

God told Abraham that his offspring would be slaves in Egypt for four hundred years (Gen. 15:13) but promised that He would come down to deliver them. Joseph expressed his confidence in this promise when he said as he was dying that God would “visit” or “come to the aid” of His people, taking them up out of Egypt into the Promised Land (Gen. 50:24-25). How then did Abraham and Joseph express their faith in this promise? They *waited* for it – all those long years until Moses was called to return to Egypt and bring God’s people out (Ex. 12:40-42). In the same way, those who welcomed the long-promised Christ-child spent most of their lives *waiting* by faith for this promised birth to take place. Luke 2:25 describes their attitude: “*they were waiting for the consolation of Israel.*” May these Christmas Bible notes on “waiting” for God to “visit” His people in their time of need be a great encouragement to us not to falter or faint as we wait for God’s promises to be realized in our lives.

**Monday: Read Genesis 50:24-25, Luke 1:68; 1:76-77 & Galatians 4:4**

**The Final Visit**

When Zechariah sang in Luke 1:68 of God’s “visiting” us in the birth of Christ, he also rejoiced that his own son John would be the forerunner to prepare the way for the coming Messiah (Luke 1:76-77). But there were many other forerunners who spoke long ago of God’s “visiting” men. Joseph was one of them. When Joseph spoke about deliverance from Egypt in Gen. 50:25, he pointed in an ultimate, prophetic sense to the *Greatest* of Divine visitations. Deliverance from Egypt lasted only a few centuries; then God’s people were reduced to slavery and exile again in the land of Babylon. But Christ came to permanently change the lot of His people from slaves to sons. This is the good news of the Gospel as declared in Galatians 4:4: “*When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*” What good news!

**Meditate and Pray:** Thank God for the permanent change in our lot which the incarnation of the Son of God in our nature has brought about. Truly we should sing this Christmas carol all the year through:

*Hark the herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild  
God and sinners reconciled"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise  
Join the triumph of the skies  
With the angelic host proclaim:  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

**Tuesday: Read Genesis 50:24-26 and Matthew 2:13-15; 2:21-23**

**Precision Planning**

Though it would be hundreds of years until his body found its resting place (Joshua 24:32), Joseph gave instructions about the disposal of his bones in Gen. 50:26, believing in God’s care of his mummified body until the time of burial in the Promised Land. Moreover, just as God took care of Joseph’s body *in* Egypt, so He precisely planned the redemption *out of* Egypt - down to the very day when his people were delivered under Moses (Exodus 12:41). When we come to the New Testament, we are not surprised to see further evidence of God’s precision in the promised sending of His Son. Just as the Lord called His people “*out of* Egypt” at the precise, predicted time (and don’t forget Moses taking with him the bones of Joseph, Ex. 13:19), so He called His one and only Son “*out of* Egypt” in Matthew 2:15 at just the right time – after Herod was dead, when there was no longer any threat. This was so that Christ and His family could settle in Nazareth in Israel, according to prophetic prediction and Divine plan (Matt. 2:23).

**Meditate and Pray:** Let us reaffirm with joy this day that we have confidence in God's control of all things in our lives. If He timed perfectly not only the birth, but also the "redemption" of His own Son out of Egypt, will He not also precisely plan the lives of those whom Christ the Redeemer came to save? Ask God to give you the "specificity" of living faith, which does not allow itself to rest in general assurances that, "everything will work out in the end", but instead looks to the Lord's constant care for every need and in every situation.

