

The Ultimate Baby Dedication
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
December 31, 2023

Purpose: Every detail in Jesus' life was in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Simeon saw Jesus and understood who Jesus was – the anticipated Messiah. Anna understood who Jesus was and praised God. As Mary and Joseph came to fulfill the law of circumcision and purification in the Temple, they dedicated Jesus back to God to fulfill His mission for mankind.

It was at the end of the year, and a kindergarten teacher was receiving Christmas gifts from her students. The florist's son handed her a gift.

She shook it, held it overhead, and said, "I bet I know what it is. Some flowers."

"That's right" the boy said, "but how did you know?" "Oh, just a wild guess," she said.

The next pupil was the sweet shop owner's daughter. The teacher held her gift overhead, shook it, and said, "I bet I can guess what it is. A box of sweets."

"That's right, but how did you know?" asked the girl.

"Oh, just a wild guess," said the teacher.



The next gift was from the son of the liquor store owner.
The teacher held the package overhead, but it was leaking.

She touched a drop of the leakage with her finger and
touched it to her tongue. "Is it wine?" she asked.

"No," the boy replied, with some excitement.

The teacher repeated the process, taking a larger drop of the
leakage to her tongue. "Is it champagne?" she asked.

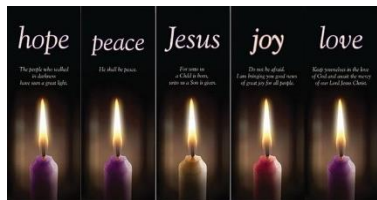
"No," the boy replied, with more excitement.

The teacher took one more taste before
declaring "I give up, what is it?"

With great glee, the boy replied, "It's a
puppy"



I hope you didn't get a puppy wrapped up in a box for
Christmas this year! They are so cute ... but they sure do
leak a lot!



Today we are looking at a
passage of scripture that is often
overlooked and is seldom
preached on. We have just
concluded the four weeks leading

up to the birth of Jesus. These four weeks of preparation
helped us focus on the words of Hope, Love, Joy, and
Peace.

Can you imagine how both Mary and Joseph felt the week
following the birth of Jesus? They had seen shepherds come
to see the Christ Child based upon an announcement by
Angels. I am sure they rehearsed in their minds how
quickly things were moving in their lives. They were
forced to make a special trip back to Bethlehem, they didn't
find room in the inn, Mary was
forced to give birth under the stars,
and a babe was placed in a manger.



While we may only think of
Christmas once a year, Mary and
Joseph lived their entire lives in the unfolding mystery of
the Incarnation. The events we read in Luke 2:21-40 aid
both Mary and Joseph to realize exactly how important the
birth of Jesus really was.

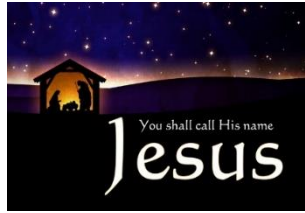
Circumcision of Jesus¹

*²¹ And when eight days were completed for the circumcision
of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by
the angel before He was conceived in the womb.*

Mary and Joseph have brought
Jesus to the Temple to be
circumcised as commanded in
Genesis 17 for all males who
would be a part of Abrahams
household. Without it, Jesus would not have identified with
his people even though he was of pure Hebrew blood.
What makes this time of dedication even more significant is
the name given to the Christ Child. He was given the name
"Jesus" which means "Jehovah is salvation." Many



people may not understand the significance of this name given by the Angel that visited Jospheh.



The origin of the name of Jesus is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word Joshua. He was the man that led the people into the Promised Land following Moses' death. Joshua's original name was Hoshea which means "salvation." Because of his faith and leadership, Moses gave him a new name, Joshua. His new name now means, "Jehovah is salvation" which signifies "deliverance." Just as Joshua delivered the people of Israel out of the wilderness, Jesus will also deliver His people out of darkness. When we see this newborn baby is given the name "Jesus," it signifies that He will deliver His people from the darkness of sin and bondage. We see this culminating in the cross where Jesus brings salvation to all that call upon His name.

