**Birth and Epiphany**

***2****In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.****2****This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.****3****And all went to be registered, each to his own town.****4****And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,****5****to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.****6****And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.****7****And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn*

*…*

 *21 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. 22 And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” 25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, 28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,*

*29 “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;*

*30 for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,*

*32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” (Luke 2:1-7, 21-32, ESV)*

 “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

 Christ is born and revealed, blessed is the revelation of Christ, good tidings to you and to us. We praise God that He has granted us another Nativity to celebrate together, especially as the world is in turmoil, much like it was in the days when Jesus was born. God’s people’s world was in a chaotic situation because an edict for a census had come out and people were travelling to their places of birth. Joseph was in that same rushed predicament, travelling with his pregnant fiancée, headed towards Bethlehem. Because of their piety but difficult financial situation, when the time came for dedicating the child (Jesus) to God according to the Law of Moses, they offered the least expensive animals. In the meantime, an unimaginably deep prophetic act was about to take place – and today we’re going to talk about that event and its relevance for today. Simeon said, *“Now, Lord, you can release me in peace[[1]](#footnote-1), according to your word, because my eyes have seen your Salvation, which you have prepared for all the people, a Light to illuminate the Gentiles and a Glory for your people Israel.”* Thus, today is not only a day of Jesus’ Birth for us, but also one of God’s self-revelation[[2]](#footnote-2), remembering Jesus’ baptism a few decades afterwards. However, that public revelation of His identity had not been the first one to His parents and a few others…

 Jesus’ Birth and Self-Revelation are interconnected and affect us deeply. Everyone in church has read or heard much about Jesus’ birth. But about the meaning of the latter and Epiphany, not so much. Jesus’ birth has meaning because from the moment of the visitation of the angel Gabriel to Mary, to Joseph’s dream about Jesus’ identity, to travelling to Bethlehem for the census, to John the Baptist leaping while in Elizabeth’s belly at Mary’s greeting, to the events surrounding the birth – whether the praise of the angels or the visit of the Magi, and especially the prophecy that was uttered at His circumcision, Jesus’ birth had already been revealed in smaller circles as the birth of the Anointed One, the Savior, the Son of God, the God-man before His public baptism. Jesus’ birth and arrival on the world scene was so important that Simeon told God that he could now die, because his life-long wait had been worth it, since he had seen Jesus the Messiah. This Jesus was the visitation of Salvation, Light and Glory (in the flesh) to all people.

 Often, I see something quite amazing: Whenever someone is called home to the Lord (and they’re dying,) sometimes, when they have family members that are not present, they wait, and it is as if the Lord gives them strength to hang on until they see that person for which they wait. I have heard of so many that have left this world as soon as the one they waited for arrived, because for the one leaving, that person’s presence with them meant everything.

 As for us, we ought to ask ourselves: just how much is Jesus’ Birth also the Self-revelation of God to us? At what level is our respect for Jesus, who is not only our Teacher, Savior and Leader, but also our Lord and God. We have no other means to know God. Apart from Him, there is no other means of salvation. Apart from Him, we have no other King.

 Let us, on this dual occasion of Jesus’ Birth and Epiphany, renew our deep respect and reverence for our Lord, and let us love and value the Presence of God in our lives. May Christ’s Birth and Epiphany awaken in us love, respect and reverence for Christ, and from these will flow every act of service, by word or deed. Jesus’ Birth and Self-Revelation are interconnected and affect us deeply.

“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” Christ is born and revealed, blessed is the revelation of Christ, good tidings to you and to us. Amen.

1. In other words, “now I can die in peace”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The meaning of the Armenian word often just called Epiphany in English because the Revelation was from above, with God’s voice stating the truth about Jesus’ identity at His baptism. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)