

Recap of 12/18/16 (Malachi 3:8-12):

1. Luke's account of Jesus' birth includes two witnesses to the significance of who Jesus is, in Luke 2:21-40, Simeon and Anna. Three significant events are recorded by Luke: Jesus' circumcision and naming on the 8th day (probably in Bethlehem), the purification of Mary, and the presentation of Jesus. The setting for the latter two events is the Temple, 40 days after Jesus' birth when Joseph and Mary bring the sacrifice (burnt offering and sin offering) for Mary's purification and to present Jesus, the first born to the Lord.
2. Mary was not sinless as Roman Catholicism claims. She herself acknowledges her need of a savior in Luke 1:47.
3. God had promised Simeon that he would not die before he saw the Messiah. He waited many years for the fulfillment of that promise. "Waiting for God to fulfill His promises or answer our prayers can be a real test of our endurance and faith. We are tempted to stop praying or to settle for something less than God's best plan for us." (Life Lessons from Bible People). His life complete, Simeon was ready to go to the Lord (Lk. 2:29), Foster says of him: "This was not a morbid death wish, but a confident discernment of the relationship between time and eternity. Men without faith crave to live on, for this world is their only home. The man of faith, however, has great peace in the thought of returning to his home in God as soon as his task here is completed. Simeon reminds us that our own time on earth is limited and that we too must soon let go, and release our own vision's fulfillment to others."
4. Anna, God's second witness, was widowed at a very young age and spent her life in worship and service of God. Anna didn't spend her life regretting what might have been or questioning God, instead "she was forward-looking and made every day—and every night also—a fresh occasion for proving how God gives strength just as it is needed." (Foster) "Anna discovered that God can make every passage of life meaningful and useful. The long years of widowhood were also effective years of worship and service." (Life Lessons)
5. The birth of Jesus is significant in three ways:
 - He came to bring salvation to the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike ("...all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel")
 - Salvation is found in the person of Jesus, not in a religious system, not in a philosophy, not in righteous works ("My eyes have seen your salvation")
 - Salvation is necessary because we are all sinners and in need of redemption (Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God")