If you think back to the angelic announcement to Mary, you see the angel Gabriel say, *"You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus."* (Luke 1:31). The announcement given to Joseph separately in his dream said, *"She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:21) Both Mary and Joseph were given separate instructions for the same purpose. Jesus is to be the one to save His people from their sins. I am sure over the years they continued to discuss their encounter with the angel and it only confirmed in their heart how special this Child was.



This Christmas name was followed by the knife of circumcision, the sharp cry of the Son of God, and the blood of His circumcision as Jesus fully identified with God's covenant people.

Along with the circumcision of Jesus, the Law prescribed the process of purification for Mary.

Jesus Presented in the Temple – Mary's Purification



The poverty of Jesus' parents was obvious, considering the humble offering they made for Mary's purification in obedience to the Law.

²² Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who 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."



In Leviticus 12:6-8, the law stipulated that the purification offering must be a yearling lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon or dove for a sin offering.

However, "If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and another for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean." Mary and Joseph's humble offering was a public declaration of their poverty.

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

²⁵ *And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was*

Simeon, and this man was just 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 *So he came by 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:*



When Mary and Joseph were in the Temple, they met two other Israelites whose lives were models of godliness and faith. Simeon was righteous and devout. He was assured by the Holy

Spirit that he would not see death before meeting the Lord's Christ – the Messiah. There was also the prophetess Anna from the tribe of Asher. She was married for seven years and lived as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple and worshipped there night and day, fasting and praying.



What we notice about these two people was they were *aged*. They embodied Israelite piety. They may have been stooped over, wrinkled on the outside, but on the inside their souls were young and growing. Secondly, we see they were *devoted* to God. Simeon is described as “*righteous*”

and “*devout*.” Anna never left the temple and was always present praying and fasting. Both were identified as Prophets. They were filled with expectancy waiting on God – waiting on the consolation of Israel – the Messiah. Isaiah speaks of one that would come and “*Comfort, comfort my people.*” (Isaiah 40:1) These two believed in a coming Messiah, while others may have given up. They never gave up trusting in God to do as He promised. Lives like these two people are extremely rare.



Imagine receiving a word from the Lord that you would not die until you see the Consolation of Israel? How long had he waited? Days? Months? Years? We do not know

how long. But he came daily to the temple looking, reflecting – “Is this child the one?”

Then one day – Mary, Joseph, and Jesus appeared! Simeon took Jesus into his arms and began to praise God!

In a sermon by R. Kent Hughes titled, “*Nunc Dimittis*,” he outlines the words of prophecy and the pronouncement of blessings of Simeon and Anna.



The phrase “*Nunc Dimittis*” comes from the Latin translation Luke's account of Simeon's blessing which means “*now you may dismiss.*”

Simeon Sees God's Salvation

²⁹ *"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word;*

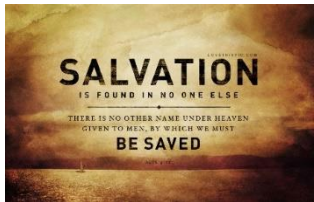
³⁰ *For my eyes have seen Your salvation*

³¹ *Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples*

³² *A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."*



We have seen many others praise God with a song of God's provision. Simeon was promised he would see the promised one of Israel. He now felt he could depart this world in peace. What a profound peace he must have felt that day. He held in his hands, the "Prince of Peace" as foretold in Isaiah 9:6. He held the one in which the angels proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests."



Simeon had seen with his own eyes, the salvation of the Lord. True peace only comes in our lives when we see Jesus as our complete salvation. The salvation offered by Jesus is offered

to the gentiles as well as the people of Israel. The light of salvation has come into the world for all to see.

