

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 2- Luke 2:25-38** 27- The Four Witnesses- Part 4

April 26, 2009

Luke 2:25-38

Now at the beginning of this text we meet an old man named Simeon, and at the end of the text we meet an old woman named Anna. And according to verse 26- it had been revealed to Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah- the Lord's Christ. And so when Jesus was brought to the Temple at eight days of age- Simeon was moved by the Spirit to come also. And he recognized the child and took him into his arms and blessed God.

And according to verse 38- at that very hour- Anna also came near and she, too, recognized the child, and she too began to thank God and speak about the babe.

So here we have two eyewitnesses to give credibility to what Luke has told us about Jesus and all the events that surround Jesus so far in this Story of Salvation. So here we have two old Jewish saints- who represent the very best of the Old Covenant- which is now giving way to the New Covenant with the coming of this baby Boy named Jesus. And the question I have asked is, *"Why these two? Of all the Jews that might have been chosen to recognize the child-Messiah and take him into their arms and speak of his coming, why these?"*

And I think that Luke wants us to ask that question because he takes the time to tell us some of the qualities about these two people that no other New Testament writer even mentions. Simeon is righteous and devout, with the Holy Spirit upon him (v. 25). And Anna scarcely departs from the Temple- worshipping God with fasting and prayer night and day (v. 37). They are both very God-centered people.

But the thought that jumps off the page because of its similarity in verse 25 and verse 38 is that both were looking and hoping for God to do something for Israel. In verse 25- Luke tells us that Simeon was

righteous and devout and was **"looking for the consolation of Israel."** And in verse 38, Luke says that Anna spoke of the child **"to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."**

Now I think it is safe for us to assume that Anna *herself* was among those who were **"looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."** And I assume that the reason she spoke to those in particular who *were* looking for the redemption of Jerusalem- was because they were open to her testimony about the Christ. So it seems to me that Luke wants to emphasize by this repetition in verses 25 and 38 that what made Simeon and Anna especially fit to recognize and receive the Christ was their longing for God to break into History again to console and redeem His people by saving them from their sins through this Baby Boy named Jesus.

So the question that we need to ask right about now is this:

How is a fallen human heart prepared to receive Christ for Who He really is?

And the answer to that important question is found right here in this passage that we just read:

God prepares a person to receive Jesus Christ by Sovereignly stirring up a longing for both Consolation and Redemption that can only come from Jesus Christ.

And since that is true- then, therefore- it is the desire to be consoled *by* God and the desire to be reconciled *to* God that is the most important desires that any human can possibly have. And, therefore- everyone who comes to Jesus for Salvation must see that he is, in fact, not consoled, and he is, in fact, not reconciled in his present condition, or why else would a person desire to be consoled and be reconciled? In other words- there must be a Providential Discontentment with life and with the things of life deep inside a person that causes that individual to understand that his problem is not a lack of money or a lack of prestige or a lack of opportunity or education or power. In a word- that person must be given the revelation that he is un-consoled; that he is not consoled by money or through possessions or by other people or through anything in this life that is passing away- that he is utterly un-

consolable and troubled and disturbed and he is patently not content.

And God alone must give that person eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to believe that the *reason* why he is not consoled is precisely because he is not reconciled to God. And God must Sovereignly reveal to that individual that the *reason* why he is not reconciled to God is because of his sin.

And this is critical because that is what Jesus came to save us from- our sins. So we can see in this text that this was the case with the first coming of Jesus- both Simeon and Anna were longing for the consolation and redemption of God's people, and they were granted the privilege of recognizing and receiving the Christ into their arms.

And we can see the same Truth in relation to Christ's second coming to complete the Redemption He began some 2,000 years ago. For example in **Hebrews 9:28** it says,

So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.

The Apostle Paul said something very similar to this in **2 Timothy 4:8**:

... in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

And the Apostle Peter turns this into a command when he said in **1 Peter 1:13**:

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

So I think that we can say that not only in relation to the first coming of Christ, but, also, in relation to the second coming- it's true that God prepares us to receive Christ by stirring up a longing for consolation and redemption that can come only from Christ. And that longing for consolation goes way past even when we are already saved because as we have seen in these passages- those who are saved have a longing and a desire for the second coming of Jesus as well.

