

42-01-01.wpd—Three Wait-Watchers in Jerusalem

advent, expectation, waiting, watching

Luke 1:5-17,57-80; 2:25-38

God's incarnational work is seen by those who wait and watch.

INTRODUCTION: (Luke 1:5-17 as Scripture Reading)

–How much *weight-watching* between Thanksgiving and New Year's?

–The carol “O come, O come, Emmanuel” speaks of a different kind of *wait-watching*. Jewish believers *waited* and *watched* for a Messiah to bring God's promised deliverance. Luke mentions **Three Wait-Watchers in Jerusalem** who hoped to see the coming of the Messiah. In various ways, each of them exemplifies the principle that **HOM.idea**.

I. Zechariah Was Wait-Watching by Serving (Luke 1:5-17)

A. Zechariah (along with his wife Elizabeth) was a faithful servant...

1. In obedience to God, v.6

- a. “*upright in the sight of God*” (God is *watching!* Are we?)
- b. “*observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly.*”– waiting faithfully starts with “observing” what God has already given for us to *watch over* (His Word, His commandments).

2. In ministry to God's people, v.8,9

- a. “*servant as priest*” [Once a *blood-tie to Aaron* made a person a “*priest*”; now a *blood-tie to Christ* has created a “*priesthood of all believers*”].
- b. “*chosen by lot*”– (Always being ready, always at God's disposal.)

B. Zechariah (along with His faithful wife) had a fulfilling surprise:

1. **v.13-14a**, *the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you (All godly parents hope for children to whom they can pass on their faith in God.)*
 2. **v.14b**, “*many will rejoice because of his birth*”– Human perspective is dwarfed by God's (John was to get us ready for “God with us”):
 - a. *Prophetic work* often prepares us for God's *Incarnational work* –**v.16,17**, Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (this is a quote from Mal 4:5-6, the last two verses of the OT).
- (1) “*bring back to the Lord*”– a renewal of spiritual loyalty.

- (2) “*turn the hearts of the fathers*”– a restoration of families.
 - (3) “*turnthe disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous*”– a revival of the fear of God in *word, thought and deed*.
- b. Zechariah's joy in his boy became God's plan in a man, one who would fulfill the prophecy in **Isa 40:3**, A voice of one calling: “In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.

TRANS: Did Zechariah see God's bigger picture in the fulfilment of his own desire for a child? I think so, from his words at John's birth in **v.76-79**, “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.” **God's incarnation is seen by those who wait and watch.** Like Zechariah, let's let our *wait-watching* be marked by *faithful service*.

II. Simeon Was Wait-Watching by Listening (read Luke 2:25-35)

A. A *listening* attitude characterized the “*righteous and devout*” Simeon

1. He was “*waiting for the consolation of Israel*” promised in the OT.
 2. But the key factor in Simeon's *faithful anticipation* was that “*the Holy Spirit was upon him.*” (The Spirit was “upon him” but is in us.)
- B. Because he was *listening*, he could hear the Holy Spirit, who in...
1. **v.26**– “*revealed to him...that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ*” (God intends His messages to us personally to go beyond ourselves, and that's why we need to share them with others.)
 2. Because he listened, (**v.27**) “*moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts*” (Are we attentive for the Spirit to *move* us around?)

C. What is the Holy Spirit's message for those who listen?

1. Salvation is a Person– **v.30**, *For my eyes have seen your salvation*
2. It's a cross-cultural “*salvation prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.*” (**v.30-32**)
3. It's a costly “*salvation*”– **v.34b-35**, “*This child is destined to...be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.*”
 - a. Costly to the rebellious, because He would expose their hearts.
 - b. Costly to believers, because Jesus came to die on the Cross, and He brings that Cross to all who want to become His disciples.

TRANS: God's incarnational activity is seen by those who wait and watch. Are we *wait-watching*, like Simeon, *listening* faithfully for the Holy Spirit's voice in our lives? If so, we will see the Lord's Christ....

III. Anna Was Wait-Watching Through Worship (Luke 2:36-38)

A. Anna was a saintly old widow living out her life in worship:

1. She too had been listening a long time (60 years or so) and was acknowledged for accuracy in listening (called "a prophetess").
2. She also was busy serving (a 100% commitment to God's work, far beyond even that of those in the priesthood).
3. She completely devoted herself to God (like a nun, she did not remarry, but fasted, kept long vigils, and lived a cloistered life).

B. Her *worship* anticipated the coming age when the Messiah restores "that which was lost." (Her dedicated devotion symbolized a coming "redemption" from widowhood, old age, gender discrimination.)

1. Her close walk with God opened her eyes to Christ's presence.
2. Her close walk with God helped her explain Jesus to others.

CONCLUSION:

– **Zechariah** was busy serving, **Simeon** was busy listening, **Anna** was busy worshipping: **3 Wait-Watchers in Jerusalem.** But let's turn that phrase around to its modern usage, (w-e-i-g-h-t) "*weight-watchers*," and look at **Heb.12:1** (NKJV), Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

–As we anticipate His 2nd Coming, are there any *weights* in our lives that keep us from *worshipping the Lord*, from *listening to His voice*, from *serving Him wholeheartedly*? In celebrating His 1st Coming, let's remember this great "cloud of witnesses" who have gone on before us. Three of them are these three *wait-watchers* in Jerusalem. Let's follow their spirit of anticipation, this Advent Season and always.

Luke 1:5-17 (NIV)

5In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.

6Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly.

7But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well

along in years.

8Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God,

9he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

10And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

12When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

13But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.

14He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,

15for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.

16Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.

17And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Luke 2:25-38 (NIV)

25Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,

28Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.

30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people,

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

33The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

34Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,

35so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

36There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.

37She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,

38and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

38Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.