

Presenting Jesus, the Son of God (Luke 2:21-38)

1. Jesus was born under the Law (v. 21-24)

A. Circumcision (v.21):

- According to the Abrahamic covenant, Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day (Gen. 17:9-14; Lev. 12:3).
- Circumcision was a sign that this son was symbolically cut off from the world of paganism and idolatry. It was a covenant of separation from the world unto God.

B. Consecration/ Presentation/Dedication (v.22-23):

- The firstborn was to be presented before the Lord (Ex. 13:2, 12-16; 34:19-20; Num. 18:15-21). Jesus, as Mary and Joseph's firstborn, was presented to the Lord.

C. Purification (v.22, 24):

- It should read "after their purification according to the Law of Moses" (Lev. 12:2-4).
- Following the birth of a son, the mother was impure for one week, after which she bathed as a means of purification.
- Following this, she remained at a secondary impurity level for 33 days, as she was not allowed to touch anything unholy.
- Both Mary and Joseph remained impure, as "their purification" is plural. Joseph supposedly helped Mary as her "attending physician" and aided in the delivery process as best he could. As a result, he was ritually unclean.
- This purification ceremony required the presentation of a one-year-old lamb to be consumed as a burnt offering. We are informed that Mary and Joseph are poor, as they could not afford the lamb but instead offered pigeons or turtledoves (Lev. 12:8; Lk. 2:24).
- The Magi, who presented gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the child, had not visited yet (Matt. 2:1-12). Otherwise, as an upright family, they would have had enough money to purchase for themselves a lamb and present it to the Lord.

Naming (v.21): Mary and Joseph were both visited separately by an angel of the Lord (Matt. 1:21; Lk. 1:31) and informed of the pregnancy and the child's name: Jesus. In faith and obedience, He was named Jesus when He was circumcised. Jesus, in Greek, means "the Lord saves." The Hebrew equivalent is "Joshua." Joshua's birth name, however, was Hosea. Moses called Hosea "Joshua" (Num. 13:16). Hosea means "salvation." The name Joshua means more than just "salvation." It means deliverance.

God incarnate willingly submits Himself to the Law that He established for sinners so that He may be just and the justifier! (Rom. 3:26).

The circumcision, consecration, and purification in the temple are counterparts to the circumcision and the naming of John (1:57-80). Luke intentionally mentions that this occurs at the temple, the meeting place with God.

2. Jesus will always have a remnant (v.25-28; 36-38)

Luke informs us of two individuals who embody the "true Israel": righteousness and faith.

A. Simeon (v.25-28):

- He is a righteous and devout man who was waiting for Israel's "consolation" (Messiah).

- This "consolation" is the restoration of the nation and the defeat of her enemies, which is a feature of the Messiah in Isaiah (Isa. 40:1; 49:13; 51:3; 61:2; 66:13). This "comfort" or "consolation" will be accomplished by the servant of the LORD (Isa. 52-53).
- Simeon received direct revelation from the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he "beheld" the Promised Messiah with his own eyes. We do not know how long he was informed of this, nor how he knew that Jesus was this Messiah, but he supposedly just "picked up" this 40-day-old infant and praised the Lord!
- This scene likely happened in the court of women since Mary was present.

B. Anna:

- She is like Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs. 22:14), Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3), and the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9) as a prophetess. Even more so, she parallels Judith, which according to Jewish tradition (Jud. 16:23), was also a widow who was constantly in the temple (Jud. 8:1-11:17).
- We do not know how old she was (perhaps 105), nor why she is fasting and praying. Still, there is a thematic parallel between not only Zechariah and Simeon but also Simeon and Anna: both are pious (2:25, 36), anticipate redemption (2:25, 38), and respond by praising God (2:28, 38). Anna is a female counterpart to Simeon.

Simeon and Anna are portrayed as symbolic of what an expectant and faithful Israel should be. Two prophetic figures (Acts 2:17-18) who are aged, pious, related to the temple, and among those who wait for this eschatological salvation.

3. Jesus will be a light to all people (v.29-32)

- Simeon likened himself to a slave whom his master has instructed to keep watch through the long night on a high place (as a tower) waiting for the sun to rise.
- He faithfully waited and had persevered through the long night until the rising sun. Finally, the morning star has come (Mal. 4:2; Lk. 1:79; 2:32).
- God's plan of salvation is not only for the Jewish nation (1:16, 33, 54-55) but for Gentiles (v.30-31). This "light" (Isa. 60:1-3; Acts 26:22-23) is Jesus.
- Jesus is going to deliver two people groups: Jews and Gentiles. Simeon calls Jesus "your salvation" as he praises the Lord.
- Luke demonstrates through Mary (who is a poor teenage girl) the shepherds (who were placed alongside tax collectors) and now to Simeon and Anna (who are of no reputation) that God is pleased to reveal himself to the least likely.

4. Jesus will be a stumbling block to some and a Savior to others (v.34-35)

- Simeon informs Mary (not Joseph) that this child will cause some to fall and rise (Isa. 8:14-15; 28:1-16). This is the first explicit statement in the NT that God's purposes and provisions will not be universally accepted.
- The Son of God incarnate will bring peace between God and man. Through that peace, however, there will be division.
- The paradox of the coming of the Son of God is what His peace, pardon, and forgiveness brings. It will cause division.
- Mary is likewise told that a "sword" will pierce through her soul (v.35). Up to this point, Mary has received the only good news of her pregnancy and the legacy of Jesus. She is now informed that there will be sorrow.
- While she is not given the specific details, Jesus, at the age of 30, will begin his public ministry. He will be rejected as a man of sorrows (Isa. 53:3). Her soul will be pierced as she witnesses the humiliation of her son, including His crucifixion (John 19:16-27).
- Like all of Jesus' disciples and apostles, she will also be persecuted.