

THE WAIT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Titus 2:11-13 ¹¹ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹² Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³ **Looking for that blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

- The week before Christmas! In North America it's business as usual, as people fight the traffic and the crowds, frantically scurrying from mall to mall, looking for that last-minute gift idea. It seems we have developed modern traditions for the Christmas holiday like rushing, stress and overspending.
- One website even suggests the following natural remedies to help people cope with the stress of Christmas:
 - **Kali Phosphoricum** for sleeplessness due to exhaustion
 - **Arsenicum Album** for sleeplessness resulting from anxiety
 - **Coffea Cruda** for sleeplessness due to mental excitement
 - **Nux Vomica** for nausea due to too much junk food
 - **Staphysagria** to relieve ailments arising from pent up anger
 - **Argentum Nitricum** to overcome a fear of crowds
- It's like this "Christmas carol" I found on the internet:
Wreck the malls this Christmas season, fa la la la la la la la
Blow your cash for no good reason, fa la la la la la la la
Push your charge card to the limit, fa la la la la la la la
Your bank account has nothing in it, fa la la la la la la la
- Or this one:
I'll be cloned for Christmas, there'll be three of me
One to Work, and One to Shop, and One just for Parties
Christmas Eve, I'm certain, I won't be alone
I'll be home for Christmas, or else I'll send a Clone!
- Sometimes, the more things change, the more they stay the same! First century citizens certainly didn't have to cope with malls, but the Bible tells us in Luke 2 that the cities, towns, villages, streets, homes and businesses of Israel were packed for another reason – the taxation and census ordered by the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus. Everyone had to make the long journey back to their hometown and stay with their relatives while giving up a major portion of their time and money – sound familiar?

- John MacArthur, in his book "God With Us," wrote about some of the first century people who missed Christmas:
 - **the Innkeeper** missed it because he was preoccupied with **making money**
 - **King Herod** missed it because he was fearful that another King could take **his throne**
 - the **religious leaders** missed it because they were self-righteous and **proud**
 - the **inhabitants of Jerusalem** missed it because they were **religious** – worshipping God in ritual while he was born right under their noses in reality!
 - the entire **Roman empire** missed it because they had their own gods and **idols**
 - Jesus' **hometown of Nazareth** missed it because they were too **familiar** with Him
- Like I said, the more things change, the more they stay the same! These are basically the same reasons that people miss the real meaning of Christmas today – not just on December 25, but all year long!
- There are three building blocks to any relationship – time, time, time! People who really know God ALWAYS have to build that relationship by taking time away from other things to spend with Him. We've fooled ourselves with the illusion of Christmas, because we really face the same problem EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR. The world is always TOO BUSY for Jesus, and that's not a seasonal problem!
- In Malachi, just before Israel plunges into what scholars call "the 400 silent years" (no word from God for four centuries), a prophetic word is given about a certain kind of people who do stay "tuned in" to what God is doing. They do this by "[speaking] often one to another."
- **Malachi 3:16-17** ¹⁶ Then they that feared the LORD **spoke often one to another**: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. ¹⁷ And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.
- The New Testament says the same thing in another way:
- **Hebrews 10:25** Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but **exhorting one another**: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

- In the 1700's a modern Jewish movement developed in Eastern Europe called "the Chasidim." Whereas most branches of Judaism emphasized **education** as a means of knowing God, these "pious ones" emphasized **personal experience** as the ultimate way to know him, and demonstrated their hunger through retaining "outward separation" in their worship (and this is not even a message on holiness standards!).
- But the spirit of the Hasidic Jews did not begin in the 1700's. It always existed among a small remnant at every point of Israel's history. The "pious ones" that Malachi referred to are among them. While nearly everyone else in their culture was preoccupied with other things, they LITERALLY anticipated the coming of the Messiah.
- In the New Testament, Luke uses the Greek word "prosdechomai" in referring to three people who looked for the Messiah, and found Him as a result of their efforts! **PROSDECHOMAI MEANS "I WAIT IN ORDER TO WELCOME."**

SIMEON

- He was "just and devout"
- His name means "**hearing**" – that was his **ATTITUDE**
- He was waiting for a **PROPHET**, "the consolation of Israel"
- **Luke 2:25-32** ²⁵And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. ²⁶And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, ²⁸Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: ³⁰For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, ³¹Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; ³²A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

ANNA

- She was "[serving] God with fastings and prayers night and day"
- Her name means "**grace**" – that was her **ATTRIBUTE**
- She was waiting for a **PRIEST**, "redemption in Jerusalem"
- **Luke 2:36-38** ³⁶And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. ³⁸And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

- He was "a good man, and a just"
- His name means "**adding**" – that was his **ACTIVITY**
- He was waiting for a **KING**, "the kingdom of God"
- **Luke 23:50-53** ⁵⁰And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just: ⁵¹(The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. ⁵²This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. ⁵³And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.
- Each of these "pious ones" found what they were looking for in Jesus, because they took the time to seek Him!
- **Luke 7:16** And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great **prophet** is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.
- **Luke 24:19b** And he said unto them, **What things?** And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a **prophet** mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:
- **Hebrews 9:11-12** ¹¹But Christ being come an high **priest** of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; ¹²Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.
- **Hebrews 4:14-16** ¹⁴Seeing then that we have a great high **priest**, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. ¹⁵For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.
- **Matthew 27:36** ³⁷And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE **KING** OF THE JEWS.
- **Revelation 19:11-16** ¹¹And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. ¹²His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. ¹³And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS**, AND LORD OF LORDS.

'Twas The Night Before Jesus Came

by Bethany Farms, Carrollton, Illinois, 1993

'Twas the night before Jesus came and all through the house
Not a creature was praying, not one in the house.
Their Bibles were laid on the shelf without care
In hopes that Jesus would not come there.

The children were dressing to crawl into bed,
Not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.
And Mom in her rocker with baby on her lap
Was watching the Late Show while I took a nap.

When out of the East there arose such a clatter,
I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash!

When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But angels proclaiming that Jesus was here.
With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray
I knew in a moment this must be the day!

The light of His face made me cover my head
It was Jesus, returning just like He had said.
And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth
I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.

In the Book of Life that He held in His hand
Was written the name of every saved man.
He spoke not a word as He searched for my name;
When He said "It's not here," my head hung in shame.

The people whose names had been written with love
He gathered to take to up to Heaven above.
With those who were ready He rose without sound
While all of the rest were left standing around.

I fell to my knees, but it was too late;
I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate.
I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight;
If only my heart had been ready tonight.

In the words of this poem the meaning is clear;
The coming of Jesus is drawing so near.
There's only one life and when comes the last call
We'll find that the Bible was true after all!

- I am **WAITING IN ORDER TO WELCOME** Jesus when He returns!
- Luke uses this word one other time to refer to people who are "tuned in" to God – in reference to **US!**
- **Luke 12:34-36** ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. ³⁵Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; ³⁶And ye yourselves like unto men that wait (**PROSDECHOMAI – I WAIT IN ORDER TO WELCOME**) for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.
- The Apostle Paul uses the same word in our text, writing to Titus:
- **Titus 2:13** Looking (**PROSDECHOMAI – I WAIT IN ORDER TO WELCOME**) for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;