

Luke 2:21-38
How God Became a Man
AD1506

December 24, 2015 pm
Christmas Eve
Advent (Incarnation)

“The Presentation of Jesus”

INTRODUCTION: Jesus Christ came to save the world from sin and the wrath of God in judgment.

1. But in doing so, the Son of God did not come to earth as a detached manner, as a stranger to us all.
2. No. Jesus comes into the world as *one of us*. He came to “*His own*” (people): A Jewish boy to the Jewish people.
 - a. *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.* (John 1:11)
 - b. A Son of the Law (*Bar Mitzvah*) born under the Law of Moses
 - c. *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.* (Galatians 4:4-5)
 - d. The Author of Hebrews puts it this way...

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:14-18)

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:8-10)

3. In **Luke 2:21-38**, the Evangelist gives us a glimpse into the first couple months of the infant Jesus’ life.
 - a. His circumcision (2:21)
 - b. His presentation (2:22-24)
 - c. His recognition (2:25-38)
4. **Donald Guthrie:** *Jesus the Messiah: “The Messiah was Jewish, and it was expected that He would conform to Jewish rites.”* (p. 23)
5. Because we Presbyterians are so afraid of the Catholic tendency to venerate “saints”, especially the “*Holy Family*”: *Jesus, Mary and Joseph*, we often ignore the significance and the powerful influence Joseph and Mary have on Jesus.
6. **Darrell L. Bock:** *Luke: IVP; p. 57.*

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Reflecting the piety of obedient Jewish parents, Joseph and Mary undertake to circumcise the child on the eighth day and give him the name the angel said he should possess, Jesus. In every action this couple is showing faithfulness. They are examples of faith. As devout Jewish parents, they follow the Mosaic law. Jesus has been born into a good family.

7. Each of these three incidents in the passage – circumcision, presentation and recognition – tell us...
 - a. Something about the person of Jesus
 - b. Something about the mission of the Messiah
 - c. Something about those who believe in the Christ

I. THE CIRCUMCISION: THE IDENTITY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH (Luke 2:21)

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. (Luke 2:21)

1. While in Bethlehem, eight days after his birth, Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the local synagogue, to a Rabbi, for his circumcision.
2. **Leon Morris:** *Luke: TNTC; p. 95.*
 - a. *Luke puts no emphasis on the circumcision and in fact does not even say explicitly that it took place. His emphasis is on the naming of the child with the name given by the angel. The divine purpose is to be seen in the name.*
 - b. Morris is an exceptionally good Bible scholar, but at this point he simply misspoke.
 - c. Luke **does** explicitly say Jesus was circumcised: “*And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised...*”
 - d. Luke **does** want to point clearly to Jesus’ family keeping the Mosaic Law.
 - e. **But** unlike Matthew, Mark or John, Luke is not a Jew, and therefore, tends to not elaborate on Jewish ceremonial rites or ritual traditions.
3. Joseph and Mary were following the Levitical (Mosaic) Law to the detail:
 - a. Birth...8 days...circumcision
 - b. *And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” (Genesis 17:9-14)*

