

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

December 5, 2018

The Gospel of Luke

The Presentation of Jesus

Topics – Luke 2; Jesus' presentation in the Temple; Anna; Simeon;

Text – Luke 2:21 - 40

Introduction

These verses are almost easy for us to overlook. Some events are only remarkable and memorable for parents, but for the rest of us, they can be downright tedious. A child's first birthday, his first steps, perhaps her kindergarten graduation: these are all very meaningful for the family, but they are rather ho-hum for people outside the family's circle of intimacy. This is the type of scene that we have before us in Luke 2. Jesus is circumcised and dedicated to the Lord at the Temple. Pretty typical for a Jewish boy in those days, but also very special; and, if we take some time to consider this passage, I bet we will find some helpful nuggets of truth.

Forty-one days after the birth of Christ, and after the visit by the shepherds, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus travelled the eight miles to Jerusalem to "present him to the Lord." This child's life obviously was wholly devoted to the Lord. These parents were wholeheartedly committed to raising a godly child. They knew He was special, but they did not fully understand all that they were holding when they held the Baby Jesus in their arms. But, consider with me for a moment two poor parents from Nazareth who want to do everything just right. They have the young boy circumcised when the time was right, and they bring him to the Temple as a sort of dedication, and so Mary could offer the sacrifice that was required by the Law.

Practical Application

Parents, take very seriously your responsibility of raising your children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

1. Dedicate them (and yourself) to the Lord.
2. Pray for them daily.
3. Teach them the Bible.
4. Bring them to church.
5. Be the right example.
6. Protect them from the evil that is in the world.

I **The Presentation to the Lord (vs. 21 – 24)**

Notice vs. 22, 23, 24, 27, and 39 – "the Law" is mentioned in each of these verses.

Christ came to fulfil the law:

"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)

Jesus did everything exactly as the Law demanded. He was the only human that ever existed that never sinned against any part of the law.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:16-17)

He did everything right, even beyond the requirements of the Law. He was baptized, identifying with His own message, but his reason for being baptized was to fulfil all righteousness.

"And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him." (Matthew 3:15)

Turn to Leviticus 12 for the Law regarding circumcision and Mary's purification. You will note that

Notice something interesting regarding this purification Law. Mary was to separate from people for forty-one days after the birth of Jesus. Could it be that God knew the health benefits of keeping both the child and his mother secluded for a period of time. A lot of the laws regarding washing and forbidden foods were given for the health benefits of His people. Chuck Swindoll states:

The God of Israel took good care of His covenant people. They were suffering slaves when He first called them out of Egypt, but within a couple of generations He transformed them into a society charged with showing the world His nature. They observed the rule of law, they enjoyed better health and greater freedom from disease, and they saw lower infant mortality and higher life expectancy than their neighbors. All because God loved them enough to declare some things ceremonially or ritually "unclean" several millennia before modern science taught us how to live longer, healthier lives.¹

Jesus was presented to the Lord because He was the first-born male in the family of Mary and Joseph:

"Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine. ... That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD'S. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem. And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem." (Exodus 13:2, 12-15)

Initially, God took all of the firstborns of any tribe for himself, but He eventually required only the Levites to serve him in the Tabernacle and later, the Temple. The passage in Numbers tell us that the firstborns from all of the non-Levite tribes were required to be redeemed through an offering. (See Numbers 3:40 – 51.)

II The Prayer of Simeon (vs. 25 – 35)

Notice what the Scripture says about Simeon:

1. He was just. "Just" means "saved." He was positionally righteous. He had received the righteousness of Christ through faith in Him, even before He was born.
2. He was devout. "Devout" means "faithful" and "dedicated." The 1828 Webster's dictionary defines "devout" as yielding a solemn and reverential attention to God in religious exercises, particularly in prayer.²
3. He waited. He spend his days anticipating the arrival of the Messiah.

These are all attributes that God's people should possess today. We obviously should have faith, but we should also be faithful (devout), looking forward to the return of Christ.

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28)

Notice vs. 32, 34, and 35 for the prophecies regarding Christ.

¹ Swindoll, Charles R.. *Insights on Luke* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 3) (pp. 74-75). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

² <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/Devout>

He would be a light to the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel. The Messiah glorifies Israel because He represents Israel. He is a son of Israel. His light, however, will travel beyond the borders of Israel.

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Unfortunately:

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19)

Practical Point – Christians are also the light of the world:

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16)

Notice v. 34 – Christ will cause division in Israel. To those who receive Him, He will raise them up:

"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:" (Ephesians 2:5-6)

But, to those who reject Him:

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." (1 Peter 2:7-8)

The sword in v. 35 prophetically speaks of the sword that would pierce the side of Jesus at His crucifixion, which Mary would witness. (John 19:25 – 27; 34)

III The Profession of Anna (vs. 36 – 40)

Another person that was prepared for the arrival of the Lord was Anna who was from the tribe of Asher and was a "prophetess"; one of six mentioned in the Bible. (Miriam – Exodus 15:20; Deborah - Judges 4:4; Huldah – 2 Kings 22:14, 2 Chronicles 34:22; Noadiah – Nehemiah 6:14; Isaiah's wife – Isaiah 8:3. Note – Jezebel called herself a prophetess, but wasn't – Revelation 2:20)

She was widow after being married only seven years. She was now 84 years old. She spent her life serving the Lord in the Temple with fastings and prayers.

Practical Point – You are never too old to serve God. Prayer and fasting are not just things that people do when they are too old to do anything else. Prayer and fasting are important things, critical things. We all need to pray, but let me encourage you who may be physically unable to work or serve in other capacities – pray, and if you are able, fast.

After giving thanks to the Lord in the presence of the family, the Scripture tells us that she told "all them that looked for redemption in Israel." That's what we are supposed to be doing. Looking for the ones who are looking for redemption. That is why we go soul winning. But notice that Anna did her soulwinning at the Temple. Why? Because people who are looking for redemption often come to church in order to find it.