

# The Church's Song for The Awaited One

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 04 December 2011

Preacher: Alex Cowie

[ 0 : 00 ] We are going to turn back then to Isaiah 25, and that in the Church Bible is on page 624.

And we are wanting to focus our attention on verse 9, where we read, And it will be said in that day, Behold, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us.

This is the Lord, we have waited for him. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. I want us to think about this in terms of the Church's song for one who was long awaited.

It is a song, in a sense, it is written in the kind of musical rhythm. It was a song that was filled with hope.

It was a song that involved waiting upon the Lord. Upon the Lord for his time of fulfilment. Now earlier on today, we were looking at that passage in Luke's Gospel, chapter 1, where Zachariah, who was actually in the priestly order, and he functioned when the temple was there in Jerusalem, and he had his stint, you remember, he was offering the incense at the altar of incense, when God's messenger came to him and told him that his wife would have a son, even though she was old.

[ 2 : 03 ] And we saw that when the time came, and the child was born, the son was born, he was called John, and we know him as John the Baptist, or the baptiser.

And he was the forerunner in God's purpose of Messiah Jesus. He was preparing the way for the Lord. And when Zachariah indicated, remember he had been struck dumb, when he had indicated that his son should be called John, and not Zachariah, after his dad, his tongue was loosed, and he began to prophesy.

And in that passage, we read the words, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people.

And we saw in that passage that God visits his people along the way of history, at his own decision, in his own time, and he does it for his own purpose.

And it's interesting that in the Gospel record, it's clear that prior to the birth of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the believing community within Israel, the believing community who were resting on the promises of God, back through the Hebrew scriptures given by the prophets, they had been looking for, and praying for, and longing for, the appearing of the Messiah.

[ 3 : 46 ] And it's interesting to notice in these early passages, particularly Luke's Gospel, chapters 1 and 2, that these believers within the community were guided by the Spirit of God in the Word, to have this conviction that the time that had been longed for, and looked for, and prayed for, was now at hand.

And what we're doing this evening is we're going back in time, and we're looking at how the people of God, the church of God, that is the gathered community of the Lord, were encouraged to wait upon the Lord for his purpose to be fulfilled.

And this is something that is relevant to ourselves today, as much as ever it was. We are required by faith in the Lord to wait upon him. And inevitably that means time.

And although it's time we feel we haven't got, because our time passes so quickly, nevertheless, the burden of the passage we're looking at tonight is about waiting upon the Lord.

And if you go back in time to Isaiah's day, when Isaiah prophesied, you're going back about 750 or so years before Jesus came into the world.

[ 5 : 21 ] So, you've got all that time that the church was waiting. Okay, so the folks in Isaiah's day weren't around when it happened, obviously.

But you see the point? They had to wait God's time. God will not be hurried. He's got his own time free. And his people have to learn that and accept that.

And Isaiah speaks in this passage, in his time, of a day that was in the future. I suppose little did even he know how far in the future it was.

But there it is. And it's a day that, as we were thinking earlier today about Zechariah, and Elizabeth, his wife, a cousin of Mary, the mother of our Lord, and so on.

These people, and old Simeon at the temple, and so on, they were waiting, and they were privileged to be around when the special visitation came to pass.

[ 6 : 30 ] And that because the time for the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Jesus, the Messiah, would have their fulfillment then, as it were.

Now, you can't have failed to notice that in the passage we're looking at, there's a lot of talk about judgment. There's a lot of talk about the overthrow of the enemies of God's people.

And that's true. That's the way it is. That always happens. It happened in history. When God came to save his people, to deliver them from their enemies, it was that the enemies felt the brunt of his wrath.

And there was deliverance for the people of God and the destruction of the enemies. And that, those twin themes work out through history in every generation and will until the Lord comes.

And you see, for example, in verse 10 of this passage, for on this mountain the hand of the Lord will rest, that is among his people, and Moab shall be trampled down under him.

