

International Sunday School Lesson Study Notes

Lesson Text: Luke 2:21-22, 25-38

Lesson Title: Jesus Presented in the Temple

Introduction

A week has passed since the night of Jesus' birth in the little town of Bethlehem. The angels have returned to heaven and the shepherds to their fields. Luke takes us to the temple in Jerusalem where Joseph and Mary will observe the law and present their offerings. Both Joseph and Mary knew the Old Testament Law and were committed to keeping it. It is important that Joseph and Mary observe Old Testament laws regarding the purity of the mother, the naming of the child and the male child's circumcision.

To convey the importance of the events in Luke 2:21-39, Luke uses some very powerful words and phrases regarding Joseph and Mary's keeping of the law. He writes, "according to the law of Moses" (v.22), "As it is written in the law of the Lord" (v.23), "according to that which is said in the law of the Lord" (v.24), and "the custom of the law" (v.27). Clearly, Luke is not just writing filler material to the early days of Jesus. The events recorded by Luke are significant for Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.

Jesus would later declare, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil"* (Matthew 5:17). From His arrival at Bethlehem to His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus never violated the law of God. The events in Luke 2:21-39 present to us the fact that before Jesus could walk or talk as a human; He fulfilled the requirements of God's law (Galatians 4:4).

Jesus and His Parents, Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:21-22)

Verse 21-22

"And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord..."

According to Jewish law, a new mother was to remain in seclusion no less than forty days after the birth of her child (Leviticus 12:2-4). During this period of time, she was considered unclean.

This period of uncleanness was not a punishment but rather a protection for the new mother. Not being in contact with others protected the new mother and child from potential disease. God took care of His covenant people and He will still take care of us if we obey His word and do His will.

On the "eighth day" of life a newborn male was to be circumcised (Genesis 17:11-12; Leviticus 12:3), at which time the child's name was publicly announced. Joseph and Mary did according to the law and "his name was called JESUS." The name "JESUS" is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word Joshua and means, "Jehovah is salvation," or "Jehovah is my deliverance." Both Joseph and Mary had been separately told by the angel to name the child "Jesus" (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31).

For the next thirty-two days, Joseph and Mary observed the Old Testament laws of "purification." At the end of that time "they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord..." This "presentation" is a formal separating of the child unto the Lord for His purpose and glory. In presenting Jesus, Joseph and Mary once again reveal their commitment and obedience to God and the law. They obeyed in Jesus' circumcision. They obeyed in Mary's purification. And now they obey in presenting their male son to the Lord. It is so encouraging to see the obedience and commitment to righteousness from Joseph and Mary. They knew the Old Testament and believed it to be true. Their belief is reflected in their complete obedience even to the smallest detail.

Jesus and the Man Simeon (Luke 2:25-32)

Verse 25

"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him."

Although the period between Malachi and the birth of Christ is commonly referred to as a period of divine silence, Luke tells us God had spoken to "a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon." There are at least four notable characteristics held by Simeon. First, he was "just." This means he was generally righteous under the law governing his spiritual development. Second, he was "devout." This means he truly sought to love his fellow man in keeping with God's commandment. Third,

he was patient as he "waited for the consolation of Israel." The word "waiting" carries the idea of "looking, longing, expecting." Simeon was "waiting for the consolation of Israel." That phrase means Simeon was eagerly looking and expecting God to fulfill His promises concerning the coming Messiah. Simeon is near 100 years old yet he is still longing to see the suffering of Israel give way to hope and comfort. Fourth, Simeon was Spirit-led as the "Holy Ghost was upon him." Simeon was living several decades before Pentecost but already living in the power of Pentecost.

Verse 26

And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."

The characteristics of Simeon's life are rewarded by the Lord in that "it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Simeon must have been so sensitive to the Lord that he was honored by receiving a message from the Holy Spirit regarding "the Lord's Christ." "Christ" means "anointed," therefore "the Lord's Christ" is the Lord's anointed One.

