

Series: Christmas 2023 –

Title: The Prophets Candle: Hope for Your Life

Text: Heb. 1:1-3; Isaiah 7:14; Luke 2:25-38

Introduction

Heb. 1:1-3

¹In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

THE PROPHETS OF OLD GIVE US HOPE

Linear Timeline

- After the rebuilding of the temple – Dan. 9:25
 - *Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again*
- After the advent of Rome – Gen. 49:10
 - *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*
- Before the destruction of the temple – Dan 9:26
 - *The seventy weeks - And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.*

Lineage Assigned

- Abraham's Seed – Gen 22:18
- Isaac – Son of Promise – Gen 26:1-5
- Jacob's Offspring – Gen. 28:13, 14
- Judah – Gen. 49:10
- Jesse – Isa 11:1-10
- David - 2 Samuel 7:12–16; Jer. 23:5-6

Lady Chosen

- Virgin to conceive – Isa. 7:13, 14

Location Determined

- Bethlehem – Micah 5:2
- Egypt – Hosea 11:1

Label Given

- Immanuel – Isa 7:14
- Wonderful Counselor – Isa 9:6
- Mighty God – Isa 9:6
- Prince of Peace – Isa 9:6
- Son of God – Prov. 30:3-4

PROPHECY MATHEMATICS - (10^{50} , 10^{17} , 10^{157})

Empower International on The Mathematical Probability that Jesus is the Christ

The reason why prophecy is an indication of the divine authorship of the Scriptures, and hence a testimony to the trustworthiness of the Message of the Scriptures, is because of the minute probability of fulfillment.

Anyone can make predictions. Having those prophecies fulfilled is vastly different. In fact, the more statements made about the future, and the more the detail, then the less likely the precise fulfillment will be.

- For example, what's the likelihood of a person predicting today the exact city in which the birth of a future leader would take place, well into the 22nd century? This is indeed what the prophet Micah did 700 years before the Messiah.
- Further, what is the likelihood of predicting the precise manner of death that a new unknown religious leader would experience, a thousand years from now – a manner of death presently unknown, and to remain unknown for hundreds of years? Yet, this is what David did in 1000 B.C.
- Again, what is the likelihood of predicting the specific date of the appearance of some great future leader, hundreds of years in advance? This is what Daniel did, 530 years before Christ.
- **Once one goes past one chance in 10^{50} , the probability is so small that it is impossible to think that it will ever occur.**
 - After examining only eight different prophecies, they conservatively estimated that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies was one in 10^{17} . To illustrate how large the number 10^{17} is, it is 1 followed by 17 zeros.
 - The probability of 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one person is the incredible number 10^{157} . How large is 10^{157} ? 10^{157} is 1 followed by 157 zeros!
 - As the professor concludes, "Any man who rejects Christ as the Son of God is rejecting a fact, proved perhaps more absolutely than any other fact in the world."
- There are over 300 prophecies fulfilled!

PROPHETS IN HIS DAY GIVE US HOPE

John the Baptist: Hope Prepares the Way

- Prepare the way – Isa 40:3; Luke 1; Matt 3:1-12
- Jesus ascribed him as prophet – Matt 11:9-11
- Leapt in the Womb - Luke 1:41
- John's hope was in the Messiah, and he placed his hope in Jesus.

And as I look around the church, I see faithful men like John.

Simeon: Hope Sees Your Salvation

Luke 2:25-26

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for 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.

We don't know much about Simeon.

- Some have speculated that he is a priest, but we're not sure about that.
- I suspect he was just a common, average, hardworking Jewish man of his age.
- Most people think he was up in years, given his ease at which he is ready to die. But we're not even told that.

We may not know where he is from or what his occupation was, but we know the important stuff about Simeon.

He was just and devout.

He was waiting for "the consolation of Israel."

- That is to say, he was waiting for the coming of the Messiah.
- Consolation - Attempt to comfort someone who is in sorrow.

The Holy Spirit was upon him.

- The Holy Spirit selectively came upon people in the Old Testament period; He was upon Simeon and revealed that Simeon would not die until he saw Jesus.

Again, stop here and consider this, God's plan doesn't follow the usual script.

- Who was it that got the "inside" information on the most important news to the Jewish nation? Was it Herod, the King? Was it the chief priest? Was it Nicodemus?

No, it was poor, faithful, old Simeon.

Who does God look for? Those who look for HIM

- You can't control where you end up or how you're promoted, but you can be faithful to God in placing your hope in HIM

Imagine the scene here.

If Simeon was told this, I'm sure he waited for years and years and years.

- Now he's an old man, stooped and graying.
- Every day he comes to the temple expecting the Messiah.
- The religious people probably think he's an eccentric.
- They mock him. And yet he has HOPE and believes what has been told him.

Every day he scans the crowd at the temple.

- He looks for young couples with babies. I imagine he asks the Lord, “Is this the one?” and every day the Lord says, “No, Simeon, this is not the one.”
- And then finally, finally one day he sees a peasant family walk in with their baby and he asks, “God is this the one?” And The Holy Spirit whispers, “Yes. Yes, that’s the one.”

