

Luke 2:21-38

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[0:00] Luke chapter 2.

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Luke chapter 2 starting in verse 21. Let's read down to verse 38. The Lord of God says, 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.

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. As it is written in the law of the Lord, every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

[2:07] And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel. And the Holy Spirit was upon him. 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.

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, then he took him into his arms and blessed God and said, Now, Lord, you are releasing your bondservant 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.

And his father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel 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. And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher.

[3:15] She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage and then as a widow to the age of 84. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fasting and prayers.

And 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.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this day. We thank you for the opportunity we have of gathering together. What a grand privilege it is to be with brothers and sisters in Christ and friends and family and open up the word of God.

And we pray now as we have opened it up, we have read it, we have seen it, and we have heard it. We pray that by the power and presence of your spirit that you would open it up to us. Father, that you would speak to our hearts, to our minds, and to our whole being, that we would be conformed by the word, that we would be shaped by it to reflect your glory and to live for your honor.

We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. I want you to see this morning just a number of matters concerning those that received him as many as received him.

[4 : 32] But as many as received him, not many did. We know that. We understand the reality. When we put all of the gospel accounts and the narratives of the birth of Christ together, we understand the reality that this matter which is so transformational in the history of mankind, this thing that had been ordained before the foundations of the world were laid, not a response of God to the problem of man, but the foreordained purpose of God to the problem of man, the coming of the Lamb, this matter that is portrayed so often in the imagery of the Old Testament, something that is spoken of from the book of Genesis to Revelation, that in that point in history in which it took place was rather unnoticed by so many.

We know and we have seen that if it had not been for the heralds of heaven, the angels proclaiming the birth of Christ, that this child would have been born and lain in a manger and no one would have taken notice.

We know that if God had not taken the initiative to reveal this truth to some shepherds that were out in the field watching their flock by night, then man would have continued living as he had always lived and would have failed to realize this event that had taken place.

We have seen the truth that if it had not been God's initiating work, then none of these matters would have taken place, though he had testified over and over about them and regarding them.

We have the testimony of Scripture as we read of the life of Christ that most places he went, he was ultimately rejected. He was welcomed for a moment in his ministry.

[6 : 15] He was welcomed because he could heal the sick or cause the blind to see or the lame to walk. He could feed the multitudes and the multitudes would come back, but they were coming back for the food.

They were coming back for the healing and miraculous powers that were being displayed. They weren't coming because of who he was. But the testimony of Scripture also shows us, but there were some.

There were some, but as many as received him that did receive him at his first coming, those that received him even on the testimony of those he left behind, and as many as received him, what is true about these individuals, even in looking at the activities and the actions of their life, I want you to understand this, we are not separating this from the sovereignty of God.

That is, we have two wings of a bird as D.O. Moody used to say, we have the free will of man and we have the sovereign providential purposes of God, and if you remove one, we just fly in a circle.

We always see what God is doing quite often in the background, and it is brought to the foreground by the activity that man takes, and we'll see it even in the lives of Simeon and Anna. But I want you to understand, none of this would have taken place if Joseph and Mary had not taken those simple steps of obedience in doing what God had commanded in the Old Testament.

[7 : 39] Isn't it amazing, in the leading of God, that all of a sudden, on the eighth day come, the day of his circumcision, they gave him the name Jesus, the name spoken by the angel before he was even conceived in the womb.

We see their obedience. And then we see on the 40th day, if we were to go to the book of Leviticus, Leviticus chapter 12, see that when a son is born, it's 40 days before the mother can enter into the temple.

If it's a daughter, then it is 80 days of her impurity before she can enter into the temple. But after the birth of a son, some 40 days later, she can bring that child and redeem that firstborn son who is holy to the Lord, how much more so than this.

And when we see these simple steps of obedience, and we see even the humble position of Mary and Joseph, because they did not bring a lamb to redeem, they brought a pair of doves to redeem, or pigeons.

