**‘Waiting’**

 **A Christmas Message for 2021**

 ***“* Ifyou can wait and not be tired by waiting”**

As I looked for inspiration for this year’s Christmas message, and the world is about to commemorate, one way or another, the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ in His First Advent *circa* 2025years ago, I have chosen for a subtitle the above “quote” from one of the most inspirational poems ever written, ***If ,*** by Bro. (Frater) Joseph Rudyard Kipling ***(1865 – 1936 )***.

***Waiting*** is an emotion which unites the human race. Isn’t it quite thematic for the state of the world today? For the whole world is currently anxiously waiting with baited breath for the finality of the 2-year-old dreaded COVID-19 pandemic, which has thus far affected over 280 Million people worldwide and claimed the life of 5.4 M! and the count is rising. Indeed, waiting is a universal experience shared throughout the world from generation to generation, for we all wait for one thing or another: we wait for a train or a plane; we wait for a needless war to end; we anxiously wait for the birth of a child; and we wait for the results of tests and of examinations, qualifications and degrees; we wait for the success of a business which might pay dividends; and we sometimes may even can’t wait for retirement; we wait for recovery from illness or surgery, and we wait for some cure or a ‘magic bullet’ to treat the incurable, to name but a few events we all share, as we wait for good and for bad news.

Notwithstanding, we all await our inevitable destiny, death. Ahh!! But better still as believers in Christ Jesus we wait with greater anticipation for the 1992-year-old promise, when “This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven”, ***Acts 1:11***, and so “we who are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord”, ***2 Thess. 4:17****, vide infra.* So please don’t be tired of waiting, His long-awaited Second Advent is quite imminent and the rapture will very soon be accomplished, when the Lord Jesus Christ, our Risen Emmanuel, returns for all those who faithfully and sincerely put their trust in Him.

Nevertheless, ***waiting*** is also a Divine attribute, He has been and is still patiently waiting for humanity to be brought back to the worship of the true God and to trust in Him, and He is not tired of waiting! for we should ***“account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation”, 2 Pet. 3:15*** *.*

And here I would like to recall that the First Advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was awaited long before it finally happened, and in like manner, as we patiently await His Second Coming, the comparative ***waiting*** for those two saliant events is the subject of this short treatise.

There are ***7*** words in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, the original Biblical languages, that can be translated **‘*wait’*** and its various temporal derivatives, e.g., waited or waiting. Combined they appeared 154 times (interestingly, 22 x***7*** *)* in the King James Bible translation. Not unexpectedly, I have selected ***7*** \* relevant references, and scenarios, in connection with waiting for the birth of The Lord Jesus Christ, as follows:

1. In *c.* 6 - 4 BCE, “the angel, Gabriel, was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou who art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered in her mind, i.e., ***waited* ,** what \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \* The No. ***7***  is my favourite, it is of course the ‘Perfect number’. manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name *Jeshua,*  JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end”, ***Lk. 1:26-33.***

***Mary’s momentary-wait and apprehension was expelled.***

2. Meanwhile, “When Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, i.e., ***waited****,* behold the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying: Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee, Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name *Jeshua,*  JESUS; for he shall save His people from their sins”, ***Matt. 1:18 – 21.***

***Joseph’s night-long anxious wait was relieved.***

3. “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding, i.e., ***waiting*** , in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. And, Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them: Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord … And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another: Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us, … And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart”, ***Luke 2:8 – 19*** .

***The shepherds’ journey-long wait was worthwhile***.

4. “Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just (or righteous) and devout, ***waiting***  for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ; … and when the parents brought in the child, Jesus”, his long wait was over and this was his song: “Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said: Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation. Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel”, ***Luke 2:25 – 32***. , it is *aka* *Nunc dimittis*, i.e., ‘now depart’ in peace.

***Simeon’s life-long wait was finally fulfilled***.

5. The prophet Isaiah, often spoken of, rightly, as the ‘fifth’ Evangelist, writes concerning the First Advent of the Son of God: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel”, ***Isa. 7:14***, and “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even forever”, ***Isa 9:6&7***. And *circa* 700 years later, he clearly speaks of “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness: Prepare ye (whilst ***waiting )*** the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God”, ***Isa. 40 : 3*** , which prophecy had totally materialized in the mission of St. John the Baptist, ***Matt. 3:3.***

