



Advent: Hope

Bottom Line: When we set our hope for Christmas on seeing more of Jesus, we will not be disappointed or let down.

Think about something you waited a long time for, such as leaving home, getting married, having a baby, getting your dream job, retirement, financial stability, etc. What was your greatest expectation for that event? Did the event live up to your expectations?

Sometimes events in our lives will greatly exceed our expectations, and other times they fail to live up to the hype that we've created in our mind. Christmas, especially when you're a child, is a mixed bag. You wait all year in anticipation of what's to come: spending time with family, gifts, Hallmark Christmas movies, etc. Some years, Christmas day is everything you hoped it would be and more. But other years, Christmas is a let-down. Perhaps you didn't get that specific gift you wanted, or you didn't get to spend time with certain people. Anticipation can either ruin or improve whatever it is that we are looking forward to.

Read Luke 2:22-26. Simeon is described as a righteous and devout man who was "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Understanding that "consolation" means "comfort", what exactly was Simeon waiting on?

The "consolation of Israel" referred to the hope that Israel had that God would deliver them. More specifically, it referred to the promised Messiah that had been foretold and prophesied about all throughout the Old Testament. Simeon was eagerly waiting for the coming of the "Holy One", the Redeemer that would save the people of Israel from their sins. As we know, on this side of the birth of Jesus, Simeon's hope was not in vain. His longing for the promise of God to be fulfilled was a right and good desire, and one that was assured to be met. But can the same be said for us? Are we longing for something that we KNOW will come to pass?

What are some things that we long for that God has not promised us? What promises of God can we trust and place our longings in?

Read Luke 2:25-32. What is the relationship between Simeon being "righteous and devout" and his ability to recognize Jesus as the Messiah?

The combination of words used to describe Simeon, righteous and devout, tell us a lot about him. The pairing of these words stresses that Simeon thoughtfully lived out his relationship with God. He was "righteous" in that he kept the laws of God, and he was "devout" in that he served God in all areas of his life. He took the promises of God seriously. It is no coincidence that this was the man who happened to recognize Jesus. Simeon had an intimate, personal relationship with God and that enabled him to be receptive to God's activity in the world. God was able to reveal Jesus to Simeon because Simeon was anticipating His arrival.

When you go to church or small group, or when you study your Bible, or when you pray, do you do these things with the anticipation that God will reveal Himself to you? (See John 14:21)



Are both “righteousness” and “devotion” necessary in order for us to “see” God? Why or why not? What does it look like to be righteous but not devoted? What does it look like to be devoted but not righteous?

Read Luke 2:36-38. Is there anything that amazes you about this account?

Anna was eighty-four years old. It says that she had spent almost her entire life in faithful service to God, and like Simeon, had been anxiously anticipating the coming of the Messiah. Can you imagine waiting so long for something to come? At this point in time, God had not spoken through any prophets for over 400 years. Imagine yourself waiting for God to fulfill His promise, fasting and praying day and night in the temple for 84 years, waiting for God to break the silence. This was Anna’s life. But then finally, she laid her eyes on Jesus, and realized that everything she had been longing for was finally here.

But don’t miss the importance of Anna’s reaction. At this point in time, the Jewish understanding of the Messiah was that He was going to be a political king, a member of Jewish royalty who would rise up, overthrow Rome, and rule the Earth from Jerusalem; He wasn’t going to be a baby, born to poor, immigrant parents. But Anna, like Simeon, had rejected the popular cultural expectation of who the Messiah would be, and had embraced the true, humble nature of Jesus as the Promised One. Yes, even a poor, weak, powerless baby could be God’s Chosen One.

What are some cultural expectations that we allow to overshadow the true meaning of Christmas?

Are there any expectations you have for this Christmas that will spoil the season for you if they don’t come true? How will you react this Christmas if you don’t get the specific gift that you want or if a fight breaks out around the dinner table? Will the joy of Christmas be robbed from you if you don’t get to sing the songs, eat the food, and enjoy the traditions that you normally do?

What can you do to anticipate and set your focus on Jesus throughout this Christmas season? How can you prepare yourself in devotion and righteousness to be able to see Jesus this Christmas?