

*Marana tha! “Our Lord, come!”*

It would not be an exaggeration to call this the most important cry, not only of the earliest Christian church, but of the church that existed before Messiah Jesus—the church of Israel. When Babylon came and crushed the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 BCE, destroying Jerusalem, razing the Temple to the ground, and exiling all its inhabitants into a foreign land, the only thing anyone could cry was: “Come, Lord!” Things were not the way they were supposed to be. God’s people were in exile. God’s land was burnt to ashes. God’s city, Jerusalem, was lying in rubble. God’s Temple was desecrated and destroyed. What had happened? Where was God’s promise? Was this the end of it all? Would God come?

The genius of Charles Wesley’s magisterial advent hymn, *Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*, becomes visible in how it places us Christians, singing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the position of Israel in its Babylonian captivity, longing for its redeemer: “Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee. *Israel’s strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art; dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.*”

In advent we plod along with Israel, longing for freedom, pining for release, seeking the day of the Lord’s arrival, the day of the Lord’s coming. But, of course, we also sing these words on the far side of God’s first coming in Jesus the Messiah. Christ the king has come. He has released us from sin. He has delivered us from exile. He has brought us home to God.

And yet—these words of longing and expectation still have meaning for us just as they did for the Israelites, for even though the Messiah King has come, he has also been away from us for a very long time, having ascended to the Father. And now we long for him to come—once more!

And so, we take up the cry yet again, in 2018, as we do every year. “Our Lord, come!” Come from your heavenly throne; come deliver us from this creation and give us the new creation; come take up residence visibly and physically on the throne of the world, so that we may no longer sway under the wicked kingdoms of this earth.

Until that arrival, we continue to petition him to come, but we also, in the meantime, plod with the trust that God has already set up his reign in our hearts by his Spirit. As Wesley writes,

*“Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring. By thine own eternal spirit rule in all our hearts alone; by thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.”*

Our only hope in the world is the Lord who comes. Take up this prayer, yet again, as one Body: “Our Lord, come!”

### Read Jeremiah 17:5-13

1. Compare the “cursed” and “blessed” person (verses 5-8). Do you believe this is still true today? Explain.
2. Sit with verses 9-10, 12-13. What do they mean for us? Does the reality of being New Testament Christians (having Christ) change how we read these verses compared with how an Old Testament Jew would have heard these verses?
3. Do you feel as if personally you are in bondage, needing to be set free from something in your life (as the hymn refers)?
4. How does the reality of the gospel (and Jesus, the long expected Savior) speak into our bondage and sin? (remember, these verses come on the heels of God declaring that Israel’s enemies are going to take them captive because they have worshiped other gods).

**Lyrics to  
“Come Thou Long Expected Jesus”**

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Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a King,  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
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