Christmas and the Coming of Christ

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When I was a little boy I loved Christmas and I still do! I remember what it felt like to anticipate the coming of Christmas morning. I wanted Christmas to come so badly I could taste it. One Christmas I remember getting out of bed in the middle of the night and tiptoeing to the window and looking out. The moon bathed the snow on the ground. There was a small breeze, but the night was very quiet. I was about 5 or 6 years old. I remember looking and listening intently for any sign of the coming of Christmas.

I still love Christmas, but my reasons are very different. Opening presents and spending time with family are still highlights of the season, but my thoughts are much more focused on the Savior and His birth. We still read Luke, chapter 2, as a family every Christmas eve. I love the account found there, complete with shepherds in the field, the angel, a heavenly choir, Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. It is common when reading the story to stop at the point at which Mary ponders in her heart the meaning of all that took place. But reading further one learns of the story of Simeon and Anna. Both were in the temple when Mary and Joseph brought the Savior there as a little baby. Both Simeon and Anna had looked forward to the Savior's birth for a long time. Finally, He came. The Holy Ghost bore witness to them that this was Him of whom the prophets had written.

Others had looked forward to the Savior's birth. Isaiah, for one, had seen the Messiah and wrote beautiful, poetic lines about Him:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Many of the ancient prophets rejoiced in their knowledge of the Messiah and looked forward to His coming. In the Book of Mormon, Nephi, the son of Ne- phi and grandson of Helaman, was such a prophet. He had heard the prophecies of Samuel the Lamanite, and he knew the advent of the Savior on the earth was imminent. Wicked people among the Nephites had set a deadline for the fulfillment of Samuel's prophecy of a day and a night and a day with no darkness. If the deadline came and went without fulfillment, everyone who believed would be put to death. Surely, Nephi looked forward with great longing for the birth of the Savior and the sign that Samuel had promised.

Nephi prayed all that day, and then the voice of the Lord came to Him:

Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets.

Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given (3 Nephi 1:13-14).

And so it was. The Savior came, and Nephi and everyone in that land knew it, because the sign was given.

Let me share one more example of people who longed for the Savior to come. In the 138th section of the Doctrine and Cov- enants, President Joseph F. Smith saw in vision those who had waited in the spirit world for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is what he saw:

And there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality;

And who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in their Redeemer's name.

All these had departed the mortal life, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

I beheld that they were filled with joy and
gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand.…

While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful; *(D&C 138:12-15, 18).*

The ancient prophets—many of whom were there when He appeared in the spirit world—looked forward to the coming of the Lord. So did those who believed in Him, and saw in Him salvation. We look back to the birth of the Savior, knowing that He came. But we also look forward to His coming. Only this time, this second time, He will not come in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes. This time He will come in power and glory! He will come as the King of Kings, with all power over all things, to rule and reign on earth a thousand years.

At Christmastime we look back and remember His miraculous birth. But I hope and pray that we will also look forward to the day when He will come again. There is in that looking forward great power. If we look forward by following Him now, if we look forward by keeping His commandments, if we look forward by living according to the laws that will prevail when He rules and reigns, we may enjoy those millennial blessings now. This is the same principle in which the ancients trusted when they looked forward to His birth:

And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy, *even as though he had already come among them* (Mosiah 3:13 emphasis added).

Those who had faith in Him rejoiced in the salvation that He would bring and enjoyed great blessings even before He had come. The same may be true for us: We may rejoice and enjoy the great blessings of His second coming before He comes again. It is up to us. When He comes again, He will rule and reign over the whole earth and everyone on the earth. But He can rule over us now. We can have Him for our King now. His invitation is to all: *Come unto me; come follow me. And if we do, if we do come to Him, if we follow Him, if we serve Him and obey Him and love Him, We may establish Zion now and enjoy the blessings of His millennial reign now. It is our privilege and blessing if we will claim it.*

There is another coming of the Lord, a coming very personal and individual. If we are true and faithful to our covenants, the day will come when the Savior will come to us. Listen to these promises the Lord made about coming to us. First, in the New Testament:

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him *(John 14:15-21).*

Here is another promise in the Doctrine and Covenants:

And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will *(D&C 88:67-68).*

The Savior wants us to find Him. He wants us to have Him for our King. And He wants us to be with Him. If we will come to Him, He has the power to come to us. Moroni spoke of this remarkable promise when he wrote:

And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things;

And only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing.
And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever (Ether 12:39-41).

If we seek Him, we will find Him. He will come. It will be in His own time, and in His own way—but He will come.

Surely, Christmas is a time of rejoicing, a time of remembering and anticipating all of the comings of the Lord Jesus Christ. I hope we will all remember Him and look forward to Him this Christmas and always. I hope that our longing for His coming will be just as intense as a child at the window who longs for the coming of Christmas. May we all come to Him, that He may come to us. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.