

Christmas Eve 2012

Good Evening and welcome to our Christmas Eve service

My name is Rob Willey – I’m the SP here at Harvest Bible Chapel . . .

And I’m glad you’ve chosen to worship with us on this special occasion

We do this for 2 main reasons: (1) To re-live the anticipation of that *first* Christmas . . .

And (2) To anticipate the *celebration* of it now; The celebration of Christ’s birth

And I trust that as we do that together, your heart will shine with his light, and swell with his goodness and greatness

So let’s stand and sing to that end – *Go Tell It On The Mountain*

• **Video** (Come Thou Long Expected Jesus)

• In 3½ minutes, that was the history of redemption – God’s work of saving and rescuing mankind from the throes of sin
The final solution for which, was foreshadowed all the way back in Genesis
And the anticipation right along with it

• That’s where God (**Image #2**), after the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, told the serpent in **Gen 3:15** – “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring* [your people and her people]

And then he gets very specific – *he* [someone from the Eve’s offspring] *shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*”

Some future person would deal a massive blow to Satan, *bruise his head* – while Satan would barely affect him; It was a foreshadowing of the final solution

And God’s people began to look for him

Who would he be? And when would he burst on the scene? And how would it happen?

That was the start of the anticipation; That was the start of the yearning

• And then, after Noah, it progressed with God’s promise (**Gen 12:3**) to Abraham – *In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*

And *in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed* (Gen 22:18)

Your offspring referring to Christ, b/c of Gal 3:16; But *they* didn’t know that

All they knew is that the One of whom God spoke, would come from Abraham

• And when *Isaac* was born (**Image #4**), their hopes must have run high; “*He has* to be the One; He’s Abraham’s son, and he’s a miracle baby”

And then the near sacrifice; How could that be? If he’s the One, how could that be?

But he wasn’t; And neither was Esau or Jacob – his sons

• But then there was Joseph (**Image #5**); Sold into slavery, his heel bruised – he eventually reigned over Egypt, the world power at the time; Surely *he’s* the One
But he wasn’t; He died, the people went back to suffering, and the anticipation continued; The longing increased

• Until *Moses* was born almost 300 years later, in the midst of Pharaoh’s slaughter of Israelite baby boys (**Image #7**); But he was saved . . .

And eventually led his people out of their bondage, received the Law (**Image #8**), instituted the sacrifices

And relayed God’s promise to lead, guide, and protect them – if they would obey

Surely *he’s* the One; Nobody else even compares

• But he wasn’t; He too sinned, and gave way to *Joshua* (**Image #9**) on the verge of the Promised Land; And so it went upon *his* death, with leader after leader . . .
Judge after judge for another 300 years; Some more successful and godly than others . . .
But all eventually giving way to a successor

• Until, God raised up *kings*; And how *that* must have fueled their hope for a deliverer
Especially with the advent of *David* (**Image #10**) – so successful and so powerful, that God made covenant with him . . .
To establish his throne forever and ever, with someone from his lineage on it

And when he gave way to his son Solomon, who was even greater in some respects – hopes must have run high; But he too failed the Lord, and gave way to *his* sons
And they to more sin, and more kings – and after 450 years of that, the people nearly gave up hope; In fact most of them did

• And were it not for prophets like *Daniel* (**Image #11**) in the midst of that time – *all* the people would have given up hope
Speaking under the compulsion of God, they kept hope *alive*; Describing the long expected One in more and more detail

One who would come as a child (**Image #19**), a son; Born in Bethlehem to a *virgin* of all things; One who would be called Immanuel, God w/ us, God in the flesh, God’s Son
And then go on to provide light and hope to the nations, suffer as a servant, bear the sins of many, be crushed for their iniquities, and prolong his days; All from the prophets
And when you put it all together, the anticipation and longing must have reached a *fever* pitch

• And then silence (**Image 15b**); No more prophets, no more leaders of any significance, no more blessing – just dark; For 400 years
During which, all but a faithful few gave up hope; All but a faithful few stopped looking, and longing, and seeking

• Until an angel (**Image #12b**) appeared one day, to a priest named Zechariah – one of the godly few; Declaring that he would have a son . . .

Who would prepare the way for the Lord (Lk 1:17), who would make ready for Immanuel; What a stir that must have caused!

Would he be like Moses who preceded Joshua? Or *Saul*, who preceded David? Or Elijah, who preceded Elisha?

• And as if that wasn’t enough (**Image #13**) *another* angel appeared to Mary a short time later; Saying (**Lk 1:31-33**) – *Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus* [which means the one who saves]. [32] *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*”

What! Could it be? Could this be *it*? The fulfillment of *everything*? Ya; This was it
And 9 months later he was born (**Image #16**); Followed by more angels (**Image #17**);
And shepherds; And praise; And awe; And worship

- And a short time later a man named *Simeon* tied it *all* together
Upon seeing Jesus (**Lk 2:30-32**), he took him in his arms and said to God . . .
*My eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.*
One of the faithful few who had been longing to see the Promised One all his life – he
recognized him as Gods means of saving the world
- No wonder the book of Revelation (**Rev 12:4b**) says that – *The dragon* [representing
Satan] *stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her
child he might devour it.*

And (**Rev 12:17**) when he couldn't do so – *The dragon became furious with the woman
and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring* [the very thing God said back in
Gen 3:15], *on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of
Jesus*. That's the environment in which he was born*****

- Presenting a world of need – where he healed the broken-hearted, set the captives free,
made the lame to walk again, and caused the blind to see
Not to mention raised the dead to life, and *forgave people of their sins*

All in preparation for the cross; Where he bruised the head of the serpent, just like God
said, and sealed his fate forever
And in the process, provided a means for *our* sins to be forgiven, and *our* guilt relieved,
and *our* lives filled with the light of life

- So that now (candle), we not only *remember* his coming, and do so with great joy – we
anticipate his *next*; And *still* say – “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”
Now it's our turn to anticipate; Now it's our turn to remain faithful
Now it's our turn to watch and pray

So that one day, when Jesus once again steps out of the light of heaven, and into the
darkness of earth (Light Candle) . . .
We can step out of the darkness of earth, and into the light of heaven
Out of time and into eternity; Out of *anticipation*, and into celebration
Just like the people in Jesus' day

- Pray (WT on; LT come forward; Becky on stage) – Lord, your light has come, and your
glory has risen upon us (**Is 60:1**); And we remember with a celebration of anticipation
on this Silent but Holy night; Use this I pray, to inflame our hopes even more, for your
next coming

(Light Becky's candle; Instrumental Music; Then leader candles; Exit stage with leaders)

Close (with Becky) – God bless you; Becky and I are so thankful for you
Sleep in heavenly peace; And have a **Merry Christmas** (Blow out candles)
(Pause briefly before bringing up lights and music)