They brought the lesser of the sacrifices for those who had not the means. I love what one commentator said, they could not afford the lamb because they were carrying in their arms the lamb.

[8 : 48] They did not redeem the lamb for he was the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. And she who bore the lamb who carried him into the temple could only afford to bring the humblest of means, but it was their humble obedience which led to the matters that follow.

And now we begin to understand, too, the sovereign hand of the leader all the way back in the book of Leviticus when God had declared that it ought to be this way, that these customs and these matters ought to be carried out in such a form, in such a fashion.

Even after going into Babylonian captivity, the temple being destroyed. If you're with us on Sunday nights, you know that we're making our way now through the book of Nehemiah. And we've seen just the historically importance of rebuilding Jerusalem.

It wasn't so that Jews would have a city to live with them because if there were no walls around Jerusalem, there would have been no gates in which Christ could have came in gentle and lowly and riding on the back of a donkey when all the people cried out, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, as Zechariah had prophesied.

There had to be gates before there could be the fulfillment of that. And if there had not been a temple as recorded for us in the building of the book of Ezra, then there could not have been a custom of bringing your child to the temple on the 40th day.

[10 : 00] See, these are the leading of God, not just for the benefit of man temporally, but for the eternal purposes of God historically, that God could bring about all that he said he could do.

And he moved these people throughout history, even in the preservation, in the book of 1 and 2 Chronicles, which we seem to deem so mundane for the repetition of their names and their genealogies.

We get lost in all of these things and we say, why are they there? Why do they matter? Until we remember that 1 and 2 Chronicles are the last books in the Jewish scripture. And within the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles are recorded for us three important matters, the lineage of David, the role of the Levites and the priest, and the importance of the temple.

And then we understand that these are all three important matters in the life of Christ. For if we did not have the preservation of the lineage of David, how would we know that Jesus is the seed of David?

And if we did not know the role of the Levites and priests, then would Zacharias have been burning incense in the temple if we did not know that the temple was important? See, these things are the last things recorded historically of the Jewish nation before God went silent for 400 years, so they were just doing what God had told them to do.

[11 : 13] And in the matter of that custom, that routine, that day of activity, we find Joseph and Mary coming on the 40th day to redeem this child. And let's just be honest.

From all outward appearances, this child looks just like everyone else. And these are humble parents from Nazareth who are temporarily living in Bethlehem who are coming to redeem their son and no one would have taken notice.

This is not Zacharias and Elizabeth. This is not an aged priest in his advanced 10 years wife carrying a child.

This is a young lady and her husband carrying in a child in which nobody would have noticed had it not been for Simeon and Anna. And more than likely, most people did not notice.

But as many as did, something amazing happened. So what do we notice about this? Those that receive Christ, those that are waiting on Christ, the first thing that we notice is their posture.

[12:18] You say, well, pastor, that was a long introduction. I know it was because we have to have the introduction before we can have exactly the means that are going on. Notice their posture. It says, and now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.

There was a man that happened to be in Jerusalem, but the Savior was born in Bethlehem because that is where it says in Micah 5 that he must be born. And out of Nazareth he should be called a Nazarene.

And later on he shall be called out of Egypt. We will find when they flee to Egypt probably somewhere around the age of two. And we try to reconcile all of these things between the Gospels of Luke and Matthew.

But there was a man in Jerusalem, so it was of utmost importance that they take this journey into Jerusalem. And they bring this child on the 40th day to fulfill the law, but it was so much more than the fulfilling of the law.

For this man was righteous and devout. And here's his posture looking for the consequences of Israel. Now on the surface that doesn't seem like much until you read your Old Testament and you understand that the prophet Isaiah, which by the way is not accidental because Isaiah is the prophet of what?

[13:30] The coming king, the king of kings. He is a high priestly prophet who speaks of the suffering Savior and of the one who was set upon his throne. In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw his throne high and lifted up and I fell before him.