So both Simeon and Anna saw Christ and welcomed Him because they were already longing for His Coming and His Redemption. In other words- what these two old people got from the 39 Books of the Old Covenant prepared them to long for and desire the New Covenant to come through Jesus Christ. And this is very important for us today because if we are rightly understanding the New Covenant- God will create in us a longing and a desire- not for things to get better down here- but God will place within us a powerful discontentment with this life so that we look forward to the time when Jesus comes back and changes everything.

Let me try to put this another way. If your Theology causes this life to be more and more acceptable and pleasing to you- if you are working real hard to fit in better with the pagan culture of this present evil world, or to get along with ungodly activities, or if you are changing so that sin and evil no longer offends you- then I suggest to you that you are misunderstanding Biblical Christianity.

God is not up in Heaven, dear friends, to cause this life to be made more palatable to the very people who He said are but pilgrims and stranger just passing through. God is not about things continuing on down here on earth as they have always gone on. No, there is an end to all things coming, dear friends, and we above all the people on the face of the earth don't need to be laboring so that this world is more pleasing to our senses- but we need to be careful that we are faithful to continue to search for a City whose Builder and Maker is God and not be entangled with the affairs of this life.

God is not about us being comfortable down here on this earth or even that we are happy and safe- No, God is about afflicting us down here so that we are inherently dissatisfied with this world so that you and me will be found faithful to labor so that God's Will to be done in the earth- through the selfless abandonment of our own wills.

So I ask you this morning: Has God disquieted your soul? Has God mercifully afflicted you so that you are no longer content with this evil age? Are you earnestly seeking after making this your best life now or are you diligently looking for that Consolation that can only come by being physically reconciled with Jesus in His second Coming? Answer this: Does money and security and safety and prosperity and material possessions take up your time and fill you with satisfaction to

the point where you are filled and content, or do you look up because your Redemption is drawing nigh?

You see, Jesus is not here, dear friends- so now is certainly *not* the time to relax and to take it easy because our work is over- because our work is not over. I tell you that now is the time to strive to enter in at the straight gate, and now is the time to labor to enter into His Rest, and now is the time to work because the night is coming when no man will work. Luke tells us that Simeon and Anna were not content- they were not satisfied- but both of them were looking ahead to a time when Israel would be consoled by being reconciled with God.

Now there is a terrible and frightening condition in the Christian language that many try to avoid today. It is a condition that is being discussed less and less in the modern Church- not because it no longer applies but simply because so many are engaged in it that it has become unpopular to even speak of it.

The condition is "Backslide", and it is a vicious disease of the soul that infects God's people periodically, and it has to do with the people of God loving this present world more than they love God, and it has to do with the people of God loving pleasure more than God, and of loving money more than God, and of living their lives so as to fit in with the lost pagan world rather than crying out against it. It is the condition of no longer being discontent- but of being content. It is the frightening condition of being satisfied with the sinful world instead of being dissatisfied with it. It is the horrible condition of God's people no longer looking ahead to when Jesus will return to bring the fullness of Consolation and Redemption.

And I beg you this morning to honestly examine your own individual heart to see if you are backslidden and if you are- I beg you to repent quickly and make those changes in your daily life that need to be made so that you will be found faithful when Jesus comes back.

Remember, dear friends, that the greatest enemy of Righteousness is not wickedness- no, the true enemy of godly Righteousness is "human goodness". And we must remember that it is the false notion that we are good or that we can be good that hinders the Work of the Spirit in our lives. No man has the ability to be counted as righteous in the Eyes of God through his own power. But while that is true- we *do* have the ability to be counted as "good" in the eyes of

other people through our own human efforts- even though in reality we are not good at all.

So we must guard our hearts to not be content with this life, and we must guard against efforts to make ourselves more righteous through our own human effort, and we must be fearful of substituting human goodness for Salvation- because the two things are not the same. Those who are backslid are content with being "good" at the expense of true, Biblical Righteousness.

The very heart of the Gospel is that God is righteous and mankind is not. Therefore, those who come to God must come in total helplessness- admitting our own sinfulness, and by Grace alone through Faith alone in Christ alone, we are justified by a Sovereign act of God.

