

# Genesis 3:1-15

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[ 0 : 00 ] We aren't very good at waiting. Problem is we touch a screen and things happen.! We can have deliveries on demand.

! Is next day all right? You're joking, aren't you? I don't have to wait that long, do I? What about an hour? Well, I suppose if I have to. If you want something, in our culture today, it's right there, it's right now, and so we're being conditioned to be impatient.

In 1972, there were only two options if you wanted a credit card. Barclay card had been around for a few years, and there was a new rival on the scene. It was called the access card.

The access card was your flexible friend, and the advertising campaign that came out with the access card described this card as taking the waiting out of wanting.

That was 1972. Since then, turning wanting into having is just expected. The idea that we would have to wait for anything is absurd.

[ 1 : 10 ] And add to that then the constant state of connectedness that our technology affords us today, and that impetus that it has to always be on. We're always on, always ready.

We think one author has, as one author has put it, every moment waited is a moment wasted. So waiting for the bus, you get your phone out and you scroll.

Or if you're out in a cafe or a restaurant with somebody and they get up to go to the toilet, first thing you do, you reach your phone. The idea that we're always on, always present. We don't like waiting. And yet, as Christians, we are by definition a people who wait.

God has made promises to His people. God doesn't fulfill those promises immediately and therefore, we have to wait. To be a Christian is to be someone who waits.

Now this is something the church has recognized in her tradition in the season of Advent. Advent, the word comes from the Latin word for coming. And during the Sundays leading up to Christmas, the church looks to the coming of Jesus Christ.

[ 2 : 19 ] Now typically, nowadays, people associate Advent only with coming in His birth, coming into the world that first Christmas of the Lord Jesus. But Advent, historically, has always looked forward to His coming again in the future when He will be revealed from heaven.

When He will come and bring His kingdom in in all its fullness. So the season of Advent in the calendar of the church is supposed to help us look both ways. To look back to Christ's coming in celebration for all that that represents while at the same time forward to His coming again in anticipation of when He returns for His people.

The season of Advent is about waiting in remembrance for what has happened and anticipation of what is to come. Now what that means is when we're looking both ways as it were, wherever we are on the timeline of history, waiting is an integral part of the Christian life.

It has always been that way. And in fact, I want to see this morning that this waiting began right back near the very beginning with the promise at the gate of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 verse 15.

Genesis 3 verse 15, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

[ 3 : 46 ] God makes a promise to the serpent in the garden, but it is a promise for God's people. It is a promise to curse the serpent, but also to conquer the serpent through the offspring of the woman.

It is not just a claim that snakes and human beings won't get on. There is in this promise a rich story. It is really the great conflict of history, the conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

God, you see, had told our first parents, Adam and Eve, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He gave them a whole garden of trees that they could enjoy, perfect, delicious, fruitful trees, a whole garden full of them, but they weren't yet ready to know good and evil, so that was restricted.

It was a whole garden of yes and one single tree of no. But Satan, in the form of the serpent, tempted them to reject God's instruction and instead to put themselves in God's shoes to be like Him.

And so they took and they ate the forbidden fruit, and in doing so, they plunged the whole world into sin. It's the event that we know as the fall.

[ 5 : 09 ] And this grasping for life on our terms is really the essence of the human condition since the fall. In God's design, all humanity is descended from Adam. We are connected to Him, both covenantally and really.

And so we inherit His sinful nature. This is why we do all the things that we know we shouldn't do, and in many cases the things that we wish we didn't do. Our problem is that we have chosen to live in God's world our way.

We've taken all of His gifts, but we've rejected Him as the giver. But rather than cut us loose, rather than be done with us there and then, rather than reject us the way we have rejected Him, He promised to send a rescuer, a Savior, one who would conquer Satan, the serpent.

And from the very start, from the very beginning, as they're sent out of the garden in Genesis chapter 3, humanity have been on the lookout. We've been waiting for this promised Savior.