The "Holy Ghost" promised Simeon that before he died he would "see" Jesus Christ. We don't know how long Simeon had waited for that promise to come true, but as he grew older year by year he must have had to exercise great faith for its fulfillment. Simeon is an encouragement to all believers today who patiently wait on the promises of God to be fulfilled (James 5:7-8).

Verse 27-32

"And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

As Simeon "came by the Spirit into the temple" his faith was rewarded. It is no coincident that he enters the temple in sync with the arrival of Joseph, Mary, and "the child Jesus." Joseph and Mary "brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law." This bringing of the child "after the custom of the law" was

required even before the giving of the Mosaic law (Exodus 13:12), and it was incorporated into the law itself.

Luke doesn't tell us what took place between the end of verse 27 and verse 28. The word "Then" indicates that something may have happened such as Joseph and Mary talking to Simeon about the conception, the birth, and all the other miraculous things concerning Jesus' birth. Whatever took place resulted in Simeon immediately recognizing the infant Jesus as the Messiah. He then "took he him up in his arms, and blessed God." "Blessed God" means Simeon offered to the Lord a hymn of praise. The content of this blessing is similar to that of Mary's (Luke 1:46-55) and Zacharias (Luke 1:68-79).

"Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people" means the salvation of God in Christ Jesus is now open for everyone to see. Although Simeon is the one presently looking upon the Christ child, "all people" by faith can look upon Christ today and be saved (John 3:16).

Simeon's hymn of praise can be divided into two sections. The first is in verses 29-30. Here Simeon celebrated the fulfillment of God's promise to him personally. As Simeon held Jesus in his arms he experienced a profound "peace" or security of soul. He was holding the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6), the one of whom the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). God's favor rested upon Simeon. He was ready to die, for that is what the word "depart" means. He was ready to go home to be with the Lord forever.

Simeon had personally "seen" the "salvation" of the Lord with his own "eyes." He had not seen part of God's salvation but he had "seen" Christ who is and always will be the totality of God's salvation. There is salvation in no other (Acts 4:12).

The second section of Simeon's hymn of praise is in verses 31-32. Here Simeon celebrates the fulfillment of God's promise universally. This is especially significant for "Gentiles" who were sitting in spiritual darkness at the time of Christ's birth. The book of Isaiah contains several references to enlightenment of the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 55:5).

Not only is Jesus our "light" in this dark world, he is at the same time the "glory of thy people Israel." Christ, a light to lighten the Gentiles and "the glory of thy people Israel." "Glory" comes from the Old Testament term for the radiant splendor of God's character. This little baby Simeon held in his arms was the

"light" and "glory" of all God determined to do in salvation for the world. This little baby Simeon held was none other than God revealed in physical form.

Verse 33

"And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him."

Simeon's remarks and praise amazed Joseph and Mary. Remember, both Joseph and Mary had been visited by the angel Gabriel, been a part of a virgin conception, were present when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, was visited by shepherds who shared with them the angelic message from heaven, and yet they still "marveled at those things which were spoken of him!" Wow! After all Joseph and Mary had seen, heard, and been a part of concerning Jesus, they are still able to "marvel."

Questions: Why have so many Christians seemingly lost the wonder and amazement of knowing Christ? Why don't we still marvel when we sing about Jesus, teach about Jesus, preach about Jesus and witness about Jesus? How is it Joseph and Mary still "marveled?" The answer could possibly be that they realized they would never be able to fully understand or grasp the reality of God becoming man and the incarnation of Jesus Christ! Have we lost the wonder?

Verse 34-35

"And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Simeon "blessed" Joseph and Mary and then directly spoke some sobering words to Mary. Mary's future concerning Jesus would involve many sorrows. The words of verse 34, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against" speaks of both the tremendous earthly and eternal differences it makes whether one trusts Christ to be his personal substitute for sin. The verse also reveals the experience of all who come to Christ. As sinners coming to Christ for salvation, we must bow in humiliation and poverty of spirit before we can rise to new life in Christ. Only when we see our inadequacy are we then ready for God's grace and salvation.