But contrary to popular opinion, Biblical Justification does not end there. Those who are justified are not only forgiven- but they are also "made" or "declared" or "counted" righteous. Those who have received Christ by Faith have literally become a new creature with a new Divine nature that loves and serves God because God has *imputed* or credited Christ's very Own Righteousness to us. And this is a miracle that originates from God- not us.

And the unmistakable proof that this new birth and this imputation of Christ's Righteousness has occurred in us- is that those who have been saved- love God and they love to obey God. You see, all saved people bear godly fruit and all lost people don't. We must know that bearing godly fruit is not *optional*, dear friends- no, bearing godly fruit is the unarguable proof that a person has been saved by Grace through Faith alone.

So since that is true- it is also true that where there is no godly fruit- you can be certain that there has either been no true conversion or that person is backslidden- and either one is real bad.

Feeding Our Flesh

When the human heart becomes backslidden- not only does sin become attractive again- but our sinful flesh is fed and strengthened and encouraged to dominate our lives. Our depraved and fallen flesh of pride and rebellion rebounds to take hold so that we then begin to substitute the fleshly goodness that Man can accomplish through his

own efforts for Christ's perfect Righteousness- which only comes by Faith.

And this feeding of our flesh begins a process whereby we downgrade the Commands of Christ, we "lower the bar" as it pertains to obedience, we minimize our responsibility as Christians to follow the Lord, and we reject any portion of the Gospel that makes any inconvenient demands upon our lives.

The backslider then unwisely takes comfort by *assuming* that being backslid will have no lasting affect because they periodically do certain "moral" or humanly "good" deeds (mostly to appease their own guilty consciences). When in actuality, by taking comfort in deeds that are humanly engineered- the backslider is rejecting Christ's Righteousness- which *cannot* be earned- which always changes the nature of those who are justified- resulting in the abundance of godly fruit- not periodic, partial, or convenient human morality.

Here is a sample check list to determine if you suffer from the disease of backsliding:

1. Prayer ceases to be a vital part of your life
2. The search for Biblical Truth has stopped and you have become comfortable with what you already know.
3. Biblical commands and expectations are not applied personally
4. Thoughts are not eternal and future but center on the "here and the now"
5. Going to Church loses its appeal
6. The Bible bores you
7. You do not see any reason to gather together with other saints and you forsake the assembling of yourself with other believers
8. Deep spiritual discussions embarrass you
9. Sports, recreation, and entertainment consume your time
10. Your heart is not convicted of sin- and you have a real problem with saying, "*I am guilty of that sin!*"
11. You have lost your desire to be like Christ- especially when it costs something, requires something of you, or it isn't convenient
12. Money and possessions are major concerns, and your joy and peace come from them.
13. You can sing hymns and songs of the Church without caring about the words that make demands on your life

14. You are comfortable with people and movies and books which frequently take the Lord's Name in vain and make sin look attractive.
15. You have no concern about what your actions do to others in the Body
16. Any excuse will do to keep you from fulfilling a solemn vow or fulfilling a spiritual duty or obligation
17. You have grown comfortable with your prayers going unanswered
18. There is no spring in your step, no song in your heart, no joy in your life
19. Worldly care and events rob you of your peace
20. The world's lifestyle attracts you
21. You are not disturbed by acts of injustice and the needs of your brothers and sisters do not weigh on your soul.
22. You call good evil and evil good
23. You are willing to lie or cheat in order to "get ahead"
24. You feel as though you have nothing at all to repent of and you are content with your own spirituality
25. You no longer blush at sin and your eyes are dry because you no longer weep over your own sin

Now this list is not comprehensive, but the point that I am making is that without a premeditated and ongoing desire to hunger and thirst after Righteousness- we humans will by default become backslidden and comfortable in our weakened and worldly condition.

And I suggest to you that without God Sovereignly afflicting us- without God mercifully causing us to be discontented with this life- we will all sink into a backslidden condition rapidly. The reason why Simeon and Anna were faithful to look ahead to a time when Messiah would bring Consolation and Redemption while most of the Jews of that day were all backslidden is precisely because God had troubled these two and had mercifully afflicted them and caused them not to be content or to rest in what God had already done for them.