**Wednesday: Read Exodus 2:23-25 and Luke 2:25-26**

**The Spirit's Preparation**

During their slavery in Egypt, the groans of God's people reached a crescendo, until their cry reached God's ears and prompted Him to "remember His covenant" (Ex. 2:24) and come down to save. What? Was God inactive until His people took the initiative, spurring Him to action by their groans? No, clearly God had determined long ago the exact time when He would save His people under Moses, just as, "at just the right time, God sent forth his Son" at Christmas-time. God's peoples' prayers did not jostle a forgetful God's memory in order to move Him to save. Rather, when God's planned time arrived, He laid the groundwork by sending his Spirit ahead to *move God's people in prayer*, preparing the way for the coming of salvation. In just the same way, we ought not be surprised that those who welcomed Christ's birth, described as "waiting for the consolation of Israel," were moved to be ready because "the Spirit was on them" (Luke 2:25). In every case where God's salvation comes down to this world, His Spirit comes first to prepare the way, to create a spirit of neediness and prayer in the people whom God has pre-destined to save.

**Meditate and Pray:** Though we are not prophets like Simeon, nor great leaders like Moses, how we should nevertheless thank God that His Spirit is the great *Preparer of the Way* - who makes straight the paths of salvation into our hearts. Because of this mighty Spirit's work, how confident we should be in calling on the Lord in our times of need, believing that our groans will indeed reach the very throne-room of Heaven. How does that great Advent hymn put it?

*Comfort, comfort ye My people,  
Speak ye peace, thus saith our God;  
Comfort those who sit in darkness,  
Mourning 'neath their sorrow's load;  
Speak ye to Jerusalem  
Of the peace that waits for them;  
Tell her that her sins I cover,  
And her warfare now is over.*

*Make ye straight what long was crooked,  
Make the rougher places plain:  
Let your hearts be true and humble,  
As befits His holy reign,  
For the glory of the Lord  
Now o'er the earth is shed abroad,  
And all flesh shall see the token  
That His Word is never broken.*

*Trinity Hymnal #197*

**Thursday: Read Luke 1:68-73 and Exodus 3:1-6**

**Flawless Word**

When God visits his people, it is always done to magnify the truth and reliability of His Word. For example, think of Moses as he experienced the burning bush, where the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and spoke of the Exodus. It was no accident that the Angel's first words reminded Moses of who God was as the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Moses learned that God had "remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob..." (Exodus 2:24). Not a moment late or early, God came down to *visit* His people, keeping His Word to the patriarchs and making plans to bring them comfort and deliverance!

**Meditate and Pray:** Thank God for the *truthfulness* and *utter reliability* of every portion and promise of His Word. Even though the faith of those who waited for God’s promise was severely tested through many years of bondage in Egypt, what joy must have filled their hearts when the bush was lighted by God’s Presence and God Himself came down to save His own – just as Joseph said He would do in Genesis 50:24-25! How much greater joy for us, when, in the birth of Christ, God has fulfilled all His promises, spoken by His prophets ever “since the world began” (Luke 1:70). Truly, “*God’s way is perfect and His Word is flawless*” (Psalm 18:30)!

**Friday: Read Isaiah 9:2-6 and John 1:14**

**Come to Stay**

One possible misunderstanding of the Divine Visitation in the Christmas story is that the word “visit” can imply just a temporary look-in. When we visit each other over the holidays, our stay is, alas, often far too brief, before the busy demands of daily life call us away from our loved ones once again. But in today’s notes, on Christmas Eve we are reminded that God has come down *not just to visit*, but to *abide* with us in the sending of His own Son in our flesh. This is why John 1:14 uses a word to describe Christ’s becoming flesh which has a permanent meaning, to “dwell among us, full of Grace and Truth.”

**Meditate and Pray:** Do you believe that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, has “come down” once and for all, to dwell with His people in all their extremities? How far from you do you think Jesus is just now? To all who may not have put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, I ask these questions: Have you asked Jesus to make Himself as real to you as He was to Moses in that burning bush? Do you believe that Christ can meet you personally, in the words of the beautiful hymn, (# 529), below? May the Lord answer all of our prayers for unsaved loved ones, neighbors and friends, that Christ might make the “light of His countenance” shine upon those sitting in darkness. Amen.

*Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven, to earth come down,  
fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation,  
enter every trembling heart.*

*Come, almighty to deliver;  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.*