- c. *The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. (Leviticus 12:1-3)*
4. Jesus Christ was circumcised because He was a Jewish boy. If He had **not** been circumcised, He could not have been our Savior!
5. **John C. Ryle:** *Expository Thoughts on Luke: vol. 1, p. 62.*
- a. *He was a Jew, made of a Jewish woman, and “made under the law.” (Galatians iv. 4.) Without it He would not have fulfilled the law’s requirements. Without it He could not have been recognized as the son of David, and the seed of Abraham. Let us remember, furthermore, that circumcision was absolutely necessary before our Lord could be heard as a teacher in Israel. Without it He would have had no place in any lawful Jewish assembly, and no right to any Jewish ordinance. Without it He would have been regarded by all Jews as nothing better than an uncircumcised Gentile, and an apostate from the faith of the fathers.*
- b. *Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” (Gen. 17:14)*
- c. To keep God’s Law, to fulfill all righteousness, to remain under God’s Covenant, to be accepted by the Jews, to go to Synagogue and preach or to the Temple and teach, to remain sinless, and to qualify as the Son of Abraham and David – the Messiah – Jesus **had to be** circumcised.
- d. Just as He had to be baptized, years later, by His cousin *John* –
- Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-17)*
6. Jesus was circumcised for three reasons:
- a. **First:** *To identify with His people: Israel.*
- i. Circumcision made Jesus a Jew!
- ii. *A son of the Covenant*
- iii. It brought Jesus into the Covenant of God and the Covenant Community – the Church.
- iv. Jesus was *a son of the Church.*
- v. **Darrell L. Bock:** *Luke: ECNT; vol. 1; p. 224-225.*
- Jesus’ parents fulfill the law when they bring the child in for circumcision. They do what any Jewish parent would do with any Jewish son. When Jesus undergoes circumcision, he identifies with Israel, not all humans, since circumcision is a national rite.*
- b. **Second:** *To qualify as the Redeemer (Savior)*

- i. The Messiah/Christ had to be “*the Son of David*”
 - ii. An uncircumcised Jew would have been an apostate.
 - iii. Remember: Jesus would one day tell a Samaritan woman He would meet at a well, “*Salvation is from the Jews.*”
 - iv. i.e., Redemption comes through a circumcised Jew.
- c. **Third:** *To set before us a godly example.*
- i. Jesus would later expand Jewish circumcision into Christian baptism.
 - ii. And like circumcision, for believing adults and their children
 - *But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matt. 19:14)
 - *And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”* (Acts 2:38-39)
 - *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.* (Colossians 2:11-12)

7. In fact: **Everything Jesus does He does for these three purposes –**

- a. To reveal to us more fully **who** He is (His Person)

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)

- b. To show forth His **work** of redemption (salvation)

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. (John 14:11)

- c. To set before us a godly **example** of how to live (holiness)

For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. (John 13:15)

- 8. Christ’s circumcision calls us to the same life of obedient discipleship as that of Jesus. If such obedience was good enough for Jesus, it is good for you and me – “*A disciple is not greater than his Master!*”

II. THE PRESENTATION: THE DEDICATION OF JESUS OF NAZARETH (Luke 2:22-24)

And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” (Luke 2:22-24)

1. The Law of Moses stipulated the following:

- a. The mother of a newborn son was unclean for 7 days
- b. The 8th day the son was to be circumcised
- c. 32 days later, on the 40th day, two things were to happen.
 - The ceremonial cleansing (purification) of the mother
 - The redemption of the first-born

2. Here is how the Mosaic Law actually read:

- a. *The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days.*

“And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, and he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.” (Leviticus 12:1-8)

- b. *All that open the womb are mine, all your male livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep. The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before me empty-handed. (Exodus 34:19-20)*

c. In Numbers, God said to the Priests:

Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours. Everything that opens the womb of all flesh, whether man or beast, which they offer to the LORD, shall be yours. Nevertheless, the firstborn of man you shall redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. And their redemption price (at a month old you shall redeem them) you shall fix at five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. But the firstborn of a cow, or the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar and shall burn their fat as a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. (Numbers 18:14-17)

3. So, on the 40th day after Jesus’ birth, Joseph and Mary travel into Jerusalem, to the Temple, to

- a. Ransom Jesus as the first-born son
 - b. Purify Mary as a woman of the covenant
4. **Please note:** *There are some who say that Jesus' brothers and sisters were from a prior marriage. If so, they were all born **before** Jesus was, and therefore, Jesus could **not** have been Joseph's firstborn! In fact, Jesus was Joseph's firstborn (legally and ceremonially), and Mary then had 4 other sons – James, Simeon, Joses (Joseph, Jr.) and Judas (Jude) – and at least two daughters ("sisters").*

Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" (Matthew 13:55-56)

So, Mary was a virgin before she had Jesus, but not after. And Jesus was the legal and covenantal son of Joseph – one who needed to be “redeemed” in the Temple.