Now I have heard the testimony of saints who have lost everything in their faithfulness to Jesus. I have been with people who have given up both fame and fortune to serve the living God. And I have spent time with those who are routinely persecuted for their walk with God. Those sounds do not discourage me- they inspire me; they do

not frighten me- they embolden me; those sounds do not cause me to swell up with pride- they cause me to fall down in shame and repent of my own lukewarmness and my own shallowness and my own backsliding.

The sound of genuine believers being hurt or even being killed is not a frightening sound- it is, in fact, a Glory to God. But what *is* frightening, what *does* cause me to tremble is the sound of believers compromising with sin, the sound of saved people laughing at what they should weep over, and the sound of a saved person going along with what he knows to be wrong- and that frightens me to death.

Simeon and Anna lived in a time when Israel was backslidden. They saw compromise on every side on an ongoing basis. They lived in a time when the overwhelming majority of Jews were no longer looking for the consolation of Israel, nor were they looking for the reconciliation of Jerusalem.

Most Jews of the 1st Century had completely forgotten about the Promises that God had made to Abraham and to David about Consolation and Redemption, and they were simply hoping and praying for the Roman Army to be destroyed so that their natural lives could improve from their horrible conditions. But the Miracle of Grace is that the very same affliction that caused these people to backslide caused Simeon and Anna to look ahead and hope.

And the difference was not in some inherent righteousness that Simeon and Anna possessed- no, the difference was that God was Graciously and Sovereignly at work in these two people's hearts while leaving the rest to do and be whatever their sinful hearts craved after.

It's kind of what is going on today in modern America. Most people who go to Church today are not discontent with this world. No, they seek to work hard to make this world and this life more appealing to their fallen flesh. And the people who are doing that are certainly not looking for Consolation and Redemption- they are not earnestly praying and looking for Jesus to come back and stop everything. No, they want things to keep going on- they just want them to get better for themselves.

In fact, the Theology of the Word of Faith Movement would prevent *anyone* from looking earnestly for Jesus to return because that would interrupt their own designs to conquer the world.

Both Simeon and Anna knew that Jesus was Israel's only hope. And this is significant because that means they did *not* believe that if they could only get the right Caesar into power then their problems would be over; they were not out campaigning for the right senators or for the correct tax laws. No, these two old saints were in the Temple- and they were praying and they were earnestly looking forward to the time when Israel would be consoled by the coming of the Messiah.

And that is what we need to do today. We will welcome Christ at His second coming *only* if we love His appearing and only by eagerly await the consummation of His Redemption. And we will earnestly desire to love His Appearing only if we are patently *dissatisfied* with this present evil world.

So I suggest to you that whatever God does for us and to us and around us to bring about utter dissatisfaction with this life is Mercy as long as that dissatisfaction leads us to earnestly look ahead to when Jesus will bring the fullness of Consolation and Redemption with Him when he returns.

And the main thing I want to emphasize this morning is that this is also true for the coming of Christ to individual hearts in what we call Conversion. And so let me state the Truth again and then apply it to the receiving of Christ in conversion:

God Sovereignly prepares a lost person to receive Christ by stirring up inside of him a longing for Consolation and Redemption that can come only from Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther

The story of the great Reformer- Martin Luther's conversion illustrates this point. Luther had almost been struck with lightning and out of the fear that came upon him- he made a vow to God to become a monk. But as a monk- Luther was utterly unable to find peace with God. He sought God in every way the Church of that day taught him— through good works, in the merits of the saints, in the process of confession and absolution, and by climbing the ladder of mysticism. If Luther was ordered to scrub the rock floors of the monastery- he scrubbed them until he could see his reflection.

Luther utterly abandoned himself to find Salvation through his own human efforts. He would fast until people feared for his life and then go into terrible, despair because five seconds after praying for four hours- he would have a covetous thought and believed that he then needed to go back and pray another four hours.

On top of all this, Staupitz, his superior, appointed him to the University to study and teach Bible.

Listen to the way Luther later described his breakthrough. How was Martin Luther prepared to see and receive Christ for who He really is? Hear the testimony from his own mouth. Luther said,

"I greatly longed to understand **Paul's Epistle to the Romans** and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, "**the justice of God,**" because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my own merit would assuage him. Therefore, I did not love
a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant. Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "**the just shall live by his faith.**" Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise!"