Now we didn't, they didn't, our ancestors didn't know it exactly at the time, but from the earliest days the people of God have been waiting for Christmas. Now it looks different where we are, where depending on where we stand in history, but the posture of waiting, the posture of anticipating what God has promised to do, is a reality for people in every age.

[ 6 : 35 ] So, from the beginning, the Old Testament story is a story of a people who were, here's point number one, waiting in hope of a rescuer.

Waiting in hope of a rescuer. That's what began with that promise at the gate of Eden. the sense that you get of, I wonder is this him?

I wonder is this the one? It comes all the way through the Old Testament story. In Genesis 5, 29, when Lamech names his son Noah, which means rest, he does that in the hope that he will rescue his line from the curse, bring them into God's rest.

but it's 600 years before Noah enters the ark at the time of the flood. In Genesis 7, 600 years. In his book of Advent liturgies, Johnny Gibson does a great job tracing both how much waiting was part of the experience of Old Testament saints, particularly those in the line of the Savior, and just how long it was that they had to wait.

He highlights Abraham was promised by God that he would become a great nation through bearing a son, but it was 25 years later when Isaac was born to Abraham in his old age. Isaac also had to wait 20 years for his twin sons to be born in Genesis 25.

[ 7 : 57 ] Jacob waits 7 years for his wife Rachel, but as we know, he is tricked into marrying Leah, with whom he has Judah, the son of the promised line, Genesis 29, Genesis 49. And so there's intrigue in the story as well as delay.

And then we could go through Naomi and Ruth and Boaz and Obed and Jesse, who would be the father of King David. All of them have to wait for extended periods.

One of the things that comes through in each of their stories is the delay, the waiting, the waiting for God to work in their lives and for his promises to come to pass.

And then there's Hannah. Hannah, who like so many of the matriarchs before her, had to endure years of barrenness before she bore her son Samuel, 1 Samuel 1, who after he had grown again, more waiting, would anoint David as God's chosen king, 1 Samuel 16.

But guess what? More waiting. David would only get to ascend the throne after many years of affliction, 2 Samuel 5 tells us. And when God then promised David that a son in his line would be the true rescuer, the one that they really are all waiting for, God's king, who would reign forever, 2 Samuel 7, another millennia would pass before the Lord Jesus was born that first Christmas.

[ 9 : 26 ] That's a lot of waiting. Indeed, Gibson says, quote, adding up all the ages in the biblical genealogies reveals that God's promise in Eden of a coming, conquering son takes about 4,000 years to become a reality.

That's a lot of waiting. So the sense of excitement and the sense of joy that we get when Jesus is born is therefore completely understandable. Isn't it one of the things that strikes you when you read those gospel narratives early on in the gospels?

In Luke chapter 2, for example, old, devout Simeon, we're told he's waiting for the consolation of Israel. He's waiting for God's rescuing king to come. And so the sense of relief and celebration, it's almost a sense of disbelief, comes through clearly.

He bursts out. Luke chapter 2, Lord, now you're letting your servant depart in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

It's amazing. I get to see this and experience this. It's known as the *nunc dimittis*. And the sheer thrill of Christ's coming is clear in Simeon's voice.

[10:44] After all these years, here he is. It's been a long wait. But that wait, it's important to say, is not arbitrary.

It's not that God has been busy doing other things or he's taken his eye off his creation in some way. The apostle Paul tells us that Christ was born at just the right time. Galatians chapter 4, verse 4, But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

In God's design, all the time that he had planned for the birth of those that he intended to be born, for the rescue from slavery of the people that he had chosen to happen, for the rebellions that he had intended to oversee, for the repentance of the people that he had ordained to repentance, for the battles that he had intended to unfold, all that time had passed and only now was it suitable for the Savior to be born.

When the fullness of time had come, when everything that had needed to happen in God's design up to that point had happened, God sent his Son. But Paul doesn't say in Galatians 4, he doesn't just describe the occasion of the birth of Jesus, he also describes the purpose of his birth.

