

## **The Reason For The Season** **The Old and New Testament** **“O Come Emmanuel”**

### **Introduction**

When I was a kid, Christmas was a huge deal around our house. I mean, my brothers and I pretty much thought about it all year long. Our parents didn't normally spoil us kids by getting us everything we wanted every single time we went to “Woolworth's” (If you were around in the sixties you know the store I'm talking about). No, if there was something that we really, really wanted, Mom and Dad would always say, “Maybe you can have that for Christmas”. Therefore, my brothers and I became very good at making out our “wish lists”. We made sure that everything we saw throughout the year that we just “had to have” (it is amazing what a kid believes he cannot live without) was carefully cataloged and tracked, so we “might” get it on Christmas morning. In those days, we actually received “toy catalogs” in the mail, and the dog eared pages and underlined product descriptions were the “clues” that we left for our parents, so they would know our every desire. It was a fun time, and I find myself feeling like a kid again just thinking about it. Expectation is a powerful thing!

Then, sometime around Thanksgiving, the tree would go up, and the enthusiasm would begin to build into a fever pitch. Mom would begin the whole “shopping thing”, and every week we would see a few more bags that were barely visible under the bed in her and Dad's room. We were expressly forbidden to enter that particular sanctuary under the severest of penalties, however, so we could only try and get a glimpse of the packages through the occasional crack left in the door. We would have probably just risked it (and truth be told, we sometimes did), for it would have been worth any corporal punishment just to see what the packages contained, but we were far more concerned over Mom's declaration that she would return the gifts, if we so much as peeked at them! So, we were compelled, for the most part, to contain ourselves. And so... we waited, for what, to us, seemed like an eternity, until finally on Christmas morning we had the time of our lives! Yes, my parents were great at Christmas!

Now, imagine if you will, what it would be like to expect the greatest gift to ever be given. To be promised that the gift would one day come, and to begin the process of waiting... and waiting. Not for a year mind you, but for four thousand years! That is exactly what happened to those who were promised a Savior. The promise was first given way back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, when they disobeyed God, and mankind became enslaved to his sin. God promised a deliverer, One Who would come and re-establish the spiritual connection between God The Creator and man the creation, but that promise was a long time in coming. The world waited. It longed for The One Who would come to be known as “Emmanuel”, meaning “God with us” (***Isaiah 7:14***). The promised One would indeed come, but the waiting... the waiting was excruciating at times.

For this Christmas season, I would like to attempt to recreate, as it were, the anticipation felt by those faithful children of God, who anticipated and rejoiced at the Promised One, Who would come to save the world. He is known by many names in Scripture, and we cannot possibly begin to discover all of them in this short holiday season. But, what I would like to do is take a look at just five of the prophecies (promises) given in *The Old Testament* about the Messiah (The word means “Anointed One”) that was to come, along with a look into *The New Testament*, where we will see if those five promises were actually kept. So, this will be an attempt to recreate, as it were, the “promise of Christmas gifts”, and then, the actual “receiving of the gifts”, the way we used to wait to open our presents as a child. We will talk about anticipating the gift, and then, we will actually see when the gift was received! Now, keep in mind that there were over three hundred specific “promises” made in *The Old Testament* concerning the Messiah, and we are only going to be examining five! Spoiler alert: All the promises were kept!

We will be looking at five of God's promises found in *The Old Testament* books of *Genesis*, *2 Samuel*, *Isaiah*, and *Zechariah*; The Promised Seed, Shiloh, Son of David, Suffering Servant, and The Stone. We will look at these great prophecies, and then, we will see when each of the promises were actually kept. Keep in mind, during this hectic time of the year my friends, that Jesus is definitely the “Reason for the Season”!

### **The Promised "Seed" (Genesis 3:15) 4000 BC**

**"I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring (Seed). He will strike your head, and you will strike His heel." Genesis 3:15**

When Adam and Even sinned in the Garden of Eden, God cursed the serpent (Satan), who had deceived them, and He made him a promise. God promised that one day, a "seed" from a woman would "crush his head". The serpent would get in a strike of his own, but it would be a strike on the heel of the promised seed. This is the first telling of "The Gospel" in all of Scripture. It tells of a promised "Deliverer", Who would come and undo what the devil had done. Sin had caused a disconnect between God and mankind, and the Deliverer would come to restore this sweet fellowship.