5. **First:** The Son would be redeemed for the Temple price. A rather simple ceremony.
- a. The parents needed to pay the 5 shekels price to one of many priests. The child need not be present.
 - b. But Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the Temple to dedicate Him to God and receive a Priest's Benediction.
 - c. Two benedictions were said (Today they are...)

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us concerning the redemption of a son.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, who has granted us life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this occasion.

6. **Second:** the mother would be ceremonially purified...
- a. Little information about how this was done. But tradition tells us...
 - b. A lamb was purchased for sacrifice, but if the couple was poor, *two turtledoves or pigeons* could be used. Jesus' parents were poor.
- And to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." (Luke 2:24)*
- c. The money would be placed in one of 13 “trumpet-shaped” chests: #3 was the collection for purification sacrifices.
 - d. A superintendery priest emptied this chest daily, purchased the lambs or turtledoves, and delivered them to the sacrificing Priests.
 - e. Mary stood in the Court of Women, while there, at the Gate of the Women, and prayed as the smoke of her purification offering rose heavenward.
 - f. **Alfred Edersheim:** *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah: Book 1; p. 138.*

The purification-services, with such unspoken prayer and praise as would be the outcome of a grateful heart, was soon ended, and they who had shared in it were Levitically clean. Now all stain was removed and, as the Law put it, they might again partake of sacred offerings.

7. These two Levitical ceremonies have great significance for the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ. Here's their symbolism:

- a. When God sent upon Pharaoh and Egypt the 10th plague, all the firstborn of Egypt died.
 - i. God spared the firstborn of Israel.

Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. (Exodus 12:21-24)

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. (Exodus 12:29-30)

- ii. God then established the consecration of the firstborn of Israel.

The LORD said to Moses, "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." (Exodus 13:1-2)

"When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's. Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' (Exodus 13:11-15)

- iii. When God set up the Tabernacle, He redeemed the firstborn males by consecrating the Levites to Himself instead.

- *All those listed among the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron listed at the commandment of the Lord, by clans, all the males from a month old and upward, were 22,000. And the Lord said to Moses, "List all the firstborn males of the people of Israel, from a month old and upward, taking the number of their names. And you shall take the Levites for me—I am the Lord—instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the cattle of the people of Israel." So Moses listed all the*

firstborn among the people of Israel, as the Lord commanded him. And all the firstborn males, according to the number of names, from a month old and upward as listed were 22,273. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle. The Levites shall be mine: I am the Lord. And as the redemption price for the 273 of the firstborn of the people of Israel, over and above the number of the male Levites, you shall take five shekels per head; you shall take them according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel of twenty gerahs). (Num. 3:39-47)

- Hence: the redemption price of 5 *shekels*

iv. **Kyle Pope: Ancient Road Publications:** “*Jesus and the Levite Redemption of the Firstborn*”

This situation shows the willingness of the Lord to accept a substitute in the place of the firstborn. Even though the Lord had commanded that firstborn males were to be redeemed, at that time 22,000 Israelites were dismissed from their liability to God. The Lord accepted the lives of the 22,000 Levites as payment in full towards His claim to the ownership of the firstborn. This is exactly what the redemption of Jesus Christ accomplished on behalf of mankind.

- v. Jesus Christ redeems mankind from the debt of sin (ransom); He gives His life in exchange for ours; He becomes the sacrifice for sins: The Lamb of God; He pays the ransom price in His own blood.

- *For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* (1 Corinthians 6:20)
- *Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.* (1 Peter 1:18-19)

- vi. Jesus is the High Priest who redeems us all with His own life.

b. And, Jesus purifies us from all *uncleanness*, due to sin in the world and in us.

- Mary’s *uncleanness* was due to childbirth.
- The pain of such a reminder of sin’s curse.