Luke 2:30-32

...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.”

And as I look around the church, I see faithful men like Simeon.

His HOPE was in the Truth of God’s Word and knew that Messiah would come

Anna: Hope Worships and Waits

Luke 2:37-38

...³⁷and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

She is a prophetess. – Hope Keeps Us Close to the Lord

- That is to say, she declared the word of the Lord. A prophet or prophetess was especially gifted by God to interpret God’s word, sometimes forth-telling in prediction and other times in interpreting what God has already said.

She was from the tribe of Asher. – Hope is for the Outsider

- One of the ten scattered tribes of Israel. Apparently she found her way back to Jerusalem.
- She was from the tribe of Asher, really a foreigner in Israel.

She was a widow. – Hope for No Other than God

- We’re not sure of her age. Either the text says she was 84 years old, or it says she was a widow for 84 years.
- If you could think of the most insignificant type of person to herald the birth of the Son of God, you would not go farther than Anna. She was a woman, who was not highly regarded in those days.
- She was a widow and widows were often not taken care of. There was no social safety net. Even though the Levitical Law required their care, they were often ignored.

She became the world’s first evangelist. – Hope Shown to Others

- That’s right, it says in Verse 38, she spread the news of the Messiah to the people who were likeminded in looking for Him.

- That very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Of all people to choose as the first herald of the Gospel, you would not have chosen Anna.

- You see the Bible always exalts woman. The Bible affirms strong and devout woman. Look at the people Jesus surrounded Himself with. He raised up women and gave them dignity and respect. Twelve women are mentioned around the ministry of Jesus, and Anna is one.

And as I look around the church, I see faithful women like Anna.

- She was a single widow most of her life.
- But she used her life and her position for God's glory.
- God chose not have her remarry, but that was okay with her.
- She spent every day at the temple praising God.

In spite of her circumstances.

In spite of her singleness.

In spite of the corruption of the religious system.

In spite of the swirling tension with Rome.

SHE PLACED HER HOPE IN THE COMING MESSIAH

Anna had her eyes fixed on God and was in attendance hoping for the presentation of the Son of God.

I see people like Anna in our church.

- I think of the faithful women who for years have held this church together by their faithfulness.
- I'm inspired by you. You are a testimony by your life and your witness.
- You have placed your hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- And know this, God sees you and you are important to Him, as important as anyone else in the Kingdom.

CHRISTMAS GIVES US HOPE FOR LIFE

Christmas = Christ's day

- Every day is a day in Christ
- Every day you can experience Hope

Christmas today is a billion-dollar industry. Every country the world over stops and celebrates Christmas.

But in Jesus' time there was no celebration.

- Nobody was ready for the Messiah to be born.
- Herod was caught off guard.
- The rich and powerful didn't know it happened.

- The ruling powers in the world from Rome to Asia had no clue.
- Even the religious elites in this temple, they didn't see anything significant about this baby.
 - He was just one more baby coming through, a peasant child born to peasant parents.

People had an expectation of the Messiah,

- but they were probably looking among the households of the wealthy,
- those who could afford lambs for sacrifice.

It seemed that nobody was ready for the coming of the Messiah, nobody except a few devout people.

In our lives we must begin each day and live each day like it is Christ's Day.

Our Hope for our lives is grounded in the trustworthiness of the Lord's Nature and Person.

WHY PLACE YOUR HOPE IN JESUS?

Place your hope in Him because it He is true to His Word

- The prophecies of the Old Testament were true for His first coming and they are true for His Second Coming.
- Faithfully anticipate the coming of Jesus, against all odds, against the logic of the times and the skepticism of the age.
- Cling to the hope of Jesus' Second Coming. I imagine that in their day people said, "Give it up, He's not coming." And yet they held out faith and so should we. People say to me, "He's not coming. They've been saying that for years." And yet He is coming and we wait and believe.

Place your hope in Christ because He is the True Light of the World.

- John was not the light but prepared the way for the Light.
- Jesus the Light will shine in the dark moments of your life.

Place your hope in Christ because He is the Salvation you are seeking.

- Simeon heard from the Holy Spirit and waited to see the Salvation, who is Jesus Christ.
- His life was dedicated to the salvation that would come.
- You and I can experience and engage with that salvation every moment of every day.

Place your hope in Christ because He is the Comfort of all who call on Him.

- He is the consolation of Israel and the comfort to everyone who would look to Him.
- His yoke is easy... you can cast your cares on Him.
- The Holy Spirit will bring comfort to you in your times of sorrow.

Place your hope in Christ because He is always with you.

- The other name for Jesus, Immanuel, means “God with us.” You see, we know a God who is with us; He visits us in our low estate.
- As you read the Christmas story, you see the people God chose to visit: lowly shepherds, foreign dignitaries, ordinary lay people, a peasant couple, and a widow from the tribe of Asher.
- These are the people God uses. And so we can find ourselves in the story. God is with us. He’s not just with the mighty and the powerful. God is with us.

Prayer