

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

By [Rev. Bill Spanjer, Jr.](#)

This week concludes the fourth week of Advent according to the church calendar. Advent refers to the four weeks prior to Christmas and has historically been a season of expectation and contemplation of the coming of the incarnate God. While we are very acquainted with the national and cultural calendar of America, its seasons, and holidays, we are less familiar with the church calendar. In fact, some Christians even find the church calendar an unnecessary burden upon simple Christian living. While it is true that there is no Biblical command to keep particular feast days in the New Testament, and while we must be careful not to elevate such days of feasting or fasting to a place of Christian necessity, none the less, the church calendar provides a wonderful tool for one's devotional life. Just as we ought to think of our children every day and should not need a day dedicated to honor them specifically, none the less, we recognize it as a good thing to set aside a day to remember them on their birthday just as we remember our country on July 4th and veterans on November 11th.

So, it is worth setting aside a day to remember the birth of our Lord, his death, his resurrection, and ascension. The church calendar sets times for us to contemplate things that we should be thinking of all year, but in the busyness and distractions of life we let slip into the background of our lives. Advent is such a time. It is a season that calls forth a sense of longing for the coming of Christ. Of course, it is a period of time where we look forward to the celebration of Christmas. As such, we take the time to identify with our Old Testament fathers and mothers in the faith as they called on God in the midst of their exile and cried out for deliverance and salvation. As the familiar advent hymn says, "*O come, O come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appears.*" Seeing the coming Christmas season through their eyes adds a rich dimension to our celebration. "*Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel has come to thee, O Israel,*" a cause for rejoicing indeed. As the apostle Peter says, we have the unbelievable privilege to see what the prophets of old longed to see and understand. We are able put a name to the Messiah that they spoke of but could only imagine.

At the same time the season of Advent is a time for us to reckon with OUR longing and waiting. We, like our Old Testament fathers and mothers, are in the midst of a darkness and exile of sorts. We too are longing for the coming of our Messiah. As wonderful as it is to be able to name him, we none the less long to see him. The Bible ends with the words of John in the book of Revelation, "Come Lord Jesus, Come quickly." We look forward to the day when he will come and wipe away every tear, throwing death and Hades into the lake of fire and

ushering his saints into everlasting Glory. This ought to be the consistent longing of the saints of God, but if you are like me, the daily rhythms of life get in the way and distract us from keeping our eyes on Christ. It is here then that the church calendar serves as such a blessing. If used well, it calls us to pause and to reflect and restore that longing.

Let us not be like those in the days of Jesus, many of whom became so distracted by the things of this life that when the Messiah came, they either did not recognize him or hated him for getting in the way and messing with the order they had made for themselves. Rather, let us be like Simeon, the old man who was so anxious for the fulfillment of God's promises, that he was told he would not die before seeing the promised one. When he was finally blessed in beholding the Christ child he broke into singing, "Now you can let your servant die in peace for my eyes have seen the salvation you have prepared in the presence of all people, a light of revelation to the gentiles and for the glory of your people Israel." As the hymn writer, Charles Wesley says in his hymn, Come Thou Long Expected Jesus, "*Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the Earth thou art, dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*"

May this Advent be a season well spent as we take the time to reckon with our condition on this side of Christ's coming. May it be a time where we join the ancient song of calling on God as Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come." May it be a time where these contemplations spring load us for celebration, penultimately at Christmas, and finally on that great day of consummation in his second coming. Come Lord Jesus, Come quickly!

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