

“Jerusalem is Where the King Would Die”

Luke 2:27-32

Tonight, we visit the last of our three cities. We have seen the little towns of Nazareth and Bethlehem. But now we visit what almost all Jews would consider the crown jewel of all cities: Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is a city with a tremendous amount of history. There have been people living at that place since soon after the Flood. Abraham, who lived about 4000 years ago, was visited by the king of that city, as we heard in our first reading. The letter to the Hebrews speaks of an event in the life of Abraham: “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine (there is some foreshadowing). He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram...” (Gen. 14:18-19a).

Tonight, as we look at the city of Jerusalem, in our Gospel reading, we hear Luke’s account of the first time that Jesus ever visited the city. This first time

that Jesus came to Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph, almost no one would realize that the Savior of the world, that God Himself, had come to the temple of the Lord.

However, two humble servants of God, Simeon and Anna who, through the power of the Holy Spirit, recognized the child for who He was, they prophesied concerning Him.

Other than these two servants of the Lord, all of the other people visiting the temple that day were oblivious to the great things that were happening. God had fulfilled His promise to send a Messiah. The final Lamb of sacrifice had been born, and like all lambs to be sacrificed in Israel, He was presented to the priest.

Most only saw the event as a father and mother coming to offer a sacrifice at the temple according to what the Old Testament law demanded for their first-born son. You can read about this in Numbers chapter 3.

This is something that all Jewish parents were required to do at the birth of their first-born son, immediately following the 40 day period of ceremonial isolation after the birth of the child, the child is to be presented and an offering is

made.

Therefore Jesus' first time in Jerusalem began as being no different from that of any other first-born son. However, Simeon and Anna told all who would listen that this child, though He is barely 6 weeks old, will be the King and Redeemer of Israel and the world.

During these Advent services, we have not only been focusing on the importance of these three cities, but more importantly, we have been focusing on the way that Christ's history with these three cities influenced His claim as the King of the Jews.

The possibility of Jesus Christ being King was discounted by most people because He grew up in the inconsequential little town of Nazareth. "How could anything good come from there?"

Bethlehem was important to Christ's kingship because it was prophesied that the Christ would be born in that town. The people of Israel had been eagerly waiting since the days of the prophets for the Son of David to come and redeem them. They were waiting for a son of David to come again and rule over Israel from Jerusalem. Jerusalem is where the King would live. That was man's

plan.

This King, who was of the house and line of David, would be no ordinary man. Micah the prophet told that His origins “are from of old, from ancient times.” This King has been around from eternity. This King is not only the son of David. This King is the Son of God Himself. He will establish a kingdom that will last forever, and He will be the shepherd of His people.

Tonight, we hear that the King of Israel was to be a king and a priest in the order of Melchizedek. His authority would not be based on His human ancestry, nor would it be given to Him by any man. The King of Israel’s authority would be based on the fact that He is the One, True, Eternal, Living God.

Like Melchizedek, this new King of Israel would establish His eternal kingdom in Jerusalem. But Jerusalem would not be the place where the King would live. Jerusalem would be the place where the King would die.

And Christ established His kingdom about 33 years after His first visit to Jerusalem, and His kingship was announced to the world as St. John records: “Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” Amen.