We read on, Galatians 4, verse 4, but when the fullness of time had come, God sent for his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

[12:24] Jesus. Here is the real gift of Christmas. Jesus was born in order to redeem those who would put their faith in him. A problem that I mentioned at the start, our problem, the problem that we all have by virtue of being born in relation to Adam, the problem of sin, it's the problem of self-government, it's the problem of me at the center of life, the problem that enslaves us to our desires and cuts us off from the God who made us.

It's the problem of not being able to control our tongue or control our appetites. It is the problem of our greed, of our anger, of our restless dissatisfaction. That problem, that problem that is in all of our hearts, Jesus was born to rescue us from that.

And by becoming the new Adam who succeeded in the face of temptation where the first Adam had failed, by outwitting the serpent in his perfect obedience to the Father, and by dying in our place on the cross where he was bruised by Satan, and in rising to new life three days later, he crushed Satan's head and fully redeemed us from our sin.

What was promised in Genesis 3.15 came to pass in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who came at Christmas.

And to all who believe that, to all who believe that, wherever you're from, whatever your life has looked like up to this point, if you will trust yourself to the rescuer, there is adoption into his family.

[14:21] The Lord Jesus has paid the price to set us free, and we are welcome in the family of God. It's important that we see as well that all of this is a gift, and it can only be a gift.

You see, we can't do anything to earn or achieve this salvation in our own strength. You must receive it from God with empty hands. You can't claim anything before the living God because of our sinful state.

We come with empty hands, and He gives us this salvation, this rescue, as a gift. If you've never done that, can I say, today is the day. Today is the day. The rescuer has come.

The wait for salvation is over. Turn from your sins, and trust yourself to the Lord Jesus, and come into His family. You can do it in your seat.

Turn your heart over to the rescuer. The gift of this conquering rescuer is why we celebrate that Christmas long lay the world in sin and error pining till He appeared, and the soul felt its worth.

[ 15 : 33 ] A thrill of hope, a weary world rejoices. Are you weary this morning? There's so much that weighs us down.

There's so much that weighs us down. We'll remember that Christ has appeared. Unlike the Old Testament saints, we aren't waiting to see if He will appear. He did, and so hope has blasted a hole in the wall of our darkness, and we can rejoice.

We can. Whatever the circumstances of your life, however difficult those circumstances may be, we can rejoice because we've been rescued in Christ.

The rescuer has come, and yet we still have our own kind of waiting to do. Even those of us that have put our faith in Him, we still have our own kind of waiting to do because although the longings for God's conquering Son are met in Jesus' first coming, the waiting continues.

The Savior has come. Our sins have been paid for in full, but the kingdom is only partially here. So while we know who the rescuer is, we still await His return.

[ 16 : 40 ] We are, here's our second point, waiting in faith for the rescue. Waiting in faith for the full and final rescue. In His earthly ministry, Jesus was very clear that His kingdom had come.

He was there as the king of His kingdom, but that He was going to return to His Father in heaven and rule from there. In John's gospel, this is especially clear. We saw that in our series earlier this year.

The disciples want Him to stay with them when they realize He is who He has said He is. But He tells them that He's going to prepare a place for them in glory and He will return. And He says, John 14 verse 8, I will not leave you as orphans.

I will come to you. I'm coming back. We heard the same note a few weeks ago in the word from the angels in Acts chapter 1. Jesus, you remember, ascends into heaven and the disciples are staring into the sky and the angel says, this Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.

He will come again. Acts 1 verse 11. They're staring into the sky thinking it's all over and He says, no, He's coming. And that theme continues to run through the New Testament letters where the return of Jesus is held out again and again and again.

[ 17 : 58 ] He is coming back as a motivation for our godliness. He's coming back as an encouragement in our suffering. He's coming back. At the start of 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul reminds the Corinthian church that they have all the gifts that they need to be able to endure faithfully while they wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ who will sustain you to the end.

The Thessalonians are exhorted to continue in their steadfast service of God while they wait for His Son from heaven, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Paul brings together the two comings of Jesus when he encourages Titus. He says this, the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people.