In the monastery Luther had come to the end of himself. He had despaired of Salvation. But by the Grace of God he did not give up his longing and his hope. He directed his attention to the one place he hoped to find help—the Bible.

He said, "*I greatly longed to understand.*" He said, "*I had a great yearning to know what it meant.*" And he said, "*Night and day I pondered.*" In other words, God prepared Luther to see the true meaning of Christ and accept it by stirring up a deep and powerful longing in his heart for consolation and redemption that could only come from Christ.

In other words- God afflicted Luther with such discontentment and dissatisfaction in his own religious duties that it forced Luther to look for the Consolation that can only come through Jesus Christ. And so, therefore, I say to you that his discouragement was a blessing of the

highest order, and his discouragement was a gift from God, and his discontentment with all of his frustrated efforts was the Mercy of God at work in his life to affect in him the hunger for the same kind of consolation that Simeon and Anna had.

And if that be true- then I suggest to you that we should pray often and fervently that God would be so merciful to us and to those we know that God would bless us with this very same kind of disaffection and this same kind of dissatisfaction and this same kind of disillusionment with carnal things and human effort that can never redeem the eternal soul.

And this is what God does again and again. This is what God had done inside Simeon and Anna, and God may be doing it for you as you sit here today- graciously and tenderly frustrating you with life that is not centered on Christ, and filling you with longings and desires that can't find their satisfaction in what this world offers.

Let me point you to the Source and Goal of those longings this morning and show you why it makes sense to set your heart on Jesus Christ.

First, it makes sense because Jesus and only Jesus *is* the Consolation of Israel. The hope that Simeon had for Consolation comes from **Isaiah 40:1&2**- let turn there are read what God gave to this Old Testament Prophet. **Isaiah 40:1&2:**

1 “Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God.

2 “Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD’S hand Double for all her sins.”

So the Consolation that Jesus brings in fulfillment of Simeon's hopes is the application of God's Tenderness to a war-weary people. It is the application of God's Pardon for a sin-sick and guilty people. When Jesus was born- the Voice of God became flesh and dwelt among us. And what the Voice said was, "**Comfort, O comfort my people!**"

The Consolation is that God's anger is past. The Consolation is that our heavenly Father has a tender affection for us in our weakness. The Consolation is that our sins are pardoned and **“cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19)**—this is the "**Consolation of Israel**" that

Simeon was looking for. And it is this same Consolation that you are looking for, too- if you have been gifted by God to have it.

Now it is real important for us to not be kept away from this Consolation this morning by saying, *"I am a Gentile and not a Jew, and, therefore, I am not a part of Israel- so there is no reason to think that this Consolation is for me."* Because that would be a terrible misunderstanding of what Luke is saying here. We must remember, dear friends, that Luke wrote this Story of Salvation for a Gentile Greek dignitary named Theophilus- a Roman official and a non-Jew. So God made sure that we desperate Gentiles would not rule ourselves out of this Consolation.

Now look at how Simeon blesses God in **Luke 2:29–32**:

29 “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word;

30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel.”

Notice that Simeon says here that God's Consolation shines the Light of Jesus Christ not only for the people Israel- but also for the Gentiles. And the point of saying that is for us to know that the blessing of God's Consolation is now available to *all* who will receive it- Jew or Gentile. And because of that- we can say that:

- ✓ Jesus Christ is the Consolation of the Father's open Arms to Jew and Gentile alike.
- ✓ Jesus Christ is the Consolation of the universal Amnesty of God held out to the world of rebellious creatures.
- ✓ Jesus Christ is the Consolation of God as we look back on all sin and hate and anger and guilt and shame and doubt and failure.
- ✓ Jesus is the fulfillment of **Isaiah 49:13**, which says:

Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people And will have compassion on His afflicted.

So that is why I say to you that if you are afflicted by the Lord this morning, if God has caused you to be discontent and uncomfortable in your sin, if God has troubled you and has imposed Himself on you and if God has interrupted and disrupted your life- I tell you that this is Mercy, and it is because God is causing you to look for Consolation in Jesus and not in any thing that this world has to offer.

And we need to know that God doesn't do that for everybody- but there are those unworthy sinners whom God has chosen from before the foundation of the world to be merciful towards whereby God troubles them and they are afflicted so that God may show them Mercy to save them.

