

“What Child Is This?”
(Luke 2:21-40)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

We saw this morning,
The Lord providentially/sovereignly
Moving Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem –
The house of bread –
To bring the Bread of Life to the world –
As He promised many years ago
Through the prophet Micah.

We saw Mary give birth to Jesus,
Wrap Him in cloths
And lay Him in a manger –
In an animal’s feeding trough –
Because there was no room for them in the inn.

We saw the angel announce
The good news to the shepherds
That the Savior had been born
In the city of David;

How they could know this was true –
They would find the child
Laying in the manger –

And the sight of the angelic choir
Glorifying and praising God

For the mercy He was showing mankind.

We saw the shepherds

Go to Bethlehem,

Find the child as the angel said,

And begin to tell everyone

The things they had seen and heard about Him.

We saw Mary,

Treasuring these things up,

And pondering them in her heart.

And we saw the shepherds return to their flocks,

Glorifying and praising God

For all they had seen and heard.

B. Preview.

This evening,

We see what happened next:

Eight days later, Jesus is circumcised and named (v. 21);

Forty days later, He is presented to the Lord (vv. 22-24);

We see Simeon's prophecy (vv. 25-35);

Anna's prophetic confirmation (vv. 36-38);

And Joseph and Mary's return to Nazareth (vv. 39-40).

II. Sermon.

A. First, we see Jesus' circumcision (v. 21).

When Jesus was eight days old,

He was circumcised according to the Law,

While still in Bethlehem.

Lord through Moses, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: ‘When a woman gives birth and bears a male *child*, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean. On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised” (Lev. 12:2-3).

Circumcision was the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham;

It was applied to Jesus

Showing He was part of that covenant –

God said He would be God to Abraham and his descendants,

Only in this case,

This was *the Descendant* promised to Abraham,

Through whom all the nations would be blessed.

He was circumcised

That “He might fulfill all righteousness” –

That He might fulfill the Law.

As we saw with John,

It was customary to name the child at circumcision,

And so He was called Jesus –

The name the angel gave to Mary;

That summarizes why He came into the world:

Which means, “The Lord is salvation.”

He came to fulfill the Law for us,

So that He might save us.

B. Second, Jesus is presented to the Lord (vv. 22-23).

After the birth of a son,

A Jewish mother was required

To spend an additional 33 days,

After the initial 7,

In the process of purification:

Again in Leviticus, “Then she shall remain in the blood of *her* purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed” (Lev. 12:4).

And so Mary,

Being a righteous and obedient young lady,

Did what God required.

When the days were fulfilled,

They brought Jesus to Jerusalem

To present Him to the Lord (v. 22),

Because He was the first-born son,

And because He needed to be redeemed.

Luke, “As it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘EVERY *firstborn* MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD’” (v. 23).

We saw this morning,

That the Lord had taken

All the first-born sons of Israel

When He struck down the first-born of Egypt –

They, in a special way, belonged to Him.

He later took the whole tribe of Levi in their place,

To serve Him in His Tabernacle/Temple.

But from that time on,

Each first-born son needed to be presented

To the Lord at the Temple

At which time he would be redeemed –

The price would have been five shekels

Which the parents would pay to the Levites.

Here is another picture of His work:

Jesus was redeemed,

That He might be our Redeemer.

It was also at this time,

That they were required to offer a sacrifice:

“A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons” (v. 24).

Leviticus 12:6-8, “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 a turtledove for a sin offering. Then he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears *a child, whether* a male or a female. 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; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.”

The fact that they offered the birds

Showed that there were relatively poor.

Jesus not only became poor

By making an infinite stoop

To become one with us –

He chose to be born in a poor family:

Paul, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

C. Third, we see the Lord give further confirmation

Of Jesus' identity through Simeon's prophecy (vv. 25-35).

We don't know for certain who *this* Simeon was,

But there are many who believe

That he was Rabban Simeon –

“Rabban” is the highest title given to Jewish teachers/rabbis,

Of which there have only ever been seven –

This Rabban was the son of the famous Hillel –

The one who was president of the Sanhedrin for forty years –

Simeon followed him in that same office;

Simeon was also the father of Gamaliel –

The teacher of the apostle Paul –

One the Jews looked at

As having a spirit of prophecy;

But who somehow fell out of favor with them –

Possibly for confessing Jesus as the Messiah (Gill).

