justify. You have become what you never wanted to be, and you know that God is not pleased.

Or maybe you sit here today because God has His thumb on you. Your sin is sitting before you at all times taunting you that God does not accept you, that He is angry with you and wrath is coming. Your sin is too great in the light of Heaven's perfection.

The truth is that our selfish and unchanged hearts have defied the rule and authority of God and our ruined and stained attempts to dethrone God to appease our consciences so that we can make the rules and not submit to anyone have placed us under the wrath of God that is coming to destroy sin and those who continue in it. We haven't trusted our Heavenly Father to know best, we tried to do it ourselves and screwed it all up.

The answer for salvation from this mess that we've made is not to work harder, but to become weak; so weak that we are helpless. We must become failures to succeed in salvation, become helpless to obtain hope, to die to ourselves and our own reputation to become alive with the fresh cool breeze of the wind of redemption and freedom. For it was in the apparent weakness of the cross, in the failure of a sealed tomb, and in the silence of His Father where Jesus Christ has won our victory for us where we could not. And we know that God accepted His sacrifice on our behalf because He was raised from the dead to continue our redemption. His weakness was replaced with power, His failure was replaced with victory, His helplessness accomplished our hope, and His death brought us life. Now He sits next to His Father in heaven, insuring our new life, our innocence before God, and giving us hope of that future day of restoration.

My fellow sinners, we all need a Savior today; a Redeemer who can guarantee our acceptance before God; One who can mediate for us and alight our hearts with the newness of life and purity of worship; One who is capable of setting us free and making our lives right with God. This, O friends, is why we need Jesus and the power of His death and His resurrection.

A word from Augustine of Hippo

The Word of the Father, by whom all time was created, was made flesh and was born in time for us.

He, without whose divine permission no day completes its course, wished to have one day for His human birth. In the bosom of His Father He existed before all the cycles of ages; born of an earthly mother, He entered upon the course of the years on this day.

The Maker of man became man that He, Ruler of the stars, might be nourished at the breast; that He, the Bread, might be hungry; that He, the Fountain, might thirst; that He, the Light, might sleep; that He, the Way, might be wearied by the journey; that He, the Truth, might be accused by false witnesses; that He, the Judge of the living and the dead, might be brought to trial by a mortal judge; that He, Justice, might be condemned by the unjust; that He, Discipline, might be scourged with whips; that He, the Foundation, might be suspended upon a cross; that Courage might be weakened; that Security might be wounded; that Life might die.

To endure these and similar indignities for us, to free us, unworthy creatures, He who existed as the Son of God before all ages, without a beginning, deigned to become the Son of Man in these recent years. He did this although He who submitted to such great evils for our sake had done no evil and although we, who were the recipients of so much good at His hands, had done nothing to merit these benefits.

Anticipation: The Peace-Maker, the Ruler of the stars, your Redeemer, is coming for you. He will restore what has been broken, He will heal what has been crumbling, He will reconcile what has been separated. Can you give up your own power, your own rightness and simply and humbly trust the King and His powerful sacrifice for you? For from the clouds he whispers now: Your Peace-Maker is coming again. Your Peace-Maker is coming again. Your Peace-Maker is coming again to take you home.