**The Light Has Come – It Really Happened!**

**Last week Christmas happened – months of excitement waiting, over. For many, the Holiday is still going – the Day of Epiphany, Jan 6.**

**Tonight, our mind will shift to the New Year. 2024**

**But - Christmas really happened. Waiting can be hard. What if you had to wait - a lifetime... 1500 years?**

**Today - we continue in Luke – as we wrap up… 3 things and 2 people**

**(2000 yrs ago - the infinite became an infant - the creator walked among creation - the breath giver, breathed air – then) Luke 2:21- On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.**

**Circumcision - 8 days after birth, the infant was circumcised and named Jesus. This reflects the devotion of J&M to God.**

**22 When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (jumps 33 days in half a verse, total of 41 since his birth.** **Still in Bethlehem, a 2-hour walk)**

**Purification - (Lev 12:1-8) 33 days after circumcision a male the woman is purified by the sacrifice of a lamb and a turtle dove.**

**(3rd) 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), 24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”**

**Consecration – (Ex 13:1-2) Set apart your first-born son unto the Lord. That child belongs to the Lord.**

**Three significant events often missed or skimmed over.**

* **The Circumcision (Genesis 17) – a reminder that God calls people to himself and sets them apart from others. This is a covenant w/God.**

**Technically - Jesus did not need to be circumcised as he is the very chosen one. But Jesus fulfilled every aspect of the law – perfectly.**

* **The Purification rites (Lev 12:1-8) woman is purified by a sacrifice of a lamb and dove. Points to - we are all born in sin and need saving.**

**Technically – Jesus did not need this either - he was born without sin. But even as a baby he was identifying with sinners – he similarly did this as his baptism and again on the cross.**

* **Consecration - of son (Ex 13:1-2) Set apart your first-born son unto the Lord. That child belongs to the Lord.**

**This points back to Passover. Sacrifice on door, the Lord passed over. But said, the first born still belongs to me (type of tithe). Set apart.**

**Instead of leaving him at the temple - a sacrifice is offered to redeem him back. The price was a lamb (for redemption) and a pigeon or dove (for sins).**

**BUT - Where is the lamb in Luke 2? They gave 2 birds. \*\* God had an exception clause - if anyone was too poor to bring a lamb, they could sacrifice two birds. They were dead broke.**

**Where is the Lamb? Jesus is the Lamb!**

**We see the lamb all through this chapter.**

**Circumcision is fulfilled in Jesus – who cuts away the sin of our heart.**

**Purification is fulfilled in Jesus – who’s sacrifice covers all impurities.**

**Consecration fulfilled in Jesus - who sets us apart in him to the Father**

**All these events point to the cross and prove - His birth was not a myth. Jesus stepped into humanity! It really happened!**

**Then God does something miraculous and mysterious**

**Only Luke records – 2 people seldom heard about at Jesus infancy.**

**You won't find them on cards or nativities, but they held baby Jesus. They had been waiting their whole life - for that day.**

**Luke 2:25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for (ready to welcome) the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.**

**\*\* SIMEON**

**What was he waiting for? Israel like today - was in political conflict and violence - looking for peace & comfort. They were waiting for the ONE, the Messiah / the Christ – to consul (comfort) them. Alleviate their pain.**

**Phil Collins – I’ve been waiting for this moment for all my life…**

**Simeon had good reason for his anticipation - God told him he would see the Messiah in his lifetime. A promise - Simeon would not miss it**

 **27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. (God moved on him to get up and go to church. God had something life changing for him there - and for you here. What if he had decided to stay home?) When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, (Held him and knew who he was looking at - He was holding Immanuel - the ONE.) saying: (a praise song) 29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. (I can die now... true contentment) 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”**

**This song is packed with deep concepts… Simeon sings!**

* **God is sovereign! 29 “Sovereign Lord”**

**Meaning - He is always in control. Some will say it means he is in charge but not in control. But that is not what it means.**

**Psalm 115:3 - Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.**

**Psalm 103:19 - The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.**

**Proverbs 19:21 - Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.**

**1 Chronicles 29:11-12 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. (The only logical response) 13 And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.**

* **God keeps His promises! 29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised”**

**God is faithful to his word and can be trusted!**

**2 Tim 2:13 - If we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.**

* **God is always accomplishing his plans! “30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations”**

**Before the foundation – you have prepared and do it!**

**1 Peter 1:20 - He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you**

**Psalm 33:11 - The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. / Isaiah 46:10 - I declare the end from the beginning, and ancient times from what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and all My good pleasure I will accomplish.' / Job 42:2 - I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**

**God always has a plan and God always accomplishes his plan.**

* **God chose Israel to bring us salvation (Jesus) “32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”**