So it makes sense to set your heart on Christ this morning because if there is any deep longing in your heart for a Consolation and Comfort that this world cannot satisfy- it is only because God is preparing you to recognize and receive His Gift of Jesus Christ- Who is the Consolation of Israel. So I beg you this morning not to seek after Consolation in anything else or in anybody else but in Jesus.

And secondly, it makes sense to set your heart on Christ today because there were two witnesses here not just one. Simeon has told us that Jesus is the Consolation- but there is another witness here, named Anna- who tells us that Jesus is also something called "The Redemption of Jerusalem". Look at **Luke 2:36-38**:

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with *her* husband seven years after her marriage,

37 and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.

38 At that very moment she came up and *began* giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Now depending on how you look at it- Anna could have been as young as 84 or as old as 104-110- and we don't know just how old she was- but we do know that Luke tells us in verse 36 that she was "**advanced in years**". And we also know that this woman didn't leave the temple but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

But as she came into the Sanctuary right at the moment when Simeon was speaking all of these words about Jesus- Luke tells us that Anna also gave thanks to the Lord, and she spoke about Jesus to all those who looked for Redemption in Jerusalem. So we know by this that although there weren't many- there were some devout Jews in Israel during this time who were saved and who loved the Lord and who followed after the Lord and who were earnestly looking- not only for Consolation- but also for Redemption.

Now it is almost as though Luke meant for us to see in the hope of Simeon and Anna the fulfillment of **Isaiah 52:9**, which says:

Break forth, shout joyfully together, You waste places of Jerusalem; For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.

Both Simeon and Anna understood that through the birth of this baby Boy- this ancient Prophecy was fulfilled. The Lord has "consoled his people"—that's what Simeon was looking for, and the Lord has "redeemed Jerusalem"—that's what Anna was looking for.

Now Consolation probably speaks to those longings for healing and restoration from all the past losses and miseries of life. And in Isaiah- the people had experienced judgment and exile with all its guilt and fear and loneliness and death. So Consolation is when God comes to heal and restore and revive all that has been thrown away or lost.

And Redemption probably speaks to our need to be delivered from powers that still hold us bondage. Redemption is a work of power to save from enemies that still threaten us.

And you can see this if you look at the one other place in this Story of Salvation where the word "Redemption" is used- namely, **Luke 1:68-71**, which says:

68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,

69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant—

70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—

71 Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;

Here- John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, prophesies with these words:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and has redeemed [literally: God made redemption for] His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from all who hate us.

So here Zechariah declares that Christ has come to redeem. Then he speaks of Redemption in terms of Power- he uses the term "horn of salvation" in verse 69, which means a "powerful salvation- like the horn of a great bull. And then in verse 71 Zechariah tells why such power will be needed: Christ will save us from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

So the second reason that it makes sense to set our hearts on Christ is that only He will fulfill your longings for victory over the forces of evil in your life.

You see, God owns and controls all things this morning. And there is nothing that He could give you that would suit your needs and your longings better than the Consolation of Israel and the Redemption of Jerusalem- or in other words- restoration for past losses and liberation from future enemies, forgiveness and freedom, pardon and power, healing the past and sealing the future.

So if there is a longing in your heart today for something that the world has not been able to satisfy- could it not be God's gracious gift to you- to prepare you to see Christ as Consolation and Redemption, and to receive Him for Who He really is?

And if that is true- then just how then do these four messages fit together? How is the human heart prepared to receive Christ for Who He really is? It is very simple.

First of all- God must afflict you so that you are no longer satisfied with what this world has to offer. For example- your heart must become disenchanted with the praises of men. Your heart must also become disenchanted with the sufficiency of money and other material possessions to satisfy the soul. Luke tells us in **Luke 16:14** that:

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him

Then alongside this disenchantment with the praises of men and the power of money- there must come into the heart a longing for genuine Consolation and a true Redemption beyond what the world can give.

And finally, there must be a Sovereign Revelation from God the Father, opening the eyes of your heart so that it cries out, like a man who stumbles onto an incredible treasure,

"Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God! You alone are the Consolation of my past and the Redemption of my future. By God's Grace I see you and through the Power of the Spirit- I receive you- not to satisfy my shallow temporary wants and lust- but I receive You for Who You really are!"

Let's come and pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.