

# The Lord's Promises are Worth the Wait

If you include today, there are seven days left, seven days to fulfill our joy, seven days till the presents and the food, and the songs, and the festival, seven more days of waiting. But is it worth the wait?

There is a famous child psychology experiment where a single marshmallow is set in front of the children. They are then told that if they wait 15 minutes without eating the marshmallow, they will get a second one. Supposedly this is to test the children's will power. The thing is, it does not seem worth it. The prize is not worth the wait. Better to eat the marshmallow and go your way, then sit waiting for 15 minutes. The promise is not worth the wait.

What about Christmas? Is Christmas worth the wait? Is it worth the wait or would it be better to go home and open the presents and eat all the cookies this afternoon?

The promise of a marshmallow is hardly something worth waiting one minute for much less 15, but in our gospel reading today Elizabeth makes it clear that the promises of the Lord are worth waiting for

**<sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."**

The promises of the Lord are worth the wait.

Last week we heard about Gideon. We learned that in the end all we can do is "twiddle" our thumbs and wait, God will accomplish what He has promised. This week we see Daniel. Daniel who unlike Gideon knew how to wait patiently for the Lord.

Daniel was born in Jerusalem, probably to a noble family. At a very young age he was taken captive to Babylon where he was given a Babylonian name and served the King of Babylon. However, Daniel always desired to return to Israel to his home and to Jerusalem.

Daniel knew from studying the word of God, specifically the prophet Jeremiah, that the people of Israel would be able to return to Jerusalem 70 years after they were taken captive.

**Jeremiah 29:10 "For thus says the LORD, When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.**

Knowing that God's people would be captive for 70 years, Daniel served the Lord in Babylon. There he waited patiently, counting. When the 70 years were complete, Daniel would have been 80 to 90 years old. He turned to the Lord fasting and praying, confessing the sins of the people. He asked when the punishment for those sins would be complete and the people could return to Israel and to the Holy Mountain, by which he meant Jerusalem and the temple.

That prayer is one that is well worth reading and studying as a model for the right way to pray. It is found in Daniel chapter 9, and it is a prayer of confession and of trust in God's promises. We are far too often quick to study the visions of Daniel and pass over the prayers of Daniel. Yet the prayers of Daniel are probably more useful to us than are the visions. However, we are also going to pass that over for today, because we want to hear the Lord's response to someone who had waited so long.

### **Seventy weeks are determined**

In the Hebrew the word for seven and the word for week is the same word. So this verse can be translated seventy weeks, which would be about 17 months, or it can be translated as seventy sevens, which would be 490 years.

In 490 years, God says, that he will:

- bring an end to sin
- Make reconciliation for iniquity, that is the full price of all the sins of the world will be paid for so that there will no longer be any anger between God and men
- In place of sin, he will bring in righteousness, and it will be a righteousness that will last forever, an eternal righteousness
- all vision and all prophecy will be fulfilled
- He will anoint the most holy. That is to say the Messiah, will be chosen. Jesus will come.

Now that is a marshmallow worth waiting for, if it is 15 minutes or 490 years that is a promise that is worth waiting for.

The year that the Israelites returned from Babylon is estimated at 458 BC, the year of Jesus death is estimated at 30 AD. 458 plus 30 is 488. Just as God had foretold 490 years after the people returned to Jerusalem, the Messiah came and made reconciliation for the sins of the world through his death on the cross.

Daniel waited 70 years for the return to Jerusalem and God fulfilled his promise, the people returned, and the temple was rebuilt. But God revealed to Daniel that if he waited 70 years another 7 times he would get a much greater promise, the end of all sin and fulfillment of all prophecy.

That is a long time to wait but the promise is well worth it. The promises of the Lord are worth the wait.

Waiting is a lost art. There is not doubt about that. Humans in general were never any good at waiting but now more than ever we just don't do it. If we are expecting to wait for longer than a minute, we get out our phones and check Facebook or play games. If we must wait five minutes longer than we were expecting, we get angry. Few people wait for marriage anymore, despite God's warning and promises of blessing. We don't bother to wait to buy things till we have the money, after all we can just charge it and pay it back later with interest.

But when the Lord asks us to wait, He has something so much better in store for us. When the Lord asks us to wait it isn't so that we can get just one more marshmallow. The promises the Lord gives us are worth the wait.

**Habakkuk 2:3 "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal, and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay.**

**This waiting takes faith.** Perhaps Daniel could have tried to escape. Daniel could have given up and said, well I might as well just eat and worship like any other Babylonian. When the 70 years were up Daniel could have decided that he was going to take matters into his own hands. But Daniel trusted God's promises and because he trusted God's promises he waited patiently for the Lord.

**Luke 1:45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."**

The one who believe is blessed, why? Because the Lord will fulfill his promises and those promises will be worth the wait. The Lord will fulfill his promises whether we believe or not, but faith makes a big difference in how we wait. Without faith we run around trying to fulfill our desires ourselves and our own way, and we end up with less than the fullness that God wants to give us. With faith we are content to wait knowing the Lord will fulfill His promises in His time and what the Lord gives will be better than what we would gain on our own.

The one who believe is blest because they are content while they wait for the Lord.

**Isaiah 25:9 And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation."**

Advent is a season of waiting. We have the Advent calendar counting down the days to Christmas. We have the advent wreath counting down the weeks till Christmas. We see the presents under the tree and wait to open them. We smell the Stollen and the Lefse and the Christmas cookies baking and wait to eat them. We wait and while we wait, we remember the prophets like Daniel who waited years and years to see the fulfillment of the promises that God had given. While we wait, we remember how glorious the promise was and is now that it is fulfilled, It was well worth the wait.

We wait and we remember that God's promises are worth the wait. We wait and we trust that what God will give in time will be far better than what we could take now. We wait knowing that some promises have yet to be fulfilled but they also are worth waiting for. We wait and by faith we wait not in anger or discontent but at peace, knowing that God will take care of it in His time.

Seven days of waiting left, seven days till Christmas. The joy of advent is the anticipation of what will come in another seven days. The joy of our lives is the anticipation of the One who is coming and what He will bring. An end to sin, forgiveness for all our transgression, a beginning of everlasting righteousness.

The Promises of the Lord are worth waiting for.

**Amen**

Part of faith is trusting that what the Lord has promised is worth the wait. Elizabeth speaks from experience she had waited her whole life for a child, but now her joy is fulfilled.

There is no doubt that waiting is a lost art. If we have to wait for a couple minutes we turn on our phones and start checking Facebook or playing games

Daniel was one who knew how to wait, he was an expert in “twiddling his spiritual thumbs.” Not that Daniel sat around doing nothing, but he knew how to wait on the Lord. How long was he waiting in prayer? We don’t know for sure but it sounds as if he was praying all day

Gabriel does not tell Daniel when the people will be able to return to Jerusalem, but when that command comes it will be not the end of waiting but the beginning.

70 weeks the English says but it could just as easily be translated 70 x 7 – if the 7 is 7 years that would be 490 years

The Lord promises quite a bit more than a single piece of candy.

**To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. (Dan. 9:24 NKJ)**