**Abrahamic covenant – Genesis 12:2-3 - And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (repeated over and over in the OT and the NT)**

**Jesus’ salvation would be for the world!!**

**Simeon is crying out - This is that infant – that baby is this!**

**33 The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. (Imagine a total stranger picks up your child and breaks into praise. How would you feel if you were told this about your kids?) 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, (speaking of Jesus ministry – some people will hate him. That is not your typical Christmas song lyrics) 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”**

**It's going to be hard for you too, it will break your heart...**

**Just as he was prophesying – another comes by.**

**36 There was also a prophetess, (Not the same as Malachi or John. She was a female foreteller) Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.**

**ANNA**

**Married young - widowed young - never remarried. 62 years. Alone - But she had the LORD! She was a woman of faith.**

**38 Coming up to them at that very moment, (providentially was there when they came in with Jesus) she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to (anticipating) the redemption of Jerusalem.**

**She started running around telling people she saw the ONE.**

**This woman prophetess was of the early evangelists of Jesus.**

**While Simeon sings of the glory of God, Anna reflects a personal God.**

**Anna tells us!**

* **God always takes care of His kids.**

**Over 60 years alone. No husband, but God took care of her.**

**She plugged into the temple (church) and worshipped, prayed, and served. She dedicated her life to serving God.**

**God was good to provide what she needed daily even when it seemed no one was there. \*Looking back, can you see it?**

* **God cares deeply about his kids.**

**She knew pain – she knew loss. But never became bitter or lost hope.**

**She was a woman of worship and prayer. She lived our Phil 4.**

**She knew God was with her. God did not forget her.**

**Psalm 55:22 - Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken. / 1 Peter 5:7 - Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.**

**Psalm 34:18-19 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. 19 The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.**

**Like Anna - God has not forgotten about YOU either!**

**Matthew 11:28 - Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

**\*\*\* BTW - In both – we see the infant savior Jesus and how God is using seniors to proclaim the truth of God!**

**For Simon and Anna, the wait was over. Christmas really happened. They saw and they held him.**

**Luke 2:38 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. (they eventually moved to Nazareth – Matt tells us after a detour to Egypt) 40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.**

**Jesus understanding of who he was in his humanity was equivalent to his age. By twelve it was clear he knew.**

**41 Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. 42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. 43 After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. 44 Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.**

**46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”**

**49 “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (KJV - about my father’s business) 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them.**

**51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. (God in skin – submitted to his earthly parents) But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. (likely Luke’s account is based on interviews with Mary) 52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.**

**Again, Jesus understanding of who he was in his humanity was equivalent to his age. Stature – physically was growing.**

**Grew close to God and human friendships and relationships.**

**And at just the right time – He laid down his life as a sacrifice for our sins – only to rise from the dead! It really happened!**

**These stories:**

**Jospeh and Mary remind us – Jesus is our redemption is here!**

**He breaks the chains of sin and sets us free! Jesus alone is our salvation (no other way). He is the lamb who sacrifices his life for us.**

**Simeon reminds us – Jesus is our comfort is here!**

**All fear, rejection, and regret is erased from Simeon's mind - when he met Jesus... the consoler had come. The wait is over in Jesus.**

**God not only fulfills the promises of the prophets and the promises for the world... but also the individual promises.**

**Are you restless? Do you seek comfort? And promise keeper.**

**Anna reminds us – Jesus is our provider is here!**

**All loneliness, all hopelessness, neglect and abandonment. Through Jesus we can know God is our provider!**

**All of these stories remind us – Jesus is absolutely coming back!**

**We are waiting for the absolute assurance of Jesus return!**

**As soon as Jesus show up, he seemed to disappear again.**

**Jesus is born – things are about to change! It’s new day! Then nothing for 2 yrs. Then nothing for 10 yrs. Then nothing for 18 yrs. Then 3 yrs of ministry and killed! Gone! Then 3 days later, shows up! Only to leave 40 days later. I’ll be back!**

**Now 2000 years later – We find ourselves like Israel, waiting. God where are you? Are you ever going to return?**

**2 Peter 3:8 - With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (only been gone a couple of days)**

**LIT – God works outside our time.**

**Jesus – really did come. Christmas really did happen. The cross and resurrection are real. As sure as it happened, Jesus will return again to gather his people.**

**Christmas has come and gone – we pack up the tree and the nativity goes in a box, the Christmas movies are over – and life goes on.**

**That aching, gnawing restlessness we have... that hope that Christmas brought is over. And for many the continued pursuit for happiness continues. The gifts did fill the hole in your soul.**

**But it really happened! Jesus did come – it was history – he lived, preached, died, and rose again. God came to us… He loved us and gave His life for us.**