

WAITING FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

For many, many years people waited for the Lord to come on earth. Many times He had foretold by men who were called prophets that He would be born on earth and would live among people, to save them from the power of evil. People kept these prophecies and remembered them and told them to their children. When the children grew up, they told them to their children. They, too, kept them and remembered them.

Long ago when Adam and Eve disobeyed the Lord and were sent out of the Garden of Eden, the first prophecy was given. Perhaps it doesn't sound very much like a prophecy of the Lord's birth to us, but that is what it means. The Lord said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15).

The serpent represented all evil. "He" means the Lord, who was "the Seed" of the woman, for He was to be born of a woman. Bruising the serpent's head means that the Lord would come and conquer all the evil that had come into the world from hell.

The next prophecy was given through Jacob when he blessed his sons in Egypt. He said: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to Him shall be the obedience of the people" (Genesis 49:10).

"Shiloh" means peace, and the Lord took this name for one of His names. He is also called the Prince of Peace. This is because all peace is from Him. So we can see that "until Shiloh come" means until the Lord, the Prince of Peace, comes. A scepter is a sign of a king's power. It is a rod which he carries in his hand. This prophecy means the Lord would be with the people of Judah and would rule them and give them laws through kings and prophets until He Himself would come into the world and be their King and bring peace.

From these prophecies the Children of Israel knew that the Lord would come, but they didn't know when or how He would come. They were often tempted to forget the prophecies, or to think that they didn't really mean that the Lord would come. So the Lord gave more prophecies about His coming to keep it in their minds and to tell them more about it.

After the Children of Israel had come out of Egypt and were journeying through the wilderness, the Lord gave a prophecy through Balaam. Balaam said, "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a

Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult” (Numbers 24:17).

From this prophecy the people knew that the Lord would not come for a long time because Balaam said, “but not now,” and “but not near.” The Lord is called a Star because He was to bring light or understanding to people in the world. And He is called a Scepter because He was to be King. The words about battering the brow of Moab and destroying the sons of tumult mean that He would conquer all the evils that had arisen and destroy all the false or untrue ideas about Himself.

It was a long time before more prophecies were given. The Children of Israel came out of the wilderness and crossed the Jordan River into the long-promised land of Canaan. They conquered the land and became a strong nation. The Lord gave them kings to rule over them. Still, they did not know when or how the Lord was to come. They expected Him to be a king like other kings, only better and wiser and stronger than any other king. They did not know that He is the King of heaven and earth, and not just the king of one country in this world.

Then the Lord raised up a great prophet named Isaiah. Through him the Lord gave many more prophecies. These are some of them.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel (7:14).

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (9:6).

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (11:1-2).

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God (40:3).

There were other prophets, too, who told about the wonderful coming of the Lord. At first there had been only a few prophecies, but when the time got closer to His coming, the Lord gave many prophecies, so that the people would be thinking about Him and would be ready to receive Him. He foretold the very town in which He would be born, the coming of the wise men to worship Him, and the birth of John the Baptist who would prepare people to receive Him.

Then, indeed, people in the land of Israel looked for the Lord to come soon. Also some people in far-away countries expected and waited for Him. These people, who lived far from Bethlehem, did not know about all the prophecies, but they knew about the earliest ones. They had little parts of the Word and old sayings from their ancestors about things written in the Word.

And so, when the Lord came, there were still a few people waiting for Him and watching for the signs of His coming. They loved Him, and believed in Him, and worshiped Him. They hoped that they themselves might see Him and might learn from Him about His everlasting kingdom and the way of life leading to it.

And the Lord did come. He came and fulfilled all the prophecies that had been given. He came to the people who were waiting for Him. And do you know that the Lord comes to each one of us, too? He comes to us through His Word, which tells us about Him. So by reading the prophecies of His birth on earth and also the other parts of the Word, we are allowing the Lord to come into our hearts and minds. Then He can be born in our lives, as He was born on Christmas day long ago.