[ 7 : 52 ] Moab ought to have been the friend of the people of God. Historically, they'd come from the same stock. But they became enemies of Israel and they persecuted them and tricked them and sold them to their enemies.

And they would feel the wrath of God. And this happened in time. And it happens to all those who make themselves the enemies of the church of Christ.

But you see, it was God's purpose not only to overthrow the enemies of his cause, but to remove the spiritual shroud that hung upon the minds of people.

You see it there in the passage that we read, that he would, verse 7, the Lord will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all the people and the veil, the veil that is spread over all the nations.

That is to say, the veil there is a veil of spiritual darkness. They don't see the truth as it is in Jesus.

[ 9 : 12 ] And you know, sometimes, this is just by way of introduction, but sometimes people have criticized us in the singing of Psalms because they're old and out of date and so on and so on.

I submit to you that there is as much idolatry in the world today, in fact, there is far more idolatry in the world today, open, idle worship than ever there was simply because there are tens of millions of more people in the world today.

The population is vast compared to what it was and those who are committed to this idol or that idol, to this false religion or that, have increased by vast amounts.

And when we sing these songs of the Psalter, we're in tune with reality. God is the God who alone himself takes away the veil from our understanding to enable us to see how things are.

And it is to Mount Zion, that is to say, this is not a political statement. When the Bible talks about Mount Zion, it talks in Old Testament language, it clothes the meaning in what was then familiar.

[ 10 : 42 ] Mount Zion was the seat of the worship of God in Jerusalem. And that translates into wherever the people of God are, in any age, in any part of the world, the people will come in.

And they will submit to the King, to Jesus. Let's not forget, even by way of introduction, that the apostles got into trouble with the Roman authorities, because they proclaimed not only Jesus as Savior, but as King.

and by the unbelieving Jews they were accused of treason. They have another King. They don't worship the Emperor, they worship Jesus as their King, and as their God.

So, the burden of this is that in all that has been going on in the life of God's people down through the generations, one key point has to be kept clear in the experience of God's people, and that is to wait upon him, to trust him, to fulfill his promises.

We have waited for him, he will save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

[ 12 : 27 ] all the way down to the coming of Jesus, this burden was given to the people, to God's people by the prophets. And this passage we are looking at had its fulfillment at the Lord's coming, but of course it will have its ultimate fulfillment when he comes again.

people. I just want to think briefly on three things for our benefit. First of all, we want to think about his identity, how he is described here, and it will be said in that day, Behold, this is our God, we have waited for him.

This is the Lord, we have waited for him. Those of us who know our Bibles well, know very well that there are many names used to describe the living and the true God.

But here the focus is on two, our God and the Lord. We will take the last first, the Lord, because it connects us right back there with Abraham, the God of covenant faithfulness, the God who came and said this is the way it's going to be, Abraham.

I've brought you out of your spiritual darkness into light and I've given you the promise of a seed, a special seed in whom all the nations will be blessed, including your own, all the nations too.

[14:08] And it took ages, it took millennia for that to come to fruition. And it's going on apace ever since. And that name for the Lord, you've heard me say before, is the great covenant name.

And it is here, this is the Lord, this is our God. But what I want to dwell on for a wee while in this first point is identity, is our God.

He is referred to as our God. God. There are two things that rise out of that. First of all, we are owned by him. He has made us his people.

To call him our God is to remind ourselves that he is our owner, he owns us. Remember Jesus taught that to his disciples, the apostle said it too, concerning the Lord's people.

You are not your own. You have been bought with a price. Therefore, glorify the Lord with your body, your person, which belongs to him.

[15:31] Our God reminds us that if we are living by faith in Jesus Christ, we belong to him. He has made us his own.

He has made us his own from all eternity. The Bible makes no secret of that. These things are high, no doubt, and deep in doctrine, and beyond our searching.

But they are there to encourage us. Nothing is left to chance with God. They shall come. In his abundant grace, they shall come and declare that the Lord God is our God.

