**How Long Has He Been Jesus?**

**Luke 2:21**

*Circumcision & Name of Jesus*

*12.31.2020*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Did you read the title for this sermon, “How Long Has He Been Jesus?” Some of you may be thinking that is a silly question. Others are thinking, “OK, what is pastor up to by asking that question?” Still others are thinking, “Yeah, how long has He been Jesus?”

The reason for the question is because you know Jesus as the second person of the Trinity in human flesh. We know that God, and therefore the only begotten of the Father, the Divine Word, has no beginning. On Christmas Day we discussed that “The Word” was present when all things were created, in fact all things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. But at the time of creation, the Word was not yet made flesh, and was not yet named Jesus.

When Moses goes up to see the burning bush, from the midst of it God speaks telling Moses to remove his shoes for He is on holy ground. It is the Word of God which speaks, the Word which would later become flesh. Moses inquires of Him His name, stating that he cannot tell the Israelites that the God of their fathers had sent him. God’s response to Moses was, "I AM WHO I AM." He adds, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' " (Gen. 3;14)

God speaks, the Word of God reveals His name – I AM. It is this name by which God is called for generations. Although the believers in the Old Testament understood God to be Trinitarian as revealed in our lesson from Numbers, they did not know the second person of the Trinity as Jesus. They knew this person of the Trinity as the Word of God, or even ***THE*** Angel of the Lord. In our Old Testament lesson for Christmas Eve from Isaiah, we were told that the Second Person of the Trinity will have many names. *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*. (Is.9:6)

If you notice, even in that list, He is not given the name Jesus. Throughout the Old Testament, we do not hear the name Jesus. In fact, the first place we hear of Him given the name Jesus is as the angel Gabriel speaks to Mary, announcing to her that she’s going to be a mother. *And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”* (Lk. 1:30-33)

Mary is betrothed but has not yet known her husband Joseph. Shortly after this Joseph discovers that Mary is pregnant. Instead of doing what he could according to the Law after finding her pregnant and knowing it is impossible for him to be the father, he instead chooses to divorce her quietly. (He was, by Law, allowed to have her put to death for adultery – how else could she have gotten pregnant) Before he acts though, an angel appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Mt. 1:20-21)

There it is, my friends. In these two texts you have the announcements that the Son of God is to be given a special name, a specific name. From the very foundation of the world, God had appointed that the Word would become flesh in order to accomplish a very special task – to save His people from their sins. He would be Jesus.

In the first garden, after Adam and Eve had succumbed to the temptations of Satan and eaten the fruit, God gave them the promise of a Savior. God knew that His own Son would take on human flesh, the offspring of the woman, and become man. This offspring would crush Satan’s head, He would destroy the power of sin.

So, how long has He been Jesus? Without being too simplistic, it all depends on your perspective. From our perspective as mortal men who think of time linearly, He has been Jesus since the eighth day after his birth. Our Gospel lesson says it this way. *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.*

But, if we take the time to consider things according to God’s plan, then we need to ponder this a moment longer.

When did God first have in mind that His Son would take on human flesh and pay the redemption price for the sinfulness of all mankind? You know, that’s tough to say for we do not know the thoughts of God before the account of the creation of the world. We know that the first promise of God’s Savior is in Genesis chapter three. It is also true, as Scripture reveals, that our names were written in the Lamb’s book of life since before the foundation of the world. Those names were written there because God foreknew that we would have faith in Jesus.

Dear Christian friends, His name is Jesus because He would save us. He would save us by the shedding of His holy, precious, innocent blood. That shedding of blood begins tonight in our text. Christ, fulfills the Law in His circumcision. In this event, the holy and sinless infant Jesus sheds blood in the fulfilling of the Law of this covenant. His blood is shed to fulfill the Law for you and for me, even as an infant.

How long has He been Jesus? Very simply answered, as Jesus means that He will save His people from their sins, He has been Jesus since before He was born.

How can this be? Even before He shed His blood to save you and me, there were those who trusted in the One who was to come. The Passover, Circumcision, and all the Old Testament ceremonies pointed sinners forward to the One who would fulfill the Law for them and shed His blood to save them – they pointed to Jesus!

All who have been saved, are saved only in Jesus, God’s Christ – even those who did not know Mary would give Him the name Jesus. But, He***is* given** the name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins. God’s Christ, Jesus, saves people by the shedding of His innocent blood unto death as the payment for your sins.

Jesus, the very Word of God incarnate, is the very Word of forgiveness spoken into your ears. Jesus saves you from sin and death.

Jesus, the very Word of God incarnate gives you to eat of His holy body and drink of His very precious blood for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. Jesus saves you from sin and death.

Tonight, we come to the end of this year that we will probably never forget – and probably remember as one of the longest, most incredible years of our life. If you have not, I have had incredible opportunities this year to focus on Jesus. It was a wonderful year to consider this One who called us by name in the waters of baptism and united us to Himself. This has been a year in which I prayed that I, as one of Christ’s called minsters of the Gospel, have pointed you nowhere but to Jesus.

So… Tonight it is our privilege to ponder the question of how long Jesus has been Jesus. Since I am the one who has raised the question, you may be thinking that it might be nice to have the answer to that question.

Let me say this very clearly, what is even more important is this, He is Jesus for you – for me – for tonight even in the midst of COVID – and for eternity, He is Jesus your Salvation and Life eternal. Amen.