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16)

- iii. Christ removes that curse by taking it on Himself –

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:13-14)

iv. And His blood washes all of us clean from our blood-guiltiness.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:7-9)

8. So, when Joseph and Mary presented their son, Jesus, in the Temple, they were **dedicating** or **consecrating** Him to His future salvific mission:
 - a. *And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (Luke 2:22)*
 - b. *“to present Him to the Lord”* as the Redeemer
 - c. *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)*
 - d. *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. (1 Timothy 1:15)*
9. **Here is an amazing truth:** *These ancient Mosaic statutes and Levitical ceremonies pointed to Jesus Christ – every one of them. Even when Mary and Joseph did not understand their Christological meaning, they were preparing us to see and appreciate the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.*
10. The same is true of our Christian **sacraments**:
 - a. **Baptism:** a cleansing from sin and a consecration of our children to God for redemption
 - b. **Lord's Supper:** our New Testament Passover meal to remind us that the blood of Jesus is over the lintel of Christian homes, for those who are trusting in Christ.
 - c. *Ransom...cleansing:* Salvation in Jesus Christ
He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)
11. You may not understand all you need to know about the **Baptism** of you and your children, or the **Lord's Supper**, but God does! And He blesses those who honor these sacraments in faith, reverence, and humble obedience.
12. **I. Howard Marshall:** *Luke: NIGTC; 117...* Three key pictures here:
 - a. First: purification of Mary from uncleanness
 - b. Second: redemption of Jesus as firstborn
 - c. Third: consecration (dedication) to God for service
We should probably find a third element in the narrative, namely the offering of the child to God for his service, in the same way as Samuel was offered by his parents to God.

III. THE BLESSING: THE RECOGNITION OF JESUS OF NAZARETH (Luke 2:25-38)

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting 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 do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

*“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”*

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:25-35)

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38)

1. Some people *recognized* Jesus for who He really was, long before anyone else.
 - a. Two such people were an old man and a widow: *Simeon and Anna (Hannah)*
 - b. Godly people whose lives were focused on the Hope of Israel – the Coming Messiah.
2. **Simeon** is described simply as a *righteous and devout* man, up in age and close to death (?), waiting for the Messiah on whom the Holy Spirit rested.
 - a. i.e., a *Prophet*: Preaching and Praying in the Temple
 - b. When Joseph and Mary bring the infant Jesus into the Temple, the Spirit of God revealed Christ to Simeon –
 - c. How? We don't know...

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 do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said. (Luke 2:26-28)
 - d. *The Nativity Story* (movie; 2006), produced by **Toby Emmerich** and directed by **Catherine Hardwicke** (a man and a woman) presents Simeon as hearing the cry of the infant and realizing the voice of his God and Savior! Perhaps!
 - e. Simeon takes Jesus into his arms and gazing into the baby face of the long-awaited Messiah, he prophesies.
3. The fourth and final **Christmas Canticle** – the *Nunc Dimmittis* – Latin for “Now, O Lord...”

- a. *“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”* (Luke 2:29-32)
- b. Salvation...light...glory – that’s how Simeon sees Jesus.
- c. *Salvation* sent from God; God’s answer to our sin
- d. *Light* of revelation to the Gentiles = the Light of the World, steeped in darkness
- i. *The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.* (Isaiah 9:2)
 - ii. *“I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;
I will take you by the hand and keep you;
I will give you as a covenant for the people,
a light for the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.* (Isaiah 42:6-7)
 - iii. *“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”* (Isaiah 49:6)
 - iv. *Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.
And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising.* (Isaiah 60:1-3)
 - v. *In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and
the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was
John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe
through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true
light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.* (John 1:4-9)
 - vi. *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will
not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* (John 8:12)

- vii. “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” (Ephesians 5:14b)
- e. *Glory* for the people of Israel (Jews) who lived in such shame and humiliation
- i. In the Lord all the offspring of Israel

...shall be justified and shall glory. (Isaiah 45:25)

