

# *unexpected*

four unexpected  
christmas stories

Zechariah

Herod

Mary

Simeon



Hope Peace

Love Joy



**Biblical hope isn't optimism based on the odds. It's a choice to wait for God to bring about a future that is as surprising as a crucified man rising from the dead. Christian hope looks back to the risen Jesus in order to look forward.**

**Tim Mackie**

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**Christian hope looks back to the risen Jesus in order to look forward.**

**Tim Mackie**

**5** In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.

**6 Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly.**

**7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.**

**11** Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. **12** When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

**13** But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.

**14** He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,

**15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.

**16** He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. **17** And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah,

**to turn the hearts of the parents to their  
children and the disobedient to the  
wisdom of the righteous—to make ready  
a people prepared for the Lord.**

**18** Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.” **19** The angel said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.

**21** Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. **22** When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

**23** When his time of service was completed, he returned home. **24** After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion.

**25** “The Lord has done this for me,” she said. “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

**57** When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. **58** Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

**59** On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah,  
**60** but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

**61** They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.”

**62** Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. **63** He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.”

**64** Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. **65** All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things.

**66** Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

**67** His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

**68** “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

**69** He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

**70** (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), **71** salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us

**72** to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant,

**73** the oath he swore to our father  
Abraham: **74** to rescue us from the hand of  
our enemies, and to enable us to serve  
him without fear **75** in holiness and  
righteousness before him all our days.

**76** And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

**77** to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,<sup>**78**</sup> because of the tender mercy of our God,

**78** by which the rising sun will come to us  
from heaven **79** to shine on those living in  
darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

**80** And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

**15** Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. **16** But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

**Luke 5:15-16**



*A FULFILLED PROMISE*

**The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation.**

**Psalm 18:2**

**Here I will make a horn grow for David  
and set up a lamp for my anointed one.  
I will clothe his enemies with shame, but  
his head will be adorned with a radiant  
crown.**

**Psalm 132:17**

2.

*THE PURPOSE OF SALVATION*

**20** When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness . . .

**21** But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

**Romans 6:20,22**

**19** Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

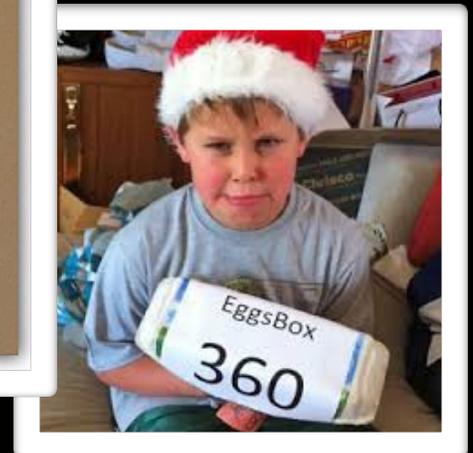
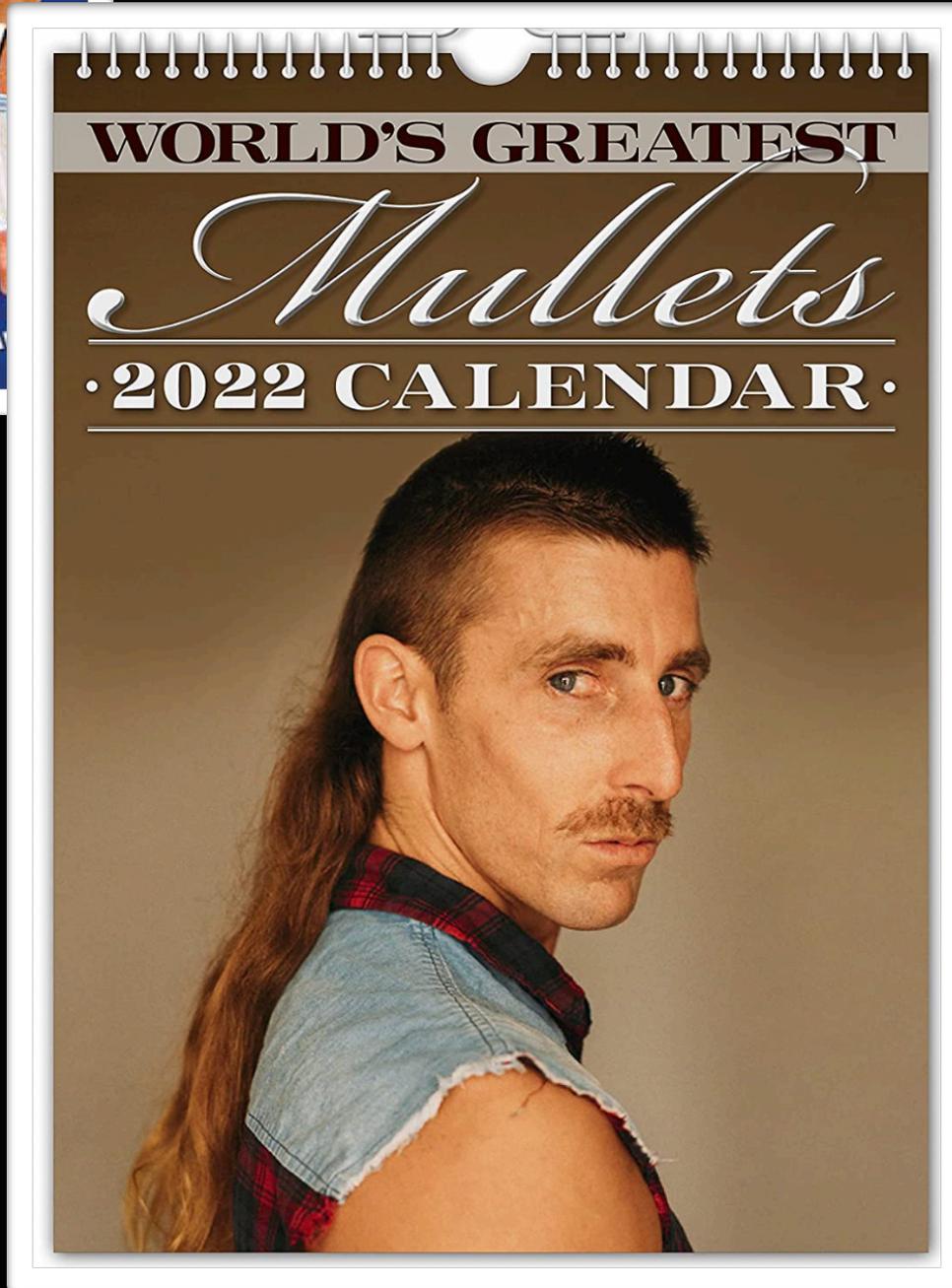
**1 Corinthians 6:19–20**