It is important to note that the promised Deliverer was not called "the Seed of man", but only of the woman. This means that the deliver would be born of a woman, but His Father would be something different entirely. It is the promise of a God/man, Who would be fully human, and yet fully divine.

The Serpent would inflict some pain (strike the heel) upon the Promised One. Looking backward we know that this is a reference to The Cross of Calvary. However, death could not keep The Anointed One down, as it were. His resurrection would deal a "death blow" to the serpent for all the suffering that he had caused. The Seed of The Woman would be victorious over death and hell.

Eve, from that moment on, began to hope for her deliverer. She had been banished from her paradise garden and longed to return. When she had her first born son, she name him Cain (meaning acquired), and exclaimed, **"I have gotten a man from The LORD."** (Genesis 4:1). The actual reading of the Hebrew is:

**"I have gotten a man... The LORD!"**

It would seem that Eve had higher expectations of Cain than he was ever to capable of fulfilling! If she truly believed that Cain was "The LORD", then she was to be severely disappointed, for Cain turned out to be the exact opposite. Eve just wanted to return to The Garden of Eden. She wanted things to be "set right" again. And who could blame her? We all tend to be a bit impatient when it comes to what we desire. Do we not? Eve didn't realize that the wait for "Christmas" would be so long... four thousand years long... And so, the expectation of the promised "Seed" had begun.

### **The Gift Opened (Promise Fulfilled)**

When Christ was born, He was indeed born of a virgin. He was not the "seed of a man", but rather, the "seed of a woman" born The Son of God. He came to crush the head of the serpent, by removing the curse of sin from this fallen world. He suffered severely to fulfill this promise, but make no mistake, Satan was crushed at Calvary. The promise of The Seed was realized in Christ (**Matthew 1:18-25**).

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### **The Promise of "Shiloh" (Genesis 49:9-12) 1694 BC**

**"Judah, is a young lion — my son, you return from the kill. He crouches; he lies down like a lion or a lioness — who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes, and the obedience of the people belongs to Him. He ties His donkey to a vine, and the colt of His donkey to the choice vine. He washes His clothes in wine, and His robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and His teeth are whiter than milk."**

Jacob, the son of Isaac, is quite possibly the most colorful person in all of Scripture. His life was, to say the least, complicated. He was the second born of twins and chosen by God to inherit the blessings of "the firstborn", which would include, in his case, that The Messiah would come from his lineage.

Jacob (whose name means, "supplanter": one who takes the place of another) had conflicts with pretty much everyone in his life. He struggled with his brother Esau. He deceived his own father, in order

to obtain his blessing. He struggled with his father-in-law, who repeatedly tried to take advantage of him. He even struggled with God at the stream of Jabbok (**Genesis 32:22-31**). It was after this “wrestling match” that God changed his name to “*Israel*”, meaning he “*struggles with God*”.

When Jacob’s life was at an end, he sent for each of his twelve sons to bless them. These men would become the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel, and Jacob wished to bless them, before he breathed his last. The old man mustered his remaining strength and prophesied over each of his children. When he came to his son Judah, he said something very interesting. He stated that Judah was a “lion” that would never be conquered. He went on to say that the staff of leadership would never be taken from Judah until the coming of “Shiloh”. And, when the one called Shiloh finally came, there would be a new order, and that many would follow Him, and he would lead them into a time of prosperity (that is what is intended by the donkey tied to the choicest of vines).

The word “*Shiloh*” (pronounced she-low) is an obscure Hebrew word of uncertain meaning, but it is derived from the Hebrew “*Shalom*” meaning peace. It is therefore the opinion of many Biblical scholars that the word Shiloh actually means “*the bringer of peace*”. In any event, Jacob speaks of One from the tribe of Judah Who shall come to rule in peace and prosperity. When this ruler comes, no longer will the government of Israel be sovereign over its citizenry. The nation will be stripped of its authority, when “Shiloh” comes and the scepter of Judah is passed on to Him.