Simeon's words, "a sign which shall be spoken against" is continually being fulfilled. Every day Christianity is being portrayed as intolerant, ignorant, insensitive, racists and full of bigotry. The world will fight against each other until

it comes to Christ and the cross and then they join forces against Christianity. This is realized from individual rejection from family and friends to social exclusion because of personal faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law"* (Luke 12:51-53).

"Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul" is Luke's first mention of the cross on which Jesus would die. Part of the great mystery of salvation is that Jesus would enter the world as a man and submit to the most painful and humiliating treatment any human being ever faced. Simeon predicted Jesus' effect on Mary personally and on the nation as a whole. The word "sword" is the Greek word *rhomphaia*, referring to "a giant, slashing-crushing blade." Jesus' death will be like a "slashing blade" to His mother and it will divide the nation cutting and separating believers from unbelievers (Matthew 10:34-39).

Jesus and the Prophetess Anna (Luke 2:36-38)

Verse 36-37

"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day."

Another individual present when Jesus was presented in the temple was "Anna." She was "a prophetess" which means she taught or ministered the word of God. She was "the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser." When Joshua divided the land of Canaan, the tribe of Asher (Anna's tribe) received land far north. Asher was a weak tribe unable to drive out her enemies. When Israel fell to Assyria, the ten tribes of the north, including Asher were scattered in captivity and virtually disappeared from history. But Anna's ancestors left their inheritance in the north and moved south to worship in the temple in Jerusalem. Because of that move, Luke tells us, "And there was one Anna..."

"Anna" was of "great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years." After "seven" years of marriage, Anna suffered a terrible, yet fairly common, tragedy in that her

husband died. Rather than remarry, she devoted the remainder of her life in "the temple" serving God "with fasting and prayers night and day." Like Simeon, she actively anticipated the coming of the Messiah.

Verse 38

"And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Anna and Simeon undoubtedly knew one another and probably worshipped with a group of people who eagerly sought the Messiah. On the day when Joseph and Mary presented Jesus and Simeon was holding Him in his arms, "she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord." The word "instant" means "the very moment she saw the Christ child." It had been at least 60 years since her husband died and she had prayed many prayers, gone without many meals, and patiently waited and believed Messiah would come. That moment had now arrived. Just as Simeon lifted up Jesus in his arms and began to glorify the Lord, Anna walked by and realized what was happening.

Anna "gave thanks" and began speaking about "him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Up until this point in her life, Anna had spent all her time talking to God about man's need of redemption. Now, she starts talking to everyone who needed God's redemption. Imagine her excitement as she reported to all who would listen how she had seen the Christ child.

Luke doesn't tell us how the people responded to her report. Some may have laughed at her; others may have ridiculed or ignored her. After all, she was an old widow woman who had spent a lot of years at the temple. But I think it is safe to say that some heard her and no doubt rejoiced with her.

Conclusion

Without much attention or fanfare, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple to satisfy the requirement of the law. Jesus would now take his place alongside His kindred Jews. At this point in his life, only a small circle of people understood the importance of what was occurring the first week of Jesus' life.

Jesus' first trip to the temple came and went without much notice from the religious leaders of Israel. It wouldn't be long until they would accuse Him of violating the law of God and breaking God's commands. On the contrary, the Messiah came to

satisfy the law on behalf of all men. It is only through Jesus Christ that God the Father is pleased.

Joseph and Mary presented Jesus to the Lord in the temple so everything would be right between them and their heavenly Father. How about you? Is everything right between you and your heavenly Father? Because Christ died on the cross and rose again the third day it can be.

In the presentation of Jesus in the temple, Simeon found the consolation or comfort Israel was looking for. In the presentation of Jesus in the temple, Anna found the redemption she was looking for. What have you found in Christ?

Amen.