Simeon must have grasped hold of Jesus tightly. His heart was overflowing with joy in receiving Jesus – the redemption of all that would receive Him. To receive salvation, you too must take Jesus into your arms and receive Him as Lord of your life.

Verse 33 concludes Mary and Joseph's encounter with Simeon by saying:

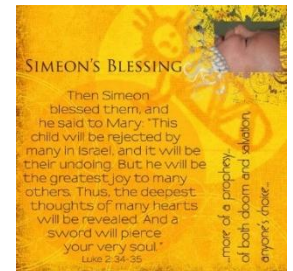
³³ *And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.*

Last week Melony interpreted the song, "Mary did you know?" in sign language. I am sure Mary knew, but was caught by surprise how important this little Child was. She and Joseph marveled at all they had seen.



Simeon's Revelation

³⁴ *Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against" ³⁵ (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."*



What a significant prophecy concerning Jesus. At this point, Simeon is addressing Mary directly. These words indicate hints that maybe Joseph may not be there the day Jesus dies. Tradition says that Joseph died prior to Jesus's public ministry.

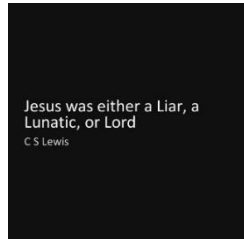
Jesus would cause many to look inward and stand with Jesus or against Jesus. Jesus always brings unity or division. The contrast is startling and runs right through the heart and soul of people. Some will call Jesus their Savior,

Master and Lord. While others reject Him to their own damnation. The Pharisees, Levites, and Sadducees all disagreed as to who Jesus was. While some received Him,



others sought His death. I am sure while Mary was standing at the foot of the cross of Jesus, she remembered how Simeon told her that her heart would be pierced through her own soul.

Simeon's prophecy applies to us today. We either call Jesus our Lord, or decry Him as a lunatic. When people truly encounter Jesus Christ, their hearts reveal a great deal about how they relate to Jesus Christ. In our natural state, we reject Jesus. When we bow to Him in humility, we receive grace and new life.



Anna Bears Witness to the Redeemer



The prophetess Anna is also present with Simeon. The scripture says:

³⁶ Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

³⁷ and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day. ³⁸ And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

There is some debate among scholars as to the age of Anna. Either she is 84 years old or she is a widow of 84 years. If that is the case, she could have been as old as 105 years old. Anna joined in the praise and adoration of the Christ Child and told people of how the redemption of Israel had come. She was a witness to who Jesus was and why He came.

The Family Returns to Nazareth



³⁹ So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

According to Luke's account, once they had performed all the necessary requirements of the Law, they returned to their own city, Nazareth.

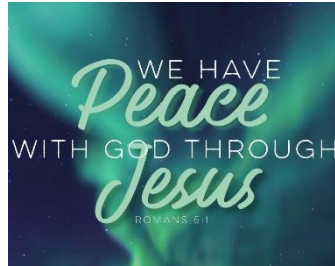
In a careful study of the Gospels, we see the story of Jesus' birth recorded in Matthew and Luke. None of the birth narrative stories are found in Mark or John.

Matthew records the visit of the Wise Men. Luke does not. Matthew records the flight to Egypt and return to Nazareth. Luke does not.

Luke records so much of the story of Jesus' birth. His account records the promise of John the Baptist, the Annunciation, Mary's visit to Elizabeth, the birth of John the Baptist, Jesus' circumcision and presentation at the temple, and Jesus' life at age twelve. Matthew doesn't record any of these.

I say all this to let you know, God's word has included everything we need in order to believe He is the Christ, the Son of God. He has come so that we might receive salvation and adoption into the Family of God.

Salvation is offered to all who have a spiritual need and hunger for Jesus Christ. Jesus is the whole of salvation – and receiving Him brings peace.



May the God of Peace reign in your heart and life today.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹Outline from R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word Series – Luke Vol. 1, The Nunc Dimittis*, p. 91-98