Luke tells us this man was righteous and devout;

He believed the Lord's promise

To send comfort to Israel through the Messiah,

And was waiting expectantly for Him;

The Holy Spirit was upon him (v. 25),

And had revealed to him

That he wouldn't die before he had seen the Messiah (v. 26).

He also led him into the Temple;
And when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus in
To present Him to the Lord,
He took Jesus in his arms,
Blessed God,

And said, “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,
according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have
prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE
GENTILES, and the glory of Your people Israel” (vv. 29-32).

Joseph and Mary were both amazed (v. 33).

They already had the testimony
Of Gabriel;
Of Elizabeth by the Spirit;
Of the shepherds who told them
Of the angel’s message
And the angelic choir;

But now this highest of teachers –
A righteous and devout prophet –
Was also testifying
That this child was the Messiah
He has waited his whole life to see.

After he asked God’s blessing on them,

He said to Mary:

“Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a
sign to be opposed – and a sword will pierce even your own soul – to the end that
thoughts from many hearts may be revealed” (vv. 34-35).

Jesus would lift many up

By bringing them to God:

There would be those

Who would fall on this corner stone,

And in humility be broken,

But redeemed by His grace –

But many also would fall by Him –

On those who rejected Him,

He would fall as a stone

And grind them to powder –

Which He did in 70 AD,

Through the Roman armies.

He would be opposed –

At first, Jesus was popular;

But then Israel turned against Him,

To the point of handing Him over

To the Romans to be crucified.

And because of this,

Mary would experience the agony

Of watching her Son undergo this suffering,

So that what was in the heart of man

Might be exposed –

The Lord continues to expose hearts today:

By how people respond to Jesus and His Word.

It's possible Joseph wasn't included here

Because he would die before this took place.

D. Fourth, we see Anna's prophetic confirmation (vv. 36-38).

Anna was a prophetess,

The daughter of Phanuel –

Whose name means “face of God” –

Who was from the tribe of Asher –

One of the ten tribes

Taken into captivity by Assyria,

But some of which returned

With Judah and Benjamin –

She had been married for seven years (v. 36),

And then lived as a widow until she was 84,

Serving the Lord in His Temple with fastings and prayers (v. 37) –

This is one of the most important services

We can perform for the Lord:

Seeking Him with fasting,

That His kingdom would come

And His will be done.

At the very moment Simeon

Was holding and blessing Jesus,

She came up to them
And began thanking God
For this Child,
And began speaking about Him
To all who were waiting and watching
For the redemption of Jerusalem.

Luke doesn't comment here,
But Joseph and Mary must undoubtedly
Have been amazed by this as well –

Sometimes the things
We believe to be true
Don't seem to be real,
Until the Lord gives us further evidence:

The Lord was giving them
Confirmation after confirmation
That this Child really was His Christ.

E. Finally, we see their return to Nazareth (vv. 39-40).

1. When they had finished doing
What the Law required,
They returned home to Nazareth (v. 39).

For reasons unknown,
Luke doesn't include
The Magis' visit,

Herod's attempt to kill Jesus,
Or Joseph and Mary's escape into Egypt,
Before they return to Nazareth –
Perhaps because Matthew did (Matt. 2:1-23).

The magi further confirmed who Jesus was,
As they offered their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh –
Pictures of His office and work –
And worshiped Him.

And Herod's attempt to kill Him
Was just one of many ways
The devil tried to stop Jesus, but failed.

2. Lastly, we see a reminder

That Jesus is fully man,
As well as fully God:

He continued to grow,
Become strong,
And increase in wisdom –
Things which could only be true of His human nature –
And God's grace was on Him,
Molding and shaping Him
Into the One the Father will use
To redeem us from our sins.

When we return to Luke's Gospel in three weeks,

We'll see Jesus in Jerusalem for the Passover,

Learning more about His Father in His Father's house. Amen.

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