

Worth the Wait

An Advent Poem

By Paul S. Beck

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I

'Twas four centuries since God's voice thundered,
A dusky malaise diffused upon the land.
A righteous remnant, crying, few in number,
For a noble Deliverer sent from God's right hand.

Darkness and despair like a blanket hung,
Oppression far worse than Rome ever made.
A tyranny unleashed by the devil's tongue,
Held mankind hostage for iniquities unpaid.

Serene was the night not long forgotten,
Sacred wonder with certainty came.
In solitude - divine will so uncommon,
Imbued my spirit with expecting Fame.

An oracle of hope beyond mere impression,
The promise divine poets and seers foretold.
Presaged a vision - Israel's grand Consolation,
Before my enfeebled eyes in death will fold.

Gazing day after day and wondering when,
Jerusalem's shattered scepter to restore.
Now crumpled in frame with age-spotted skin,
Heightens my hope Heaven will tarry no more.

If longing makes waiting intensify so,
If hope deferred makes the heart sick,
God's promise rekindles faint faith to a glow,
Lingering long past the last wick.

II

Little more than two fortnight's had expired,
Flaming messengers winged through the air.
The birth of a Savior in David's tiny shire,
Angelic good tidings to shepherds declare.

Salutations I have waited myriad years to hear,
Collapsing my knees in unspeakable joy;
Royalty from Heaven suddenly appears,
Israel's iniquities and foes to destroy.

Sleep was fleeting one morning early,
So fastening my sandals - slipping on my cloak;
Moved by the Spirit, to the Temple, I hurried,
Joyful anticipation my spirit provoked.

The precincts all humming from regular traffic,
Strolling the courts in silence and prayer.
At once my head turned unexplainably quick,
To behold a peasant family standing there.

For consecration they had brought a Child,
Compliance with the rules of piety.
Every firstborn male - custom so required,
With a sincere offering presented to Deity.

As I looked in haste I saw a young mother,
Her husband, two turtledoves, in his hand.
My gaze was soon gripped by the sight of Another,
Wrapped tenderly in soft linen bands.

III

Promptly approaching with God-given realization,
The privilege, I requested, of holding the Child.
With tears in my eyes I was granted permission,
And cradled the Babe in my arms for a while.

All things stood still in that holy moment,
As divine favor upon favor rushed over me,
Who am I? I wondered, to see His first Advent,
Mighty hands, so tiny, will soon set captives free.

Above my head my hands were raised,
My heart awakening in ecstasy sings.
In joy I offered this hymn of praise,
My spirit soaring toward God my King:

"O Sovereign Lord, as You have promised,
Your Christ and His blessings to impart.
With eyes so frail and body tattered,
Your bond-slave may in peace now depart.

The Desire and Hope for all the nations,
Incarnate Glory who makes Israel great.
His splendor to brighten every location,
Even Gentile-lands will He illuminate."

Awe swept over both father and mother
Astonished - their Child's identity revealed.
A prayer of blessing I offered with fervor,
His worldwide mission no longer concealed.

IV

Handing the Babe back to His mother,
A humble maiden marked by grace.
In her selection God by-passed all others,
Bestowing upon her an esteemed place.

A sudden rush of divine revelation,
The Spirit of God stirred me to say;
To this peasant girl sobering words of prediction,
That rugged and rough will mark His way.

A line of division will be drawn in the nation,
Rising to summits of great faith for some.
Others will stumble through intense opposition,
As they trip over the Rock of Offense and succumb.

Even at birth His cross casts its shadows,
Rejection and suffering He would endure.
Mary, His mother, will know pain and sorrow,
A piercing sword of grief and loss will be hers.

Jesus came in meekness no army to lead,
No throne from which He sat and ruled.
He chose the path of humility instead,
And bore the agony of shame and ridicule.

The world likes its saviors to be big and strong,
To strut along its streets in glitter and with gold,
God's plans may never impress the throng,
In disguise He came, a Baby, and yet was of old.

V

Simeon withdrew from the Temple that day,
And quickly passed from history.
Though his song of hope still tolls away,
Declaring Israel's Consolation for all to see.

The earliest Christians gave Simeon a name,
Calling him *Theodoches*: the God-Receiver.
He waited with expectancy until He came,
Then received Immanuel - our Lord and Redeemer.

So receive this Child of Christmas tonight,
With refreshed wonder or first-time sight.
And when your final breath draws also nigh,
You too, like Simeon, may be dismissed in delight.

What did expecting Simeon in the Temple see?
Not a general on a stallion or an earthly monarch,
Coming to His subjects in regal pageantry.
He saw the Babe that made the angels hark.

What did righteous Simeon in the Temple learn?
Not that we all can hold the Creator in our arms.
It is that God is not indifferent, remote to us or stern.
He is the One who holds us - saving from all harm.

What did aged Simeon in the Temple know?
Victory goes not to the swiftest out of the gate.
It comes to those who with patience show,
God's best gifts are always *worth the wait*.