I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off, and my salvation will not delay; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory.” (Isaiah 46:13)
 - ii. The vindication of the people of God in the world!
- f. And **Joseph** and **Mary** were struck with wonder over all this exalted prophecy...
And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. (Luke 2:33)
- g. **But...**not all is glorious and rosy; there is a dark side to this little’s boy’s life.
- i. *...a sword!*
 - ii. *And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”* (Luke 2:33-35)
 - iii. Christ will yield a spiritual sword (force) that will do four things:
 - Divide mankind between saved and damned
 - Pierce the heart of Mary with sorrow
 - Cause opposition by sinful men
 - Cut down to the soul and thoughts of all people
 - iv. *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* (Hebrews 4:12)
 - v. **The Precious little boy will grow up to become a provocative and powerful man – a force from God to be reckoned with!**
4. **Hannah**, a prophetess, added her voice to Simeon’s prophesy in thanksgiving and testimony:
- a. *And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.* (Luke 2:36-38)
 - b. She, too, saw in the Babe of Bethlehem “*the redemption of Jerusalem*” (v. 38).
 - c. She shares with a small, but faithful, remnant who are waiting for the Messiah.
 - d. **Norval Geldenhuys: Luke: NICNT; p. 38.**

For this reason the coming of Jesus became known in a comparatively wide circle—but only among those faithful souls who had earnestly hoped for His coming.

5. Once people **recognize** Jesus for who He really is, three things always happen – the same things that happened to Simeon and Hannah:
 - a. They **feel prepared to die**, because they are reconciled to God.
 - b. They **break forth in praise and thanksgiving** for their own salvation.
 - c. They **tell others about Jesus** and what He can do for them.

CONCLUSION: There is a repeated note of **wonder** and **mystery** in this story of the Nativity...

1. It is found in Joseph and Mary (but also seen in others)...
 - a. *And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered.* (Luke 1:63)
 - b. *And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.* (Luke 2:9)
 - c. *And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.* (Luke 2:33)
 - d. *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.* (Luke 2:51)
2. Jesus has that affect upon people. It cannot be avoided!

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:34-35)
3. **Michael Wilcock:** *The Message of Luke: BST; p. 40.*

If I am concerned about the vital matter of salvation, then whether I like it or not, there is no evading what seem to be the exotic surroundings in which it is brought to my notice. Angels, predictions, miracles, are an intrinsic part of the gospel, because it concerns a supernatural break-in to our world, as unexpected as the message to Zechariah and as staggering as the one to Mary. For such supernaturalism we must be prepared: Christianity is meaningless without it.
4. How about you? Have you *wondered* at all these things? There is a **wonder** in Christmas that sometimes only children can see!
5. Does this story make you *marvel* at the work of God in history? These are indeed **marvelous things about salvation!**

*This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.* (Psalm 118:23)
6. Do you *ponder these things in your heart*? For there is certainly much to **think about** as Christ presses into your life!

7. Jesus Christ was circumcised in order to become *a child of the covenant*, a son of the church. And He desires for you to bring your sons and daughters to Him in baptism, and make them *children of the covenant and of the church* as well. Your children belong to Jesus.

Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 18:3)

“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”
(Matthew 19:14)

8. Jesus Christ was dedicated to God to ransom you and your household, and to cleanse you from all spiritual uncleanness. It is time for us to consecrate ourselves to Christ in faith and to God in service. All the rituals of Christian faith drive us to that decision, to that dedication.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

9. Jesus Christ wants to be recognized as your *salvation*, the *Light* of the World, and the *glory* of the church. He is calling us to repentance, faith and discipleship. To recognize Christ for who He really is will issue forth in assurance in the face of death, praise and thanksgiving, and joyful witness.
10. Have you been *baptized* into Christ? Have you *dedicated* yourself to God’s service? Have you *recognized and believed* in Jesus the Messiah?
11. Want to know something interesting? All those who encounter Christ – old Priest and old Prophets, barren women and young virgin, angels and shepherds, neighbors and Temple worshippers – will tell you that their world was turned upside down by this Divine Invasion called **The Incarnation** – God becoming a man.
12. And what it did to them was this: *It filled their souls, their lives and their families with joy, praise, hope, comfort, marvel and wonder.*
13. Jesus made their lives *wonderful* – full of wonder!
14. I think you ought to *ponder these things* in your heart!

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* (Isaiah 9:6)