

The Presentation of the Lord Jesus at the Temple

Luke 2:21-38

Luke 2:21-38: 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. 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." 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: 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." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 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." 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 fastings 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.

Background Notes

The first section of Luke 2 gives the account of the birth of Jesus in the well-known "Christmas story." The shepherds found the Lord in Bethlehem wrapped in strips of cloth lying in a manger, just as the angels had told them. *"Then the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them"(v20).* The shepherds went back to their same old job as shepherds, and they went back to their same day-to-day activities and routines and problems -- but they were **changed** men!

In the same way, when we meet the Lord we are changed. We still have the same jobs, and the same bills we have to pay, and problems still have to be worked out -- but **we** are **changed!** We have a **new purpose in life** and a **new relationship with the God who created us**, and He is the God who will help us and guide us in our everyday lives.

In the second section of Luke 2, the infant Lord Jesus was circumcised. This ritual took place on the eighth day after birth, and we assume that this was done in Bethlehem. He was given the name “Jesus,” as the angel had instructed. After forty days, in accordance with the regulations of the Law, Mary and Joseph came up to Jerusalem for two reasons: first, for Mary to offer the purification sacrifice after childbirth according to the Law (Leviticus 12); and second, to present Jesus as a baby to the Lord God, because Jesus was a firstborn child. According to the Law in Exodus 13, all firstborn children and animals in Israel belonged to the Lord. This presentation would have involved giving the five-shekel redemption price into the Temple treasury (Numbers 18:16).

In reference to Mary’s purification sacrifice, Mary’s offering showed that the Lord Jesus was born into a poor family. The Law allowed an offering of two turtledoves or two young pigeons if the women could not afford a lamb. Leviticus 12:2, 3, 6, 8 (excerpts): *“When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days... Then she shall remain in her purification for thirty-three more days... When the days of her purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter she shall bring to the priest at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting a one-year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtledove for a sin offering.... But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering....”*

Doctrinal points

1. Godly Simeon recognized the truth that Jesus was the Savior for all peoples.

The statement that Simeon was “godly” means that he righteous and devout, and also that he was part of the “godly remnant” in Israel. The “godly remnant” was composed of Jews who were walking with the Lord. They were not wayward sinners, nor were they self-righteous, like the proud Pharisees. These godly Jews practiced righteous living, and they were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah.

The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die before he had see the Messiah -- and sure enough, the Lord led Simeon into the Temple just as Mary and Joseph arrived to present the infant Jesus to the Lord! When the Holy Spirit revealed to him that this baby was the Messiah, Simeon probably asked Mary, “May I hold the baby?” With the Lord Jesus in his arms, Simeon spoke this song of praise, which has become known as the “Nunc Dimittis” -- the Latin words for “now dismiss.”

Notice Simeon’s insight into God’s salvation. First, **God’s Salvation would come through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ** -- not through human good works. We, too, can be ready to depart in peace when we receive God’s salvation trough the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. Second, **God’s Salvation is for all peoples** -- not just for Jews. Notice that Simeon mentioned the Gentiles **before** the Jews – an amazing insight for a Jewish person of that day! This,

of course, is exactly the way God's salvation is being worked out in history. Today the great majority of those who are being saved are Gentiles. In the future, however, there will be a great spiritual awakening of the Jewish people.

After Simeon's burst of praise to God for the Savior, he blessed Joseph and Mary and uttered a four-part prophecy in verses 34-35. Did you notice the four-part prophecy in those verses?

- 1) Jesus was appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel (v34). The proud and self-righteous people and all those who would not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, would fall. The humble and repentant believers would rise and be blessed.
- 2) Jesus was the sign from God because he would show God's moral standards by his life and teachings (v34). The natural man opposes such unattainable standards, and thus they are opposed to God.
- 3) A "sword would pierce Mary's soul," as she would witness the horrible injustice of the crucifixion of her Son (v35).
- 4) Because of Jesus, the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed (v35). The way a person reacts to the Person and work of Jesus Christ certainly reveals the spiritual and moral condition of that person's soul before God.

So there is quite a bit of content in Luke's account of Simeon's prophecies about the infant Jesus. Godly Simeon recognized the truth that Jesus was the Savior for all peoples.

2. Godly Anna shared the truth that Jesus was the Redeemer of Jerusalem.

Anna was another member of the "godly remnant" of the Jews of Israel at that time. She was from the tribe of Asher, which was one of the tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This is an indication that the ten tribes of northern Israel were not "lost" (as some have taught), but were present during the time of Christ.

Anna was advanced in years, either 84 years old or a widow for 84 years (the text could either way). In any case, she served the Lord day and night with prayers and fasting in the Temple (v37). It is possible that she had been give one of the rooms in the Temple complex as her living quarters. When Anna recognized Jesus as the Messiah, she not only gave thanks to God but she shared the good news with the rest of the Jews who were part of the godly remnant in the area.

The Jews of the godly remnant in Israel of that day were looking for the redemption in Jerusalem, or the redemption of Jerusalem. What does this mean? Does it mean that they were hoping for a political or military Messiah who would free Jerusalem from the Roman oppression? No! Godly Jews knew that the Old Testament prophecies predicted a spiritual awakening for Israel when the Messiah would come. **Then** time of judgment would be over, and **then** the nation, with Jerusalem as her capital, would turn to the Lord, and be blessed, and become a light and blessing to the nations.

Let's read two of these Old Testament prophecies. Isaiah 40:1-2 - *"Comfort, O comfort My people,' says your God. 'Speak kindly to Jerusalem, and call out to her that her warfare has ended, her iniquity has been removed; that she has*

received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." And also Isaiah 52:9-10 – *"Break forth, shout joyfully together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared His holy arm to the sight of all the nations, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God."* These prophecies of course will be completely fulfilled when the Lord returns.

Godly Anna shared the truth that Jesus was the Redeemer of Jerusalem.

Practical Application

You're never too old to serve!

Anna was at least 84 years old -- and (if the text is saying that she was a widow for 84 years) she was possibly over 100 years old! In either case, Anna was certainly not in her prime -- but she was still serving the Lord! Notice that Anna's dedicated fasting and praying was considered worship and service to the Lord. You're never too old to serve!

So if you're an older believer, and if you feel that you no longer have the energy that you once had, and if you feel that you can no longer serve the Lord in an active way -- **you can always serve by praying!** A prayer ministry is a great and necessary ministry. We need more dedicated "pray-ers"! You're never too old to serve!