That's the first coming of Jesus. He has appeared. He has brought salvation. And in doing that, He trains us to put off sin and to pursue godliness as we wait.

And we're waiting, He says, for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us.

[ 19 : 09 ] In His first advent, Jesus came in humility. In His second, He will come in glory. And we wait in faith for that day.

The Christian life is lived in the present. It's lived in the here and now. The Christian life is an embodied, real, flesh and blood, work a job, love your neighbor, raise a family kind of life.

We're not to disengage from this world. But this life that we're called to live is always oriented towards the future. What I mean is, knowing that Christ is coming shapes how we do absolutely everything that we do in the present.

Think about it. Knowing that one day we're going to give account for the lives that we live. every word and every deed is going to be accounted for.

Well, knowing that shapes how we speak and act in the present. How you treat that person across the table from you. How you treat that person in the department that you work in in work.

[ 20 : 26 ] How you treat that person as they get old and need care. Or that person that cuts you up in traffic. how you speak or perhaps gesture towards them.

Or that person that sins against you. All of these, how we behave in all of those situations matters because we know that Jesus is coming back. He's going to hold us to account for the way that we have conducted ourselves in all of those situations.

It also shapes the reality of Jesus' return shapes knowing that perfect justice will one day be done. That has an effect. Knowing that justice is coming, perfect justice, it frames how we think about wrongdoing and miscarriages of justice in the world today.

No one will get away with anything because Jesus is coming back. Anybody who has thought that they got away with what they got away with in this life hasn't because Jesus is coming back. Knowing that our suffering has an end point. Think about that. That shapes how we respond to it in the present. Often what happens when things get tough, we get impatient, we get grumpy, we feel sorry for ourselves, or when we've been wronged, sometimes we'll take matters into our own hands. [ 21 : 52 ] Jesus is coming back. He has allowed these things into our lives for His good and wise reasons. We don't know what those reasons are, especially when we're not enjoying our experience of them, and yet we can trust Him with all of that because this life is not all there is.

Glory awaits, and glory awaits for eternity for all who have trusted the Lord Jesus. So don't let this brief struggle, and I'm not downplaying how painful it might be.

It'll be very painful, but don't let this brief struggle derail your hope while you wait for that day. We wait in faith for the full and final rescue. Now we might never know why God is allowing specific trials into our lives, but don't forget what Peter tells us.

He's reminded of this last Tuesday by Andrew in the Lunchtime Talk. God has not forgotten you. Often when we're waiting and things are tough, it feels that way, but God has not forgotten you, nor has He forgotten to return.

We might look around as the people in the context that Peter was writing to did and think, well, people come, people go. It's always been that way. So where is this Lord in this returning that you're talking about?

[ 23 : 16 ] And Peter says, do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that the Lord with the Lord one day is a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

God is patient towards you. The Lord has promised that the earth will one day be full of His glory as the waters cover the sea. We don't see that yet, so we are waiting in faith as God is patiently bringing it to pass, giving people time to repent and believe in Him.

Then Christ will come and we will know His full and final rescue. I'm glad that the Lord Jesus didn't come back sometime before 25 years ago.

And so are many of you. And whatever He is doing as He is working in your life, however painful that might be, He is patient towards you.

[ 24 : 29 ] He hasn't forgotten you. And we are waiting for a full and final rescue that will bring all of our struggle. It won't compare.

It will be so glorious that we won't even think about it. Every moment waited is not a moment wasted while we wait for Christ.

You are learning to grow in the fruit of patience. God is at work in your character, changing you, making you more like His Son. But it is also the case that waiting is an act of waiting.

Faithful service is possible in any context. Giving to others with generosity, being a blessing to those in need. We can all do these things as an expression of our love for God while we wait for Christ's return.

And yet, at the same time with the Apostle John, we can pray the last words of the Bible. Come, Lord Jesus. O come, strong key of David, come, and open wide our heavenly home.

[ 25 : 37 ] Make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery. Rejoice. Rejoice. Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

Let's pray.