

Intro. Ask people their favorite Christmas songs of all-time & you’ll hear responses like “White Christmas,” “The Little Drummer Boy,” “Santa Claus Is Coming to Town,” “Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer,” “Jingle Bells,” “All I Want for Christmas Is You,” “I’ll Be Home for Christmas,” & a host of Christmas hymns. We’ve been listening to them on the radio or on CD or iPods. We listen to them because they put us in the mood for Christmas, giving us feelings of cheer, peace, love, hope & more. Over the last few weeks, I’ve been covering a series in Luke 1-2 entitled “A Christmas Carol,” looking at the 4 hymns recorded in the infancy stories of Jesus’ birth on praise, blessing & peace. Tonight, we conclude the series in Luke 2:29-32 on “A Song of Hope.”

Theme: Hoping in God

Background: Each Gospel writer has a unique purpose for writing his account of Jesus, which explains the differences we find in them (much like differing accounts from news reporters—they aren’t necessarily wrong, they just share a different angle or have a different purpose). Luke goes to great lengths in his research to write an accurate account of Jesus and present him primarily to the lower-classes of society, highlighting Jesus as the Savior of the world.

- We probably all know the story of Jesus’ birth in the manger at Bethlehem & the angelic message & song to the shepherds in the first half of Luke 2, but most Christians are less familiar with the rest of Luke 2.
- In the verses preceding this song, we discover Jesus was circumcised on the 8th day and given His name & He was presented in the temple on the 40th day, once Mary’s purification time was over. So Jesus was about 6 weeks old when Joseph & Mary brought Him to the temple.
- Simeon, the one who sings this song, was near the end of his life and had been waiting on God to fulfill His promise to send the Messiah. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before he saw the Lord’s Messiah. Thus, Simeon probably spent a good deal of time around the temple, wondering when he would catch a glimpse of the Messiah.
- We don’t know if Simeon expected to meet a baby or if he thought he would meet a man, ready to rule on David’s throne. We do know, however, he was overjoyed when he saw Jesus, because he knew he was the Christ.

Illus: Many of you would be overjoyed if you met a particular idol, whether an NBA player (Steph Curry, LeBron James, Kevin Durant) or a baseball player (Mike Trout, Bryce Harper) or a movie star (Harrison Ford, Ben Affleck) or TV star (Drew & Jonathan Scott)—Simeon’s joy was greater than your joy would be at meeting one of those

- This song urges us to portray one main goal in life, fitting at Christmas but also all throughout the year:

Hope in the Lord for Fulfilling His Promise of Salvation in Christ (2:29-32)

- The salvation promised to Simeon from God concerning the Messiah had been fulfilled, so he could now die in peace
- There are 2 elements of this hope in Christ:
 - A. Christ is central to God’s grand design (2:31)**
 - God “prepared” this salvation “in the presence of all peoples”—that He prepared it points to His design
 - When I say Christ is central to God’s grand design, I’m trying to capture the essence of this verse—all of history prior to Christ’s coming pointed to the Messiah’s role on earth

through His sinless life, ministry, sacrificial death & victorious resurrection; all of history since Christ's coming points back to His completed work so desperately needed by the world, because of our sin

Illus: Our modern calendar has been built around this coming with the initials "BC" (Before Christ) & "AD" (Anno Domini—in the year of our Lord). Even those who try to dismiss Jesus' significance with "BCE" (Before Common Era) & "CE" (Common Era) still use His entrance into the world as the great time-changer! Christ is central to God's grand design!

B. Christ is the only light in a dark world (2:32)

- That Christ is a light, explains "salvation" of v. 30—just as someone can be completely hopeless in darkness, they find great hope with even a little ray of light

Illus: Those of you who know me well know I like Darth Vader, because I have a bit of a dark side & that dark side enjoys the writings of Edgar Allen Poe. While I enjoy many of his works, one of my favorites is "The Pit and the Pendulum." In the pit, a prisoner from the Spanish Inquisition finds himself trapped in a dark compartment & he immediately realizes his hopeless situation. Only when he begins to get a little light does he find a glimmer of hope in freeing himself—the coming of Christ into the world didn't simply give a little glimmer but a bright, blazing, radiant beam of hope for peoples throughout the world!

1. Revelation to the Gentiles—unveiling God's salvation plan to them

- This light came not only to darkened Israel but all the world, revealing God's plan of salvation through Christ & His cross, but it isn't automatic, but must be grasped & appropriated by repentance & faith

2. Glory to His people Israel—hope & praise for Israel

- Israel already had the promises of God & past deliverance. Just as Yahweh brought Israel numerous victories & glories in the past, their greatest glory would be found in the Messiah
- Though many Jews have grown hardened in seeing Jesus as the Christ, the first followers of Jesus were Jews & thousands more in our day have trusted in Him

Conc. If you paid attention to a little news this past week, you know Steve Harvey made a terrible mistake at the Miss Universe pageant by announcing the wrong country's representative as the winner, only to correct it a minute later. Lots of people get a kick out of someone else's faux pas, but let's face it, we all make mistakes & aren't you glad the national cameras weren't rolling when you made yours? Because of our numerous mistakes & sins, we need hope for deliverance & salvation. Jesus Christ is the only hope of the world. His work & hope for our lives can cause us to sing out of joy for ourselves & to give hope to the world. May this hope be yours this day & always!