Isaiah chapter 6. It is Isaiah who proclaims that it would be a virgin who would conceive and they will call his name Emmanuel. It is Isaiah 9 that tells us that the one that comes will be the prince of peace, the king of kings and lord of lords.

But it is also Isaiah that says, though God had judged his people, that there will come a day when he will console them. That he will bring the great comforter of their soul into their midst.

And now all of these years later we find Simeon who is waiting for the consolation of Israel. He is waiting for God to fulfill his word.

He is one who has read the word of God. He has taken the word of God at face value and he says, oh Lord, you said you will console our burdens. We have no reason to believe that Simeon has been displaced or really has been mistreated by anything politically that has taken place for he still has the freedom to go in and out of the temple but yet he is waiting for the consolation of Israel.

[14:54] There are many if you do your historical reading that would think that Israel is living in a great time of abundance if you know anything about the time of Christ. The high priest at that time was a position that was kind of put up to the highest bidder.

So the high priesthood was occupied we know by the time of Christ's death we can understand there are two that are referred to as high priest the father-in-law and then his son and then son-in-law and we see that there are two that are kind of bearing that name and we say how could that ever happen and you ought to scratch your head if you're reading the reading plan and you've read of the trials of Christ this morning or you're reading of it today in the gospel of John you'll see that he's brought before two people of the Jewish people and both of them are referred to as the high priest and you ought to scratch your head and say that makes no sense and the reason you would scratch your head is because you've read the book of Leviticus and the book of Leviticus says when you're a high priest you're a high priest for life and then only after your death is there another high priest so there could not be two people high priest at the same time but there could be during the Roman rule because see it was put up every year to the highest bidder and those who paid the most for that very important position attained the title of high priest and so during the Roman occupation of Israel it were the Sadducees that were holding the position of high priesthood and the Sadducees held that position is because they were the ones who got along with the Romans the most and they were not

Pharisees really legalistic separated themselves and considered everything unclean rather they said you know this is not too bad let's get along and we can do business and we can prosper and the peace the Pax Romana the peace of Rome came into the room and they said business is good they made a lot of money and all of a sudden they attained the great prominent position of the high priesthood and it is that temple in which Simeon is waiting for the consolation of Israel see some people were at home in that world and it's not one of them he says it's not supposed to be this way and look at this humble position he holds this posture the posture of his heart is to say there has to be more and Anna is much the same way Anna is married lives with seven years with her husband until he dies and then until the age of 84 she is daily in the temple with prayers and fasting why because the posture of her heart says there's got to be something more than this two people who are very much living in the world but are not content with the world notice the posture of their life while this is where we're at this cannot be all there is there has to be something more and they were longing and waiting and even anticipating

God to do something greater this was a posture of humility it says surely something better than this is waiting secondly we notice their position simply put they had positioned themselves to be available to the Lord's leading by posturing their heart in such a manner that they were not content with the ways of the world but lived separately from it they were positioning themselves and this is where the free will of man and the sovereignty of God begin to interact they were positioning themselves to be available for God's movement and leading and now we have to say that because what does scripture tell us God resists the proud there are some people who are not so positioned by their own attitudes and by their own posture living in pride and arrogance the word he resists the proud they have put themselves in a position in which he will not do any work the unbelieving it says that

Jesus could do no miraculous deed among the people of his own town not because he was limited in power but because he was limited in willingness because of their unbelief they were not in a position to be available to be used by him or moved by him but here with this posture of humility it says in Simeon he was righteous and devout looking for the consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was upon him that is a wonderful testimony by the way and the reason it's a wonderful testimony is because the gift of the Holy Spirit has not yet been given the gift of the Holy Spirit is given at the ascension of Christ but the Holy Spirit's activity is unlimited because it is found in the Old Testament and here we find it in the early pages of the New Testament but there is a difference and I want you to notice the difference in the Old Testament when the Holy Spirit moves in an individual's life even in the life of King