That's one thing. The other thing is, not only do we belong to him, but he belongs to us. He's made himself over to us.

He is our God. You remember in Psalm 43, a psalm that talks very much of the oppression of the Lord's people, and depression too, because of opposition to the cause.

[16:45] He says that he is my own God. Psalm 43, and verse 11, he's my own God. He belongs to us.

He's given himself to us. The apostles frequently in the letters talk about our God and our Father, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Very much this identity or identification rather, between the Lord and his people. We know him.

We talk about him because he's brought us to know him, and he is ours, because we are his in the first place, and he gives himself to us.

And the whole wonder of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was just to make known. No man has seen God at any time.

[17:52] The only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, he has come to make him known. He has made him known, he has given us an exposition of the invisible God.

That's why you could say, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. God has given the life. And as we were thinking earlier on today in Luke 1.78, the long wait had an end, and the day spring from on high visited his people.

Now, no doubt, it was difficult for the Lord's people, all through those centuries, to wait.

And wait, and wait, and live out difficult days. You take the 400 years between the end of the Old Testament prophets, Malachi, and the dawn of the new era when Messiah came.

Take that period. It was a turbulent time. It was full of violence, brutality, huge cruelty, and so on. And God's people had to live through it.

[19:22] You take a situation, say, 165 years before Jesus came. You have a deliberate attempt by Antiochus Epiphanes.

To exterminate the Jewish people, the people of Israel. That's what Hanukkah is about, the feast of dedication in the Jewish calendar.

It was God came into their darkness and despair and delivered them from this man, this mad king who wanted to destroy them, wipe them out.

So all the centuries that passed, the long wait was difficult. But God's word came again and again to them.

Such a passage as this, Behold, this is our God. We have waited for him. And at whatever point along the way the child of God came to this, he was encouraged to remind himself of the importance of quietly waiting and hoping in the Lord.

[ 20 : 38 ] It's true that when the time came and Jesus came into the world, he came to his own people in the first place, and the bulk of them, the authorities, didn't recognize him.

They refused him, I mean. Even although they were told this is the one who has come as a light, as revelation for the Gentile nations, and as the glory, the divine glory of his people Israel.

And for all that, they refused him. His identity. This is the Lord. This is the God of Abraham.

This is our God. And it's important to reassure ourselves by the word itself, by God's own word, that we can say by faith, this is our God.

The second thing, we've touched on this a bit, so we won't dwell on it over much. He was waited for. We have waited for him. And yet in these few words, we have waited for him.

[ 21 : 59 ] In these few words, we know that these words carry in them all the hopes and fears and tears and longings of generations of the Lord's people.

people of countless millions of believers then and ever since the coming of Christ. We wait upon him.

And it's ever important for us to keep our minds on what is written by God and not allow ourselves to speculate.

You probably have heard some of the journalist pundits telling us that 50 years from now the church will be no more in Scotland and in the UK.

Well, that's an arrogance. It's a presumption. It doesn't take cognizance of our God. And the truth of the matter is, if that turns out to be the case, it's an indictment on the people.

[ 23 : 11 ] It's not a demonstration of the non-existence of God or the weakness of God. It's simply an indictment on the people. That's it. You go to the churches in what is now modern Turkey, where the church expanded.

You find it in the Acts of the Apostles. And those churches were everywhere in Turkey, in that area. And within a few generations, they were gone.

It wasn't that God had died. It wasn't that the gospel, the good news in Jesus, had lost its power. It's that people stopped waiting upon him.

It stopped believing the report. People turned away. And God said, in his own sovereignty, let them have their way.

Let them taste and see the bitterness of turning away from me. And so our business, as those who profess the Lord, is to recognize what we know very well, in a sense.

[ 24 : 23 ] And that is that the ways of our God are not unreasonable. And they're not illogical, rather.

