



Zechariah's Story

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I imagine if we were to compare notes in terms of our Christmas experience as adults, they would be very, very different. But I imagine if we compared our experiences as children, they would have a lot in common. The agonizing, agonizing, agonizing wait for Christmas and counting down the days to Christmas—and your parents might have had a calendar—we have this little thing that we spin over every day that counts down the days to Christmas. And do you remember as a kid just the agonizing—it just took forever for Christmas to be here. The few days right before Christmas were like the longest days of the year, and then you become an adult and somebody says, "It's three weeks till Christmas" and you panic? Isn't it weird? The other day I heard it's three and a half weeks or something to Christmas and I'm like, *Oh no* and the kids are going, *Oh yeah!* And I'm going, *Oh no, it's going too fast* and they're going, *It's going too slow*. But when we were kids, it was so slow. And the great thing was, no matter how slow it went and no matter how long it seemed to take until we get to Christmas, we always got there. Right? There was the promise of the certainty of Christmas morning.

During that time, we all probably did something else in common. It's confession time, and it won't leave the room. How many of you actually searched for the gifts your parents had hidden in the house? Did you search? Okay, okay. Next question. How many of you found them at some point? You found them? Yeah, okay. The third question for the rebels: How many of you actually got them out and played with them? Yeah, and then final question: How many of you ever got one out, played with it, and you broke it? Yeah, and what do you do with that, right? It's like, do you rewrap it, or, *Oh mom, it's broken?*

I remember the year I got my guitar for Christmas from my parents and they hid it in the attic. How do you hide a guitar case? We had a little house and one of those pull down attics where you pull the stairs down out of the ceiling and the insulation pours down on you. We had one of those. And so I would climb up in the attic when my parents were gone and I would actually get the guitar out and play it in the attic, freezing cold in December up in the attic. They shouldn't have had a wooden guitar up there anyway. But I would sit in the attic playing and then listen to see if they were home; play and listen to see if they were home; try to get all the pink insulation out of the case and put it back. Well, the interesting thing—that dynamic of waiting, waiting, waiting is the dynamic actually that set up the very first Christmas.

You may know this, or this may be new information, but for generations, generations, generations—many, many, many generations—there was always a handful or a group or a remnant of Jewish people who waited every single day for the arrival not of Santa Claus, but of a Messiah. In every single generation, there was a group of people and they lived their lives, literally, they lived their lives every single day in obedience to