

Always Christmas:
Always Prepare
Luke 2:25-38

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Introduction to Christmas: What if every day was Christmas? I had a football coach in college that had a signature line when we would make excuses. Most of our excuses seemed to have begun with either “if” or “but.” So, he would interrupt us in the middle of our excuses and say, “If ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’ were candy and nuts, today would be Christmas and we would all be happy.”

Always Christmas! That’s the theme we want to take you through this Christmas season. Lord willing, I want to share with you these four ideas related to Christmas: today—always prepare, then in the remaining Sundays, always proclaim, always rejoice, and finally always glorify.

I want to take you today to a story that Luke gives us. The setting is after the birth of Christ, probably about 40 days after the birth of Christ. Though the setting is after Christmas and we are in the calendar, before Christmas, this text is a helpful place to understand how we are to prepare for the coming of Christ. Those in Luke 2 were preparing for the first coming of Christ; we are preparing for His return, or his second coming.

Text: ²⁵ There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel’s consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple complex. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for Him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took Him up in his arms, praised God, and said:

²⁹ Now, Master,

You can dismiss Your slave in peace,
as You promised.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation.

³¹ You have prepared it
in the presence of all peoples—

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

³³ His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about Him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and told His mother Mary: “Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed— ³⁵ and a sword will pierce your own soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

³⁶ There was also a prophetess, Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along in years, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and was a widow for 84 years. She did not leave the temple complex, serving God night and day with fasting and prayers. ³⁸ At that very moment, she came up and began to thank God and to speak about Him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Introduction: So, let me ask you a question. How prepared are you for Christmas? I have to even laugh at myself for even asking the question. I am kind of an “in the moment” guy when it comes to Christmas. I tend to think that Christmas Eve is a wonderful day to start and hopefully finish Christmas shopping. I sort of amazed myself this week. I bought a gift. But, I get that some of you are already preparing for Christmas.

The first Christmas, the coming of the Messiah, represents one of the greatest struggles in “waiting” on God recorded in history. The Old Testament prophets spoke of a coming Messiah. Many in Israel thought that this Messiah would come much sooner. As a result of their wait, many began to doubt.

Could it be the same today? Here’s what I mean. Just as people from the prophets of the Old Testament to the Gospels of the New Testament waited for the Messiah to come, so we wait for Jesus’ declared and promised second coming. As a result of this wait, many perhaps begin to doubt, disbelieve, or just be apathetic to His second coming.

So, here is the big idea of this text.

We prepare for the second coming of Christ in the same way that Simeon and Anna prepared for the first coming of Christ.

We prepare for His coming by always . . .

Obeying—“this man was just (righteous) and devout”

The greatest indicator of our belief in God’s Word is not what we say, but what we do. There are lots of people who say that they believe God’s Word, but the real test of belief in God’s Word is acting on His Word.

Here in our text are two individuals whose stories can be summarized as obedient. The best way to be prepared for Christ’s first coming was to walk in obedience. That was the message of John the Baptist, the forerunner to Jesus. John declared it this way. He (John the Baptist said), “I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord—just as Isaiah the prophet said.” (John 1:23) Matthew described John the Baptist’s ministry this way: “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the Wilderness of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near.’” (Matthew 3:1) Though Jesus had been born, He had not been revealed to all as the Messiah, so John the Baptist’s ministry shows us that the way to prepare for His coming is through obedience.

The way to prepare for His second coming is in obedience. Listen to words recorded in 2 Peter 3:10-14.

But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief; on that day the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, it is clear what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness ¹² as you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God. The heavens will be on fire and be dissolved because of it, and the elements will melt with the heat. ¹³ But based on His promise, we wait for the new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell.

¹⁴Therefore, dear friends, while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found at peace with Him without spot or blemish.

Expecting—“Looking forward to Israel’s consolation”

The word used here, translated “looking,” is a word that has the connotation of being expectant and is the same word used by Luke in Luke 12:36 in a parable associated with readiness for the Lord’s return. So, the idea of the word is more than just waiting, but rather waiting with a certain expectancy that the thing that you are waiting for is going to occur.

It is not just hoping that this turns out to be the case, but it is believing that this will take place. This is the difference in Simeon and Anna and perhaps most everyone else who lived in this time of Jesus’ first advent.

We don’t really know how old Simeon was when he saw Jesus, but we have a good idea how old Anna was. According to verse 37, she was easily over 100 years old. Regardless of their age, the implication of the text seems to be that both Simeon and Anna had waited a very long time.

Believing in the return of Jesus is an expectation that every Christian must have. This is how we “always prepare” for Christmas. As the disciples saw Jesus ascend into Heaven, two men suddenly appeared to them (Acts 1:10) and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen Him going into Heaven. (Acts 1:11)

If you believe that He lay in manger, having been born of a virgin conceived of the Holy Spirit, lived a sinless life, died taking up on Himself your sins, buried, rose again, ascended into Heaven, you must also expect that He is going to return one glorious day. That’s how you prepare always for Christmas!

Warning

We see this in verses 34-35. You are going to either die and meet Jesus face to face or you are going to be still alive and then see Jesus face to face. Either way, we are to be warned that we must be ready. We get one chance at this and we do not know when either our death or His return will occur.

Praying

We see this in life of Anna particularly. It is a good reminder of how to always prepare. We are to pray, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Trusting

Finally, we are to be trusting. The trouble with waiting on God is to trust His timing. When Jesus was born, many had given up on waiting for the Messiah. From the lesson of Simeon and Anna, we learn a great lesson about God’s timing.

God has a purpose in His timing.

Why did Jesus come the day that Jesus came? Why did Simeon, Anna, and others have to wait for the Messiah? Apostle Paul in writing to the Galatians gave this answer, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." (Galatians 4:4) Jesus was born at the right time. We don't know the exact date, but it was the correct date. We don't know the day He is coming again, but it will be the right date.

The purpose is given to us in verse 31-32. The people of God had to be prepared for the birth of Jesus.

His delay does not mean we are idle. His delay means we are busy preparing for His coming.

So what?

If not yet a believer, no one knows the day of His return, we must prepare. Believe today in the Lord Jesus.

If a believer, no one knows the day of His return, we must prepare. We find our example in Simeon and Anna—always preparing. Always Obeying, expecting, warning, praying, and trusting.

Because . . .

"When Jesus came the first time, He came wrapped in swaddling clothes. When He comes again, He'll be dressed in the vestments of victory.

When He came the first time, there was no room in the inn. When He comes again, the whole world will be His domain.

He came the first time as the King of the Jews. He will come again as King of kings and Lord of Lords.

He came the first time to be crucified. He will come again to be glorified.

He came the first time as the Author of our salvation. He will come again as the Finisher of our faith.

He came the first time with a baby's cry. When He comes again, it will be in the roar of the lion of the tribe of Judah.

His first coming was known only to a few shepherds, and a few residents of Bethlehem. When He comes again, it'll be as lightning flashing east to west, He will come in the clouds of glory, and the entire universe will hear the news.

When He came at Bethlehem, the angels sang, 'Glory to God in the highest' (Luke 2:15). When He comes again, they will sing, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.' (Rev. 11:15)"

Be Ready!