

***Circumcision of Jesus***

***2:21 And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.***

Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day as the law demanded. Although this may seem like an insignificant detail, it reveals a number of things. First, it shows that Jesus' parents were pious, law-abiding Jews; they submitted to the Law. Secondly, circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, so Luke wants to make it clear that Jesus was identified with the people of Israel and the covenant that God made with them. Thirdly, circumcision meant that Jesus was under the Law, which made it possible for Him to redeem those who are under the Law. Paul says in Galatians 4:4-5, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, *born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*"

Since Jesus was born under the Law, He was subject to the Law. And as one under the Law, He fulfilled the requirements of the Law through His perfect obedience to the Law. Thus, He could be the curse of the Law on our behalf (Gal. 3:13), and free us from the bondage of sin. As Hodge says, "Redemption from bondage to the Law includes not only deliverance from its penalty, but also from the obligation to satisfy its demands. This is the fundamental idea of Paul's doctrine of justification. The Law demands . . . perfect obedience. It says, Do this and live; and, 'Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them'" (Hodge, Systematic Theology, II, 518). No man has been able to keep the Law's demands, yet he must keep them or he will die. The only way that men can be saved is to be delivered from the obligation of perfect obedience. This is what Jesus' death did. We are saved not by our own obedience, but by the obedience of Christ (Rom. 5: 18, 19). "Redemption in this case is not mere deliverance, but a true redemption, i. e., a deliverance effected [accomplished] by satisfying all the just claims which are against us" (Hodge, Systematic Theology, II, 518). And all this came about because Jesus was born as a man under the Law.

**Jesus Presented in the Temple – Luke 2:22-38**

***2:22 And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord***

***2:23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "EVERY firstborn MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD ")***,

***2:24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS."***

Two distinct ceremonies are being spoken of here:

- (1) The purification of the mother (Luke 2:22a, 24 - Lev. 12;2-4, 6– Bock, 235)

The law required that after the birth of a son, the mother was considered to be ceremonially unclean for seven days, and then for another thirty-three days she would be kept away from all

holy things (for a daughter the times were doubled – Lev. 12:1-5). At the end of that time she was to offer a lamb and a dove, but if she was poor, two doves could be offered instead (Lev. 12:6-13). Mary's offering indicates that she was poor (Morris, 96).

It is strange that it is said to be the time of "*their*" purification when Mary was the one who was ceremonially unclean. However, it is logical to assume that it would be passed to Joseph and he would need cleansing, too (Morris, 96). Or, it is also possible that Luke is just putting the cleansing of Mary and presentation of Jesus together as one act (Marshall, 116).

- (2) The presentation of the firstborn male to the Lord which involved paying a redemption price of five shekels (Lk. 2:22b, 23).

Three OT passages are particularly relevant to Luke 2:23.

Exodus 13:2: Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.

Numbers 3:13: for all the firstborn are mine. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the firstborn in Israel, both of man and of beast. They shall be mine: I am the LORD."

Numbers 18:15-16: the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. As to their redemption price, from a month old you shall redeem them, by your valuation, five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary,

The Law required that the first-born of both man and animals (clean and unclean) be given to the Lord (Exo. 13; 22:28ff; 34:19ff.; Num. 3:11-13, 40-51; 8:16-18; 18:15-18; Deut. 15:19ff.). The first-born males of the clean animals were to be set apart and sacrificed. However, since unclean animals (such as a donkey or a camel) were not suitable for sacrifice, they were to be redeemed (Num. 18:15; Davis, Moses and the God's of Egypt, 161-162). To redeem means to buy or purchase. It is the act of freeing someone, whether a slave, a prisoner, or someone in debt, through the payment of a price. This custom was related to the tenth plague of Egypt when the first-born male of every man and beast in Egypt died. The payment declared that the first-born Israelite son would be spared, and because he was spared, it was appropriate that he be given to the Lord for His service. This practice was to serve as a reminder of the mercy of God to His people (Davis, Moses and the God's of Egypt, 161).

Thus, Jesus, the first-born son of Mary, had to be redeemed with five shekels (Morris, 96; Davis, Moses and the God's of Egypt, 242). Typically, the child was presented to any priest, the redemption price was paid, and two short prayers were offered to set the child apart for the Lord (Exo. 13:2, 12, 15; Num. 18:15; Edersheim, I, 195).

***The Witness of Simeon - Luke 2:25-37******2:25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous******2:26 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.******2:27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,******2:28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,***

Simeon was a righteous and devout (a word which originally meant cautious and hence came to mean careful in religious duties; Marshall, 118) man who was waiting for the coming of Messiah (i.e. "the consolation [or, comfort] of Israel;" cf. Isa. 40; also see Edersheim, I, 198 note 3). The Holy Spirit was upon him (the verb seems to mean that the Holy Spirit was on him continually), and had revealed to Simeon that he would see Messiah before he died. God then fulfilled His promise by prompting Simeon to go to the temple the same day and time that Mary, Joseph and Jesus did.

