

Message #11

Luke 2:21-40

Years ago, there was an article written that polled 158 medical doctors who had become missionaries. The article was written to try to determine what influenced them into becoming a missionary. Each doctor was asked to rank the influencing factors that led them to the mission field. Here were the results:

- 7) College Teacher;
- 6) Pastor;
- 5) Books on Missions;
- 4) God's call they sensed on their lives to help others;
- 3) Personal contacts they had with other medical missionaries;
- 2) A missionary speaker who challenged them;
- 1) Parents.

The top influencing factor was the parents. I wonder today how many parents would challenge their son or daughter who spent 8-10 years in college and thousands of dollars to consider putting God first and going to the mission field. Probably it would not be too many.

When Jesus Christ was born, it was necessary that He fulfill all the regulations of the O.T. law (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 10:4). He would nail that law to the cross. But obviously when you are a baby, the only way that this can be accomplished is by having parents who will see to it that the law is fulfilled.

Think of the parental pressure on Joseph and Mary in raising Jesus Christ. They were responsible to see to it that their baby fulfills every aspect of the O.T. Law. These two had been entrusted with raising the Son of God.

Obviously God knew when He selected them that they would follow through with this. He chose them because He knew He could trust them in raising His only begotten Son. Truth is we owe a great debt of thanks to Joseph and Mary, because they cared enough about the things of God and the law of God to see that their baby fulfilled every bit of it.

In a time when many parents don't even consistently go to church with their children and in a time when many don't encourage their children to serve God, and in a time when many parents aren't even faithful themselves, thank God for Joseph and Mary. Dr. Luke researched this and what he concluded was this:

JOSEPH AND MARY OBEYED THE LAW OF GOD WITH THE BABY JESUS, AND THEY EXPERIENCED AMAZING THINGS BECAUSE OF IT.

We live in a world in which some parents abuse their children. We need faithful, godly parents who obey God's Word. No parent is perfect and no child is perfect. Joseph and Mary were not perfect. In fact, their baby is the only perfect child ever born. But with their imperfections, they did their best to obey God with the baby Jesus and they experienced amazing blessings.

There will never be another Joseph and Mary and baby Jesus, but if we want our children to be like Jesus, we need to raise them as faithful parents. That is what Joseph and Mary did. Luke was very careful to research this and he brings three historical realities:

HISTORICAL REALITY #1 – Joseph and Mary obeyed the law of God. **2:21-24**

This is a very important point, clearly seen in this text, the law needed to be completely fulfilled if Jesus Christ were to be able to nail it to His cross and, as an infant, it was up to Joseph and Mary to completely fulfill it. Joseph and Mary were very pious, law-abiding Jews. This text makes it very clear that was their focus (**2:22, 23, 27, 39**). There are five specific law facts brought out here:

Law Fact #1 - They circumcised Jesus on the 8th day. **2:21a**

Circumcision was a sign that the person was part of the Jewish covenant made with Abraham. Circumcision on the 8th day was in complete conformity to the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:9-14) and the Levitical law (Lev. 12:3) which required baby boys be circumcised on the 8th day. No baby had any say in this and to meet this requirement, a baby would need faithful parents.

Law Fact #2 - They named Jesus with the name the angel demanded. **2:21b**

The angel Gabriel specifically told Mary (Luke 1:31) and an angel had specifically revealed to Joseph (Matt. 1:21) that they were to name this baby Jesus. That name emphasizes that He is the Savior.

Law Fact #3 - They waited for the proper legal duration of purification. **2:22a**

According to Levitical law, a woman who had given birth to a male child could not appear in the Temple for a purification ritual for 40 days. She was unclean for seven days (Lev. 12:2) and then she was not to enter the Temple or touch anything consecrated to God for 33 days (Lev. 12:4). What is fascinating about this is that Mary is the mother of Jesus and she is obviously caring for Him and He is God. But what we do see is that Joseph and Mary are completely obeying the law of God in this and they did not take Jesus to the Temple until this legal time frame had been met.