[19:57] Saul when Saul was moved by the Spirit the Holy Spirit came upon him and led him to prophesy and to speak and to be humbled and to lay naked even among the prophets of that region when David was anointed by Samuel and it says the Holy Spirit came upon him and the imagery there is he is cloaked in the Holy Spirit I've told you this before in the Old Testament David is the only individual we find that has the Holy Spirit upon him from that day forward never leaves him never departs him but yet he is upon him don't miss the wording here the Holy Spirit cloaks him much like this coat is upon me it cloaks me here Simeon it says and the Holy Spirit was upon him cloaked him but when Christ ascends the wording changes it's a subtle change but it's important because then the Spirit comes not to be upon you but to be within you

Jesus says that when I ascend to the Father my Father and the Spirit and the Father and the Son will come and make their tabernacle or their abode within you friend that is the transformation is from the inside out you can see what I put upon me but I have the freedom to go home and to take it off and to change but you cannot see what is within me but what is within me is radiating from out of me and there is no denying that which is within me because it changes the very core of who I am I do not suddenly become a pastor simply because I put on some very comfortable golf pants and I'm so thankful for golfers and for goodwill I don't become a pastor because I have some good pants on a nice shirt on and a coat that I also found at goodwill I don't become a pastor because goodwill has good clothing okay I don't become a pastor simply because I stand where I'm at I don't become a pastor because of what I look like externally

I become a pastor when God called me and appointed me and anointed me and changed me from within I have done just as much pastoral work wearing a chainsaw hat and blue jeans and a fishing t-shirt as I have doing it in dress clothes I've probably done more the other way I have done just as much work looking not like a pastor I've had people over the years I'll never forget one of our church members this is I was pastoring at the former church I was I was weed eating our yard and she was bringing at that time her little daughter which now is one of our teenagers here was bringing her little daughter for my wife to watch and she showed up at the house and she gasped and she looked at me and I said what's wrong she said well my grandfather was a pastor she said I never saw him in anything but khakis and a dress shirt now at that time I believe I was and I said I don't have that much money my khakis are nicer than that okay I'm sorry you came to my house on my off day and this is what I look like but I'm still a pastor see I don't change because of what I put on me but we are changed by what he puts in us and that's the subtle difference at the death of Christ we are no longer cloaked with the

Holy Spirit we are filled with the Holy Spirit in Christ but Simeon was moved by the Holy Spirit and had been revealed to him it says because of his posture of humility the Holy Spirit is moving and again notice the initiative of God he could have all his life prayed and sought but if God had not taken the initiative and responded then Simeon would have missed it but the Holy Spirit was upon him and had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ and again we notice the activity of God you say well that's the activity of the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit is God just as much as the Father and the Son we're not going to define it we're not going to explain it we're going to accept it okay it is too far above our minds to comprehend it but we can't accept it here we see that the Holy

Spirit is revealing this matter to him and he came look at this and he came in the Spirit see he was so positioned that he could be led by the Spirit and being led by the Spirit at the very moment when Joseph and Mary came bringing that child and he saw that child and it says and at that very moment Anna comes in as well and we must position ourselves by the posture of our heart to say here we are oh Lord lead us not that we can do it in our own ability not that we can do it by our own strength but we ought to say here we are oh Lord we're looking we're anticipating something more and Lord humbly we wait notice the patience Simeon is an old man waiting to die Anna for up until the age of 84 she's been praying and fasting and waiting and looking and longing and then in that moment

[25:30] God led them to the expectation of their hearts notice the leading here because they were positioned to be available to him third notice their praise for as many as receive him praise him have you noticed that have you noticed even in the Christmas event that all that encounter this child cannot help but praise for the shepherds when they left went back glorifying and praising God and telling all who would listen to them about all they had heard and seen even the magi the wise men when they come they go back they glorify and praise God for all they have seen and here we find Simeon comes in and he takes him in his arms in verse 28 and he took him into his arms and blessed God began to praise him why and said now Lord you are releasing your bond servants to depart in peace according to your word he praised him for the fulfillment of his word the word of promise that had been given to him he praised him for the peace that he would have in death he praised him for the comfort that was given to him in life and for my eyes have seen your salvation and this is some other truth that we've noticed that those who praise