When Joseph and Mary were bringing the offering for Jesus (Morris, 97) Simeon saw the child, was "moved by the Spirit," and blessed God (to bless means to speak well of someone) saying,

***2:29 "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word;******2:30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,******2:31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,******2:32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel."***

This is the third hymn in the infancy section of Luke's account of Jesus' life.

Salvation and Christ are so closely connected that when Simeon saw Jesus he could say he saw God's salvation; Jesus personifies salvation. The thought is as follows:

2:30: Christ is God's salvation

2:31: This salvation (in Christ) was designed by God for all people

2:32: Salvation in Christ is revelation to the Gentiles

AND

the glory of Israel

In other words, verses 30-32 are speaking about salvation, but since that salvation is personified in Christ, it is speaking of Him as well; both thoughts need to be kept together.

- Jesus (who is salvation) is a light to the nations for He reveals God to them (Jn. 8:12; also see notes on John 1:4-5; Isa. 49:6; 52:10).
- He is the glory of Israel for the Gentiles will come to Israel as the place where God reveals His salvation (Isa. 46:13; 45:25), and Israel will share Messiah's glory (Marshall, 121). "There is much about glory in the Old Testament, particularly in connection with God's manifestations of

Himself to His people. But Israel will see glory in the truest and fullest sense when it sees the Son of God. His being a light to Gentiles means no diminution of Israel's glory, but rather its full realization" (Morris, 98).

Simeon had seen all that he had longed to see and now there is nothing left. He is at peace to die.

***2:33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.  
2:34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed--  
2:35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul-- to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."***

Through the words of Simeon we find that salvation is not simply a story of joy and happiness, but that it will also result in judgment. After blessing Mary and Joseph he says, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel." The image of falling is common enough; in both the OT and the NT Jesus is said to be a stumbling stone and a rock of offense (Isa. 8:14-15). The nature of the rising and falling is disputed.

Some think it refers to one group of people who will fall and then rise (be humbled, but then believe, or if these are believers they will suffer and then be vindicated). Others think that it refers to two groups of people; one that will fall (reject Christ) and one that will rise (enter into salvation). If the latter view is correct, it helps explain why Jesus will be spoken against; He will divide the nation. People cannot remain neutral, many hearts will be revealed.

Lastly, the prophet says that Mary will not be free from suffering. The events surrounding her son would pierce her heart like a sword (2:35a).

#### ***The Witness of Anna - Luke 2:36-38***

***2:36 And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,  
2:37 and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.  
2:38 At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.***

Because Anna was a prophetess she had insight into who the child was that others didn't. She is described with unusual detail. Anna was married for seven years until her husband died; she then remained single. She was eighty-four when she saw Jesus. Her devotion to God is noteworthy. She was constantly at the temple and her focus was entirely on God. She worshipped day and night. She fasted. She prayed. This was no ordinary woman, which makes her recognition of Jesus significant. She, like Simeon, and every other devout Jew, had her heart focused on the redemption of Israel in the coming of Messiah. Mary declared that through her son, God "has given help to Israel His servant . . . to Abraham and his descendants forever" (Lk. 1:54-55). In Luke 23:51, Joseph of Arimathea was "waiting

for the kingdom of God." Likewise, on the road to Emmaus after Jesus' resurrection, the disciples confessed that they were hoping that it was Jesus who was "going to redeem Israel" (Lk. 24:21); prior to Jesus' ascension they asked, "Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6; also see Luke 1:68-79). According to Paul, God will redeem Israel through Christ (Ro. 11:25-26), though this redemption has not yet come.

### ***Return to Nazareth - Luke 2:39***

***2:39 When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.***

***NOTE:*** Luke passes over a number of events that should be mentioned. Although they returned to Nazareth as Luke 2:39 states, it appears from Matthew 2 that they then moved to Bethlehem then back to Nazareth.

#### 1. The Visit of the Magi

*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." (Matthew 2:1-2).*

More myth has surrounded the story of the wise men than nearly any other place in the Bible. The only real facts we have about them are found in these few verses in Matthew. We don't know their names, their number, their mode of transportation, or where they came from. Contrary to popular belief, the magi did not visit Jesus when He was born; rather, they most likely came 1 or 2 years later based on Herod's reaction in killing the children 2 years old and under.