Law Fact #4 - They dedicated the child to the Lord. **2:22b-23**

In perfect conformity to Exodus 13, which God required that every firstborn child be set apart unto Him and formally presented to Him, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. They are following the Word of God to the letter.

Law Fact #5 - They offered their sacrifice to the Lord. **2:24**

This sacrifice is in conformity with the Mosaic Law (Lev. 12:6-8). This sacrifice shows two things:

- 1) It shows that Mary fully admits she is a sinner and not sinless.
- 2) It shows that Joseph and Mary were very poor.

Initially, a lamb was required for this sacrifice but if one could not be afforded, the law permitted a poor person to offer a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons (Lev. 12:6-8).

Joseph and Mary did not have much money, but they were the richest two people on earth. They had in their possession and custody the Son of God and they were fulfilling every bit of the law of God so He could nail that law to the cross and save sinners from their sins.

HISTORICAL REALITY #2 – Joseph and Mary were amazed by what happened to their baby.
2:25-38

When Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple, a couple of amazing things happened. These things never happened to John, who was born six months before Jesus, nor did they happen to any other baby ever born.

When they got to the temple, two different individuals, who were both led by the Spirit of God, came up to Mary and Joseph and did some things that amazed them. When we are faithful to God and His Word, God will do some powerful things with us that will amaze us. We will receive some unexpected blessings.

Individual #1 - God used a godly man to encourage Joseph and Mary. **2:25-35**

There are eight characteristics brought out about him:

(Characteristic #1) - He was a man. **2:25a**

Twice in this verse it is brought out that he is a man. It seems the point of this emphasis is not only concerning gender, but to bring out the fact that he was a man and not a priest. I understand this to mean he was just a man and not a clergy professional.

(Characteristic #2) - He was in Jerusalem. **2:25b**

Not certain by the Greek if he lived in Jerusalem or was just visiting. But he was there.

(Characteristic #3) - He had the name Simeon. **2:25c**

(Characteristic #4) - He was righteous. **2:25d**

He was a godly Jewish man who was in Jerusalem and he certainly had a grasp of the Word and will of God. He did his best to conform his life to the Word of God.

(Characteristic #5) - He was devout. **2:25c**

This is a very rare Greek word that means that this Simeon was a man who feared God and was a very reverent man. He had a deep reverence for God and His Word.

(Characteristic #6) - He was prophetic. **2:25d**

Simeon was one who was “looking for the consolation of Israel.” What that means is he was focused on the prophetic future for Israel. He knew that God had promised a great future for Israel and he expected it and looked for it.

(Characteristic #7) - He was old. **2:26b, 29**

There is a written document called Pseudo-Matthew that claims Simeon was 112 years old. The text does not say, but it does imply that he was an old man. What we do know is that he was still focused on the Word of God and the will of God. He was still going to services.

(Characteristic #8) - He was directed by the Holy Spirit. **2:25e-27**

The Spirit of God controlled everything Simeon did and said.

Fact #1 - The Spirit was upon Simeon. **2:25e**

The Holy Spirit came upon Simeon and empowered him for this very special moment. This is a very special work of the Holy Spirit.

Fact #2 - The Spirit revealed truth to Simeon. **2:26**

The word “revealed” (παρηματιζω) refers to instruction and consultation. The Spirit of God had specifically revealed by consultation with Simeon that he would not die before seeing the Messiah.

Fact #3 - The Spirit led Simeon into the Temple. **2:27**

There were many people going to the Temple, but Simeon was entering the Temple led by the Spirit of God.

Fact #4 - The Spirit led Simeon to take Jesus into his arms and praise God. **2:28-33**

As soon as Simeon saw Jesus, he took Him in his arms and he blessed God:

He blessed God because he could die in peace because his eyes had seen God’s salvation.

The baby he held in his arms was God’s salvation to the Gentiles and the nation Israel.

God has prepared one way of salvation and one Savior. This Savior was born into this world one time and Simeon held this Savior in his arms and worshipped God.