But they are of a totally different order. They don't equate with our way of thinking. Actually, interestingly, John was praying in the prayer before we come in here.

And he was quoting from Isaiah 55, verse 8 to 10. His word will not return to him void.

This is what he was quoting. It shall accomplish what he pleases. It shall prosper in the thing where to he sends it. It's not that his promises fail.

It's not that he ceases to be. It's that he operates at a different level than us. And he requires us, by faith, to wait upon him when everything seems contrary.

[ 25 : 33 ] I'm reminded of words, God's ways are other than we think. Far beyond reason's height.

And reached only by childlike land. His ways are other than we think. But his ways are perfect ways.

And we are called upon to wait upon him. Just like the many millions of believers before the coming of Christ waited upon the Lord.

Through many difficulties. You go right back before Abraham. Right back to Seth. In the early days of human history.

And from Seth to Abraham to Moses. Believers had to wait upon the Lord with what little they had of the word of God then.

[ 26 : 36 ] They didn't have the full kit like us. They didn't have the promise of Jesus the Messiah fulfilled. They didn't have the ability to look back and say of Calvary.

It has been finished and remains so. The work is done. Salvation has been accomplished. And those who died waiting upon its coming.

Died not in vain but in hope. And we can look back. We have great privilege. And see what the Lord has done.

But to wind back for a moment. From Moses down through the ages of the prophets. Right down to Malachi. And then the years that were the centuries that were lean and turbulent.

Until the light began to dawn. And we were reading this morning of Zechariah. Saying that the day spring from on high.

[ 27 : 43 ] The rising sun has risen upon us. What ages. What ages. The Lord's people had to live through.

And they had nothing more to go on. Is it right for me to say that? They had nothing more to go on than his word. It is enough.

That he has said it. We go on his word. We go on the word of him whose word never fails. To accomplish what he purposes.

And it is vital to our spiritual and our eternal good. That we are ready to wait. And wait. And wait. Upon him. Actually in the song we were singing.

Psalm 40. I waited for the Lord my God. And patiently did bear. In the Hebrew. It is simply. In waiting I waited. In waiting I waited.

[ 28 : 48 ] It is not good English. But it is good Hebrew. And the thing is. That is the emphasis. There is an intensity in it. In waiting I waited.

For the Lord my God. At length. He inclined to me. And answered my cry. And it is important for us. To wait upon him. And to keep his way. And not to be deflected. To remind ourselves. This is our God. This is the Lord.

With whom the fathers had to do. And with whom we have to do as well. We look at the prophecies. We look at the promises. And we say.

This is fulfilled. This is fulfilled. And on and on. And when we look at the sheer magnitude of the promises. That are fulfilled in Jesus.

[ 29 : 48 ] We identify. With the words of the apostle. There is salvation. In no one else. For there is no other name given to men.

Under heaven. Than the name of Jesus. He is salvation. And we make. By faith. His life. And his death.

And his resurrection life. Our own. And we rest in him. And we know. It is true. As it is here in the word. He. Will.

Save. Us. It is all. Accomplished for us. We simply take. Him. And his work. And rest.

Upon it. He is. Our savior. That's the last thing. Briefly considered. He is our savior. There is nothing more to be said about it.

[ 30 : 50 ] Why should we feel hope? Hopeless. And despondent. We ought to chide ourselves. For feeling that way. For feeling as if. As if. Somehow we have been.

Cheated. By waiting upon him. That's the enemy's lie. It's his business. To make us sink in despair. And despondency.

And to feel. That it's all hopeless. Our God. Is. Worth. Worth. Worth. Waiting for. He is the Lord.

Let us. Wait for him. And let us be glad. And rejoice. In his. Salvation. We are encouraged.

To wait upon him. And in the psalm we were singing there. In psalm 27. The last thing we read is. Wait upon the Lord. And keep his way. Yea I say.

[ 31 : 51 ] Wait. Upon the Lord. May we find it in our hearts. So to do. Amen.