***Isaiah’s Age-old prophetic waiting is accomplished***

6. However, at the birth of Jesus there were two camps, there were those who were waiting to see him and worship him, *vide supra*, and there were those who were baiting to kill him! “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod, the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him. When Herod, the king, had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, … Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said: Go and search diligently for the young child, and when ye have found *Him*, bring me word again, that I may come and ‘*worship’*  Him also”. As we know Herod’s waiting was disingenuous, for he intended to and murdered “all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all its borders, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men”, ***Luke 2:1-18.*** As it were, Herod was lying in ***waiting***  to kill him, and by his actions he heralded the attitude of humanity towards Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world”, ***John 1:29.***

***Herod’s murderous-wait by royal decree was actualised***

7. Lastly, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, … Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. … In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the *eternal past* counsel of His own will”, ***Eph. 1:3-5 & 11*** . That was a very long ***waiting!*** In fact, it is far longer than any of us can think, but “when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His son … To redeem *us* that we might receive the adoption of sons”, ***Gal. 4:4&5*** . For “ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times”, ***1 Pet. 1:18 – 21 .***

As it were, God was waiting to declare, in Jesus Christ, what was determined in the eternal counsel of the Godhead before the foundation of the world, and He is still waiting , “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”, ***2 Pet. 3:9*** .

***God’s long-awaited plan of past eternity was finally realized.***

**In conclusion:**

It may be that our ***wait*** might be like Mary’s momentary-wait, Joseph’s night-long, the Shepherds’ journey-long, Herod’s months-long, Simeon’s life-long, Isaiah’s Ages-long or in God’s case eternity-long, the ***waiting*** is not over yet but we should “not be tired of waiting”!

Although it is more than 2025 years since the First Advent of Christ Jesus, and the remembrance of His birth is renewed every year at Christmas, albeit largely superficially and very scarcely genuine, sadly, He is still vehemently rejected by the majority of the 7.8 Billion people inhabiting the earth today, for there are those who crucify Him, over and over again, in their lives and their disbelief, and as sin and darkness overspread the earth, nothing has changed in the world today, for we “know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, ***waiting*** for the adoption, *to* *wit*, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope, and we with patience ***wait*** for it”, ***Rom. 8:22-24.***  but this waiting will soon be over!

For to those who believe in Him and are now waiting for His return to reign supreme, “our conversation, or citizenship, is in heaven, from where also we look, i.e., ***waiting* ,** forthe Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself ”, ***Phil. 3:20&21*** . “Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every *man* that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure”, ***1 John 3:2&3*** .

For there and then all will be revealed, and it is my most ardent wish that we ought not wait much longer:

**“He who testifieth these things saith: Surely I come quickly.**

 **Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus”, *Rev 22:20***

*May your Christmas be Merry and best wishes for a prosperous and peaceful, happier and above all healthier 2022.*

**My chosen Hymn is written by Miss Hannah Kilham Burlington, (1842 – 1901) who was born, lived and passed away in Evesham, Worcestershire, not many miles away from where we live, whose upbringing taught her godliness and piety, and her hymnody was rich in the scripture, especially the awaiting of the Lord’s coming typified in “I’m waiting for Thee, Lord”, its wistfulness touches the spirit and sets the heart longing for the Lord’s return.**

**1. I’M waiting for Thee, Lord,**

 **Thy beauty to see, Lord,**

 **I’m waiting for Thee, for Thy coming again.**

 **Thou’rt gone over there, Lord,**

 **A place to prepare, Lord**

 **Thy home I shall share at Thy coming again.**

**2. ‘Mid danger and fear, Lord,**

 **I’m oft weary here, Lord;**

 **The day must be near of Thy coming again**

 **‘Tis all sunshine there, Lord,**

 **No sighing or care, Lord,**

 **But glory so fair at Thy coming again.**

**3. Whilst Thou art away, Lord**

 **I stumble and stray, Lord;**

 **O hasten the day of Thy coming again!**

 **This is not my rest, Lord;**

 **A pilgrim confest, Lord,**

 **I wait to be blest at Thy coming again.**

**4. Our loved ones before, Lord,**

 **Their troubles are o’er, Lord,**

 **I’ll meet them once more at Thy coming again.**

 **The blood was the sign, Lord,**

 **That marked them as Thine, Lord,**

 **And brightly they’ll shine at Thy coming again.**

**5. E’en now let my ways, Lord,**

 **Be bright with Thy praise, Lord,**

 **For brief are the days ere Thy coming again.**

 **I’m waiting for Thee, Lord,**

 **Thy beauty to see, Lord;**

 **No triumph for me like Thy coming again!**

 **Amen, Amen and Amen**

**Joseph**

24th December 2021