



Tel : 01792 415222

Email: manseltonurc@gmail.com

Weekly Letter 31 January 2021

Malachi 3.1-5: Psalm 24.7-10

Hebrews 2.14-18: and Luke 2.22-40

Presentation of Christ in the Temple

When we compare the stories about Jesus' ministry and his last days we notice that they have a very different 'feel' and atmosphere to the Infancy narrative. We also know that the eye witnesses to the events that Matthew and Luke write about in their stories are almost impossible to pinpoint, which is quite the opposite with the rest of the gospel narratives. So, as far as I can make out, the primary purpose of these infancy stories is that they are a profound reflection by the early Christian communities on the meaning and purpose of Jesus' life, usually using Old Testament prophecies as a prism with which to clarify who he is.

That said, these infancy narratives do confirm and clarify crucial facts about the early life of Jesus. Therefore we know that Jesus was born during the reign of King Herod the Great 37-4BC. I prefer Herod the Grizzly (it's worth noting that poor old Denis the Little (Dionysius Exiguus) miscalculated the date of Jesus' birth).

The stories confirm that Jesus' putative parents were Mary and Joseph. They chose to name their first born Son, Yeshua (Jesus), he grew up in Nazareth (the reason he is sometimes referred to as Jesus of Nazareth), a small hill town in Lower Galilee. Jesus will soon be living with his four named brothers, and at least two unnamed sisters.

Jesus grew up in within an uncomplicated form of Jewish piety, so he would have followed the basics of the Mosaic Law: circumcision (Luke 2.21), observance of the Sabbath, observance of the Kosher food laws (both of which he will question later on), and pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple (Luke 2.41-51), and it wouldn't, surprise me if he was already chattering away in Aramaic.

All this knowledge is great, because it will help the reader of Jesus' life to make more sense of the whole gospel. We will learn even more about his life because he left so many footprints in the sand of time, and because he brushed up against what were considered the great men and religious institutions of his day. Therefore, we will be able to be fairly precise about a number of key dates in his life, what he said, where he went, and who he spent time with.

But, all that comes after today's gospel! Should be Good News!

Stephen

Church News

Sunday Worship

Our worship on Sunday is led by Rev Dr Jason Askew and the reading is 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13.

As well as this service there is another opportunity to worship this Sunday. A Synod series of recorded video services has been planned whenever there are five Sundays in the month for use across the Synod. A different congregation or pastorate will be preparing worship on video and this Sunday is the first one. It will be available on YouTube and can be accessed at any time from Sunday by using the link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S41BLegNw7g>

There are more details on the Synod website:

<https://www.urcwailes.org.uk/news/synod-sundays/>

Praying for Swansea Region Churches

We are restarting the cycle of Prayer for the URC churches in the Swansea Region. This is the list for the next 5 weeks

- 31.01.21 Christ Well, Manselton
- 07.02.21 Hall St, Llanelli
- 14.02.21 Tabernacle, Mumbles
- 21.02.21 Temple, Gowerton
- 28.02.21 Uniting Church Sketty

