



Luke's Christmas Chronicles

December 2023

Luke 2:22-40 The One we are Waiting For

(sermons: Dec 31)



Luke 2: 22-24 The Presentation in the Temple

- v.1 *the purification rites – the Old Testament Law (Leviticus 12) said a woman was ritually unclean for 7 days after giving birth to a boy, and had to keep away from the Temple for another 33 days, making 40 days in all. Then she had to offer a sacrifice to ‘purify’ her so that she could rejoin society fully.*
- v.22 *to present him to the Lord – a separate ceremony for a firstborn son: to dedicate him to God, then redeem him (buy him back) as in Exodus 13:2, 12-15.*
- v.24 *to offer a sacrifice – the purification sacrifice was two doves (or pigeons) for a poor person; richer families would sacrifice a lamb (Leviticus 12:8).*

1. How did Mary and Joseph follow the Old Testament Law in these two ceremonies in the Temple?
What does this show about them? What does it show about Jesus sharing our human experience?

Luke 2: 25-35 Simeon

- v.25 *waiting for the consolation of Israel – the coming of the Messiah who would end oppression and bring comfort, as promised by Isaiah 40:1-2*
- v.26 *the Lord's Christ – God's ‘anointed one’ (‘Christ’ in Greek, ‘Messiah’ in Hebrew); God's chosen king, the leader promised by the prophets*
- v.29 *you may now dismiss your servant – Simeon uses the picture of a slave being released from his duties as a picture of his approaching death after a lifetime of serving God*
- v.30 *my eyes have seen your salvation – Simeon recognizes the baby Jesus as the one through whom God will save his people*
- v.32 *a light for revelation to the Gentiles – this echoes Isaiah's promise (42:6) that the ministry of the coming ‘servant of the Lord’ will reach beyond the Jews; and that Israel's ‘glory’ (being used to reveal God's nature) will come through being the channel of God's mercy to the wider world.*
- v.34 *the falling and rising of many in Israel – this may refer to different reactions to Jesus in his ministry: rejecting him and incurring judgement (‘falling’) or accepting him and ‘rising’ to new life.
Or it may be those who are humbled in repentance (‘falling’) then ‘rising’ to new spiritual life.*
- v.34 *a sign that will be spoken against – a sign of God's activity in the world, that will be rejected by some*
- v.35 *a sword will pierce your own soul too – probably pointing to Jesus' violent death that will also bring great suffering to Mary*

2. What do these verses show about how the Holy Spirit was active in Simeon's life and his response?
How was he in the right place at the right time? Have we had similar experiences?
3. What insight was Simeon given into Jesus' future life and ministry?
How did Simeon respond? In what way was it the culmination of a life of faithful service by him?
4. How were Simeon's words to Mary both good news and bad news, words of both comfort and suffering?
Do we still see that God's activity leads to different responses?

Luke 2: 36-38 Anna

v.36 *a prophetess – someone who speaks a message directly from God: there hadn't been any prophets since Malachi until John the Baptist and only 7 women were recognized by Jews as prophetesses*

v.37 *she never left the temple – the temple, with all its courts and cloisters, was a large area, where Anna may have lived; or it may mean that she attended the temple every day.*

v.38 *the redemption of Jerusalem – the release from slavery of the people, another way of referring to the coming of the Messiah*

5. What can we learn from Anna: the way that she had lived her life, and the way she shared her insight?
6. Do these accounts of both Simeon and Anna have something to say to us about the role that older people can play in the church and in the lives of younger people?

Luke 2: 39-40 Jesus as a Boy

v.39 *to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth – a small town about 70 miles north of Jerusalem*

7. There is very little in the gospels about Jesus' childhood. What do these verses tell us about how Jesus was fully human as well as being the Son of God?

Exodus 13:2,11-15

² 'Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal.'

¹¹ 'After the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your ancestors, ¹² you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. ¹⁴ 'In days to come when your son asks you, "What does this mean?" say to him, "With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed the firstborn of both people and animals in Egypt. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons."

Leviticus 12:8

⁸ "But if she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean."

Isaiah 40:1,2

¹ Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

Isaiah 42:6

'I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles... '