The prophecy also mentions a time when Shiloh’s robes are washed in wine, which is symbolic for blood. This mysterious leader would come to rule and would not only lead many in the way of prosperity, but He would crush those who stand in opposition to Him, staining His garments with their blood. It is a powerful prophesy of The Messiah, Who would come from the line of Judah and would establish an everlasting kingdom. Jacob saw Him, as he lay dying, and he spoke beautifully of His coming in majesty and splendor. And so... the expectation of the promised “Shiloh” continued.

### **The Gift Opened**

The Jews were allowed to govern themselves, even during the Babylonian exile. But, when the Romans subjugated Israel, they placed a Herod, an Idumean (descendant of Esau), as King of the Jewish people, and also appointed priests, instead of those who should have been granted the privilege by rightful succession. When Herod became King, “Judah” no longer had rulership in Israel. It was taken away by the Romans. This was prophesied to occur, when “Shiloh” came. This all took place when Christ “The Lion of Judah”, was born, the rightful King of The Jews. He is the promised Shiloh, “bringer of peace”, for He is The Prince of Peace (**Matthew 2:1-18**).

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### **The Promised “Son of David” (2 Samuel 7:11-14) 1000 BC**

**“The LORD declares to you: The LORD Himself will make a house for you. When your time comes, and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom. He is the One Who will build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be His Father, and He will be My Son.” 2 Samuel 7:11-14a**

King David loved The LORD with every fiber of his being. He was by no means a perfect man, but no one could question his devotion to God. In fact, when David became king over all of Israel, he desired to build a house for God, instead of the tent that Moses had constructed as a shelter for The Ark of The Covenant. David had so loved to have the presence of The LORD near Him, that he actually set aside the Mosaic Law and brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem while leaving the Tabernacle of Moses in Gibeon. I actually believe that this is a foreshadowing of Christ leaving His abode in heaven and “tabernacling” among men (**John 1:14**).

David was so in love with God that he wanted to build for Him a wonderful temple as opposed to the tent of Moses. But God said that David would not be the one to establish a permanent dwelling for God among His people. There was another One Who would one day come to do just that. Now, we know that David’s son Solomon (whose name means peace) did build a temple for God, but even Solomon’s temple was temporary. God promised David that since he had desired to build a house for

Him that God would establish a “house” for David. A descendent (Son) of David would one day come to rule on an everlasting throne of an everlasting kingdom. He would not only be David’s “Son”, but He would also be known as The “Son of God” (**vs. 14a**).

When David heard this prophecy, he went into the tent that had been constructed for the Ark of The Covenant and “sat down before The LORD”, overcome by what God had promised to do for him. God would see to it that The Promised **Seed**, The **Shiloh** bringer of peace, would also be “The **Son of David**”! Can you imagine what a blessing it was to the king to hear this wonderful promise of God?

### **The Gift Opened**

The Gospel of *Matthew* shows us clearly the lineage of Jesus, tracing His ancestry all the way back through *The Old Testament*, proving that HE was indeed “The Son of David” (**Matthew 1:6-17**).

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### **The Promise of “The Suffering Servant” (Isaiah 53) 700 BC**

**“Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses, and He carried our pains; but we in turn regarded Him stricken, struck down by God and afflicted. But He was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds.”** **Isaiah 53:4-5**

Though many in Israel believed in, and waited for, the Anointed One that would come, they had a very difficult time in understanding the additional prophecies that would tell of His coming. Surely this chosen One of God would ascend to His throne in power, without having to endure any type of suffering. To the Jews, it was unthinkable to be blessed by God and be forced to endure hardship! But, they had forgotten the promise of **Genesis 3:15**: **“...you will strike His heel”**.