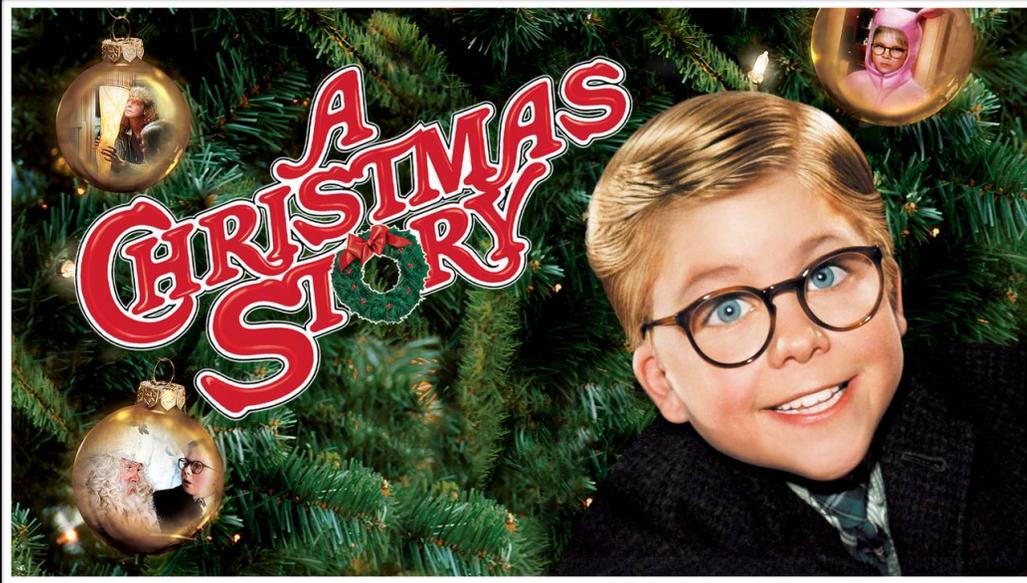


**HANDERPANTS**

**Underpants For Your Hands!**





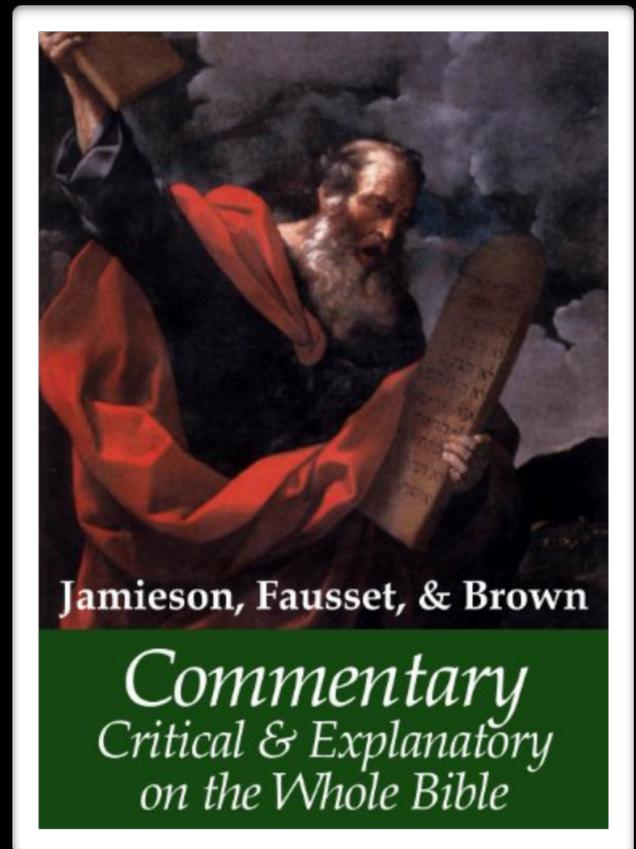


3.

*JOHN WILL PREPARE THE  
WAY FOR THE MESSIAH*

**“Here are the dying echoes of this song:  
and very beautiful are these closing notes  
like the setting sun, shorn indeed of its  
noon-tide radiance, but skirting the  
horizon with a wavy and quivering light,  
as of molten gold — on which the eye  
delights to gaze, till it disappears from the  
view.**

The song passes not here  
from Christ to John, but  
only from Christ direct, to  
Christ as heralded by his  
Forerunner.”



**I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the Lord Almighty.**

**Malachi 3:1**

**Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.**

**It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.**

**1 Peter 1:10-12**

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