#### 2. The Trip from Bethlehem to Egypt

*When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." (Matthew 2:13-15)*

When Herod decided he would kill the infants in Bethlehem who were two years old and under, Joseph had a dream telling him and his family to flee to Egypt which they did. It is possible that the stay in Egypt only lasted a few months until Herod died (MacArthur, *Matthew*, 41). He then planned on returning to their home in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:21-22), but was told not to by an angel, so they returned to Nazareth.

### 3. The New Home in Nazareth

*But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel . . . and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene." (Matthew 2:19-21, 23)*

Once again, an angel appears and gives clear guidance. At his direction, Joseph and Mary returned to Israel and then settled down in Nazareth where they had lived before (Lk. 1:26-27).

### **Growth and Early Life of Jesus**

#### **Nazareth- Luke 2:40**

***2:40 The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.***

Jesus' growth is described briefly. He grew mentally, physically, and spiritually as any child would. But above all, God's favor rests upon Him.

#### ***Jesus' first Passover in Jerusalem -Luke 2:41-50***

***2:41 Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.***

***2:42 And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast;***

***2:43 and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it,***

***2:44 but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.***

***2:45 When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him.***

***2:46 Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.***

***2:47 And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.***

***2:48 When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You."***

***2:49 And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?"***

***2:50 But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.***

First, it should be noticed that verses 40 and 52 bookend this section and point to its significance. Verse 40 says Jesus kept "increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." Verse 52 says, "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." There can be no doubt that

Luke is emphasizing that Jesus needed to go through every stage of human life; He needed to experience human development; He was not excused the processes of normal human maturation. He grew in wisdom as He experienced more of life. He developed in maturity. He maintained a good reputation among men, and lived His life in a way that was pleasing to God (Lk. 2:52). When Jesus next appears it will be as the One fully matured and prepared for His consecrated task. His death on the cross was therefore sufficient for all men in whatever stage of life they may be. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation."

Secondly, Luke takes another opportunity to emphasize the faithfulness of Jesus' family to Judaism. All male Jews were supposed to attend three major festivals in Jerusalem each year – Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Passover, of course, commemorated the freedom of Israel from slavery in Egypt.

Jesus was only 12 years old at this time (2:42); therefore, he could've been either with the women and children or with the men and the boys as they traveled together in a caravan with friends and relatives. Each parent might have supposed that He was with the other (Lk. 2:43). It was then, after they had traveled for a day, that they realized that Jesus was missing (Lk. 4:46). From there it would take a day to go back. Then on the third day, after they were separated, they finally found Jesus in the temple courts sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. This was the usual place for teaching, and evidently it didn't bother anyone to have a small boy joining in. Jesus, even at a young age, hungered to know the scriptures and was taking advantage of the opportunity while away from His parents. The leaders were amazed at the depth of His knowledge and the questions He was asking.

Jesus' parents were astonished. Mary's agitation is seen by her comment, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you" (Lk. 2:48). This, of course, is a normal response of a mother who had been worrying over her son.

Thirdly, the incident in Jesus' hidden years that Luke selects tells of Jesus' self-conscious sense of who He was and the obedience He was devoted to. Jesus replies to Mary, "Why were you searching for me?" "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Lk. 2:49) Jesus was as surprised by Mary's comment as no doubt she was by His. He assumed it natural to be in His Father's house. His answer shows that He had a desire to serve God and a knowledge of His unique relationship to Him. "Two fathers are mentioned in the account, one human, one divine, and Jesus is the Son of both" (Edwards, 96).

To assume His role as Messiah, a deeper relationship with His heavenly Father had to come about which meant that a break from His parents was necessary. Mary and Joseph did not understand this (Lk. 2:50), though they would come to understand Jesus' messiahship over time.

***Jesus' Adolescence and Early Manhood -Luke 2:51-52***

***2:51 And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.***

***2:52 And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.***

Jesus, as a good son, and as an example to us, returned obediently with His family. But more than that He is obedient to God; He kept the fifth commandment and honored His father and mother. As the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), the head of a new humanity, He is obedient to the Father in every stage of His development, in stark contrast to the first Adam who disobeyed from the start. No wonder God said, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights" (Isa. 42:1).

How remarkable that the Son of God obeys His parents.

He also grew in his human nature. "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." At every stage of His life there was appropriate and perfect growth. It is noteworthy that He grew in wisdom. Isaiah 11:2 says of the Messiah that "The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, *The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*" But wisdom is also that characteristic that comprehends God's salvation. Wisdom is believing God and embracing the way of God; He grew in conformity to His Father's saving purpose.

**1 Corinthians 1:21-24**

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed, Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, *Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*"

Perhaps, Luke is telling us that Jesus grew in His understanding of His calling as the wisdom of God.