Christ around his birth even when we refer to the magnificent of Mary when she is still carrying this child in her womb or Zachary immediately after John is born the very first words he speaks after his mouth is loosed and even here Simeon speak of the salvation that has visited man not just the child that they're looking at but the salvation that God has appointed the fulfillment of his covenant promises they praise him and praise him for this reality you have prepared in the presence of all the people this includes us by the way a light of revelation to the Gentiles do you notice too in Zachariah's praise that he offers he refers to the revelation of God extending beyond the nation of Israel a light to the Gentiles this is a worldwide event this is not a local event though it happened at a time and place and even it says in Anna when she came in this prophetess one of the few prophetesses we meet in scripture but she is one at that very moment it says in verse 38 she came up and began giving thanks to God why because praise is a natural response to revelation revelation true revelation always leads to praise if God begins to open up his word and he will when you read his word and you study his word and you say father here I am speak to me through your word then as he begins to open it up and reveal it to you and you have positioned yourself and say

Lord I want you to speak to me when he does be sure to praise him praise is a natural response all who beheld him praised him and in scripture we see Christ lifted up magnified and exalted for all to see praise is a natural response but fourth and finally we don't stop with praise for praise is a private matter praise is something that we do when we gather together with the saints but it's something we can do when we are in our own prayer closets and when we're in isolation you can do praise in the audience of one you can do praise when you're gathered with a multitude but this fourth one this last one is something that we need fail not to do either and that is a proclamation they began to proclaim the truth they began to proclaim matters that were connected to this child Simeon takes this child praises God for the salvation that has been revealed the peace that has now filled his heart the willingness he has to die in the comfort of God being fulfilled and it says in verse 34 and Simeon blessed them and said to marry his mother notice that to marry his mother why because we know historically when we look at the death of Christ

Joseph is not there possibly more than likely he'd already died by that time and it was Mary that this would apply to 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 will be revealed and then with Anna it says that she began to speak it says and she continued to speak of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem oh may our proclamation of Christ not be centered around Christmas we celebrate and we rejoice in his coming but the reality is the one we meet at that coming is the one that we cannot help but speak of over and over and over again to all who would listen it is a proclamation of the truth of who he is regardless if anyone listens to us or not the shepherds testified to the reality and we understand that in that day and time the shepherds testimony wasn't even accepted in the court of law for they were considered unreliable witnesses but they didn't let that stigma keep them from telling anyone who would pay attention

Anna you know the aged lady who always has been here and she's just always hanging around fasting and praying and we know nothing of her other than this one little occurrence but what we do know is that from that moment on she could not help but continue to speak of him Simeon more than likely is going to die shortly after this where he says now I can die but in that moment when he has the opportunity he begins to speak and to proclaim the truth of who Christ is it matters not when we come it matters not when we are numbered among those as many as received him we are among those as many as received him may we never fail to proclaim the truth of who he is as long as we can may he be the subject of our conversations may he be the intent of our thought may he be the guiding force of our interactions may we be those who speak of him over and over and over again because

[32:11] Christmas is not the end rather was the beginning of this great event that the savior has come and he has come that we may proclaim the truth of who he is and we do it daily for his glory and his honor this is the description of as many as received them this is what it looks like those who proclaim him to a world that will listen let's pray father we thank you we thank you for this day we thank you for your word and pray that you continue to speak its truth into our hearts even as we come to this time of closure lord jesus we cannot praise you enough for taking on our flesh and dwelling among us for we know that truth was not so that we could celebrate a season but that we could see the savior and understand the salvation that has come to be made known to man and for that we praise you we praise you that as many as received you you give them the right to become the children of god so we pray that you would multiply that number that you would draw men and women to yourself that you would bring the knowledge of the savior into the hearts and minds of those around us and we ask it in christ's name amen