No one is ready to die in peace until they have seen Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can give salvation and He is the only one who can let you die in peace.

Fact #5 - The Spirit led Simeon to bless Joseph and Mary. **2:33-35**

In the O.T., it was not uncommon to pronounce a blessing on someone. This type of blessing contained prophetic ramifications, especially when it was led by God (i.e. Gen. 49:1-28).

Prophetic Message #1 - Jesus is appointed by God for the rise and fall of many in Israel. **2:34b**

Those who believe in Him will rise and those who do not will fall.

Prophetic Message #2 - Jesus is appointed to be a sign that will be opposed. **2:34c**

Jesus Christ will be opposed by the whole world. If you believe in Jesus Christ and if you stand for the Word of God, you can expect opposition.

Prophetic Message #3 - Jesus will pierce souls and reveal thoughts of the heart. **2:35**

Jesus Christ and the truth of God will cut open souls, even that of Joseph and Mary.

No other baby ever born has had these kinds of things said about him.

Individual #2 - God used a godly woman to encourage Joseph and Mary. **2:36-38**

Now just as Simeon was completing this statement, a godly woman was raised up by God to encourage Joseph and Mary:

(Fact #1) - She was a prophetess. **2:36a**

This was one woman who did receive direct revelatory messages from God.

(Fact #2) - She was named Anna. **2:36b**

The O.T. name is Hannah, and the name means grace.

(Fact #3) - She was the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. **2:36c**

Asher was one of the ten northern tribes of Israel, but this woman was very faithful to God serving in the south.

(Fact #4) - She was old. **2:36d**

She was at least 84 years old and may have been as old as 105.

(Fact #5) - She was a widow. **2:36e-37a**

She was married for seven years and she had been a widow either for 84 years or until she was 84 years old. The earliest a Jewish girl married was 14. If she were married at 14 and widowed at 21 and then remained a widow for 84 years, she was 105 years old.

(Fact #6) - She never left the Temple. **2:37b**

This woman was not only at the Temple for all the services, she never left the temple. She was totally focused on serving God.

(Fact #7) - She ministered night and day with fasting and prayers. **2:37c**

Notice she is not teaching, but fasting and praying. Women who continually pray offer a great ministry for the work of God. Godly women are women of prayer.

According to **verse 38**, at the very moment she came up she started thanking God and continued to speak of this baby to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The word “redemption” is the word that refers to paying the price for something and setting it free. This baby would be the One who would pay the full price for all sinners. Not only would He be the Savior of Jerusalem, but of Israel and the whole world.

This baby would be the One who would make that happen.

HISTORICAL REALITY #3 – Joseph and Mary fulfilled the law and returned home. **2:39-40**

They fulfilled everything pertaining to the O.T. law and left Jerusalem and eventually went to Galilee and their own city Nazareth.

The actual precise geography of this is this:

- 1) Joseph and Mary leave Nazareth and go to Bethlehem where Jesus is born. Luke 2:1-20
- 2) Joseph and Mary take Jesus to Jerusalem for presentation and sacrifice. **Luke 2:21-38**
- 3) Joseph and Mary go back to Bethlehem to a house where the Magi come at the time Herod issues his baby-killing edict. Matt. 2:1-11
- 4) Joseph and Mary leave Bethlehem and go to Egypt. Matt. 2:12-23
- 5) Joseph and Mary leave Egypt and go back to Nazareth. **Luke 2:39**

Luke wanted to know everything he could about this. What we actually learn about Jesus in these verses is this:

Christological Fact #1 - Jesus grew up in Nazareth. **2:39**

Christological Fact #2 - Jesus grew normal physically. **2:40a**

Christological Fact #3 - Jesus grew abnormally mentally. **2:40b**

Christological Fact #4 - Jesus grew abnormally spiritually. **2:40c**

God’s Grace and favor were on Him. He is God’s program of grace to the world and if you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, God’s grace is on you.