Suffering was ALWAYS the plan for The Messiah who would come. Isaiah plainly speaks of the suffering that He would endure in order to take our sins upon Himself. For we:

**“...all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and The LORD has punished Him for the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. Like a Lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, He did not open His mouth. He was taken away because of oppression and judgment; and who considered His fate? For He was cut off from the land of the living; He was struck because of my rebellion. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but He was with a rich man at His death, because He had done no violence and had not spoken deceitfully. Yet The LORD was pleased to crush Him severely. When you make Him a guilt offering, He will see His seed, He will prolong His days, and by His hand, the LORD’s pleasure will be accomplished. After His anguish, He will see light and be satisfied. By His knowledge, my righteous servant will justify many, and He will carry their iniquities. Therefore, I will give Him the many as a portion, and He will receive the mighty as the spoil, because He willingly submitted to death and was counted among the rebels; yet He bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels.”** **Isaiah 53:6-12**

What that means is simply this. The Messiah, the Promised Seed, Shiloh, Son of David would also suffer and die for our sins. He would offer Himself up willingly and not resist the fate that God had assigned Him. He would be buried in a rich mans tomb, but then, rise again, and see light, and be satisfied. Many will believe in Him and find forgiveness and salvation, while those who reject Him, those who consider themselves to be “mighty” and have no need of Him, will surely perish. The Messiah was always destined to achieve His victory over the Serpent by becoming the overcoming, Suffering Servant, who would die and rise again! This was always the plan for The Lamb of God, slain before the foundation of the world (**Revelation 13:8**).

### **The Gift Opened**

This promise was kept on the day of Calvary, when the suffering servant willingly laid down His life to save us from sin. He offered no resistance, He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and He willingly gave Himself to save us from our sins (**Matthew 27:11-54**).

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### **The Promise of "The Stone" (Zechariah 3:8-10) 520 BC**

**"Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your colleagues sitting before you; indeed these men are a sign that I AM about to bring My Servant, The Branch, notice the Stone I have set before Joshua; on that one Stone are Seven eyes. I will engrave an inscription on it — this is the declaration of The LORD of Armies — and I will take away the iniquity of this land in a single day. On that day, each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under His vine and fig tree. This is the declaration of The LORD of Armies."**  
**Zechariah 3:8-10**

After the 70 year Babylonian exile, the Jews returned to their beloved promised land and began construction of a new Temple in Jerusalem. The prophet Zechariah, whose name means "*The LORD remembered*", was given many visions from God to remind His covenant people that He had not forgotten them, nor the promises that He had made to them throughout the centuries. Zechariah gives us more insight into the coming Messiah than any other of the so called "minor prophets". The vision of Joshua the High Priest, dressed in filthy garments, is actually a symbolic vision of The Messiah that would come and take our sins upon Himself.

The LORD gives Zechariah two names for the coming Messiah. The first is "The Branch", which is a reference to His lineage coming from the "tree of David". The second reference is "The Stone" with seven eyes (which means all seeing and all knowing). The Stone is a name that had been also used of The Coming Messiah by the prophet Daniel (**Daniel 2:34**), and also in **Psalms 118**:

**"The Stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This came from The LORD; it is wondrous in our sight. This is the day that The LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."**  
**Psalms 118:22-24**

### **The Gift Opened**

The "day" that both this *Psalms*, and Zechariah speak of is the day that The Stone (Messiah) would die for the sins of the world. The iniquity of us all, that was placed upon Him, was to be removed from us in a single day like the filthy garments removed from Joshua the High Priest in Zechariah's vision! That day was the day that our Savior gave His life upon Mount Calvary. Jesus is the foundation stone of The Church (**Matthew 16:13-18**).

It is interesting to note that **Psalms 118** was part of the hymns the Jews would sing every Passover (**Psalms 113-118** known as the Egyptian Hallel). Jesus sang this song just before He went to the cross.

**"When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."** **Matthew 26:30**

We know that this is the "hymn" that Jesus sang, because it is the last song sung at the end of the passover meal. So Jesus sang about this wonderful "day that The LORD had made", the day that Zechariah spoke of that would remove the sins of us all. Jesus sang about it and "rejoiced", for it was the day that "The LORD had made" to save us from sin! He rejoiced before He went to the cross... for you!!

So you see, God has indeed kept His promises. He sent His only Son into the world to give us the greatest gift that has ever been given. This is a wondrous time of year. Sometimes, its true meaning gets crowded out by the noise and consumerism, but we should never allow such trivial things to remove our focus for the promised gifts, and the day when those gifts became a reality. O Come let us adore Him, Christ The LORD. ***Merry Christmas!***

And let all of God's people say... TRUTH!!!