

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 3: Jesus Presented and the Boy in the Temple -- Luke 2:21-52

The Son of God, eight days old, is brought to be circumcised like every Hebrew boy before Him, and He is given the name the angel had spoken before He was conceived: Jesus, the Lord saves. The Maker of heaven and earth submits to the knife of the covenant. The One who gave Moses the Law on Sinai is now placed under that Law, carried in the arms of a young mother who offers the sacrifice of the poor, two small birds, because a lamb is more than her family can afford. Heaven could have announced His arrival to kings. Instead, the King of kings begins His life in obscurity, in obedience, and in poverty, doing everything the Law required because He came to fulfill it on our behalf.

Then two old saints step into the story, and they have been waiting their whole lives for this moment. Simeon is a righteous and devout man who has been promised that he will not die until he sees the Lord's Christ. When Mary and Joseph carry the infant into the temple courts, the Spirit moves the old man, and he takes the baby into his arms and blesses God: "My eyes have seen your salvation" (v. 30). In that small bundle Simeon holds the rescue of the world, a light for the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. And then his tone turns. He warns Mary that this child is set for the fall and rising of many, and that a sword will pierce her own soul. Salvation has come, but it will divide hearts and break a mother's heart along the way.

Anna is there too, an aged widow who has all but lived in the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. She comes up at that very hour, gives thanks to God, and begins to speak of the child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Two faithful elders, one man and one woman, have spent their long lives leaning toward a promise, and now the promise has a face. They remind us that the people most ready to recognize the Savior are often not the powerful or the busy, but those who have learned to wait on God with prayer, devotion, and an undistracted heart.

The chapter closes with the only window the Gospels give us into Jesus' childhood. The family returns to Nazareth, and the child grows, becomes strong, and is filled with wisdom. Then, at twelve, He is found in the temple among the teachers, astonishing them with His understanding, and He says something that stops us in our tracks: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (v. 49). Here is the mystery this lesson sets before us. The boy who genuinely grew and learned and obeyed His parents is also the eternal Son who knows, even at twelve, that God is His Father in a way no one else can claim. Read these verses slowly, and let yourself marvel at the One who is fully God and fully man.

Group Discussion: Simeon and Anna had spent decades "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (v. 25) and the "redemption of Jerusalem" (v. 38), worshiping, praying, and fasting while they leaned toward a promise they might never see fulfilled. In a culture that prizes speed and

instant results, what do these two elderly saints teach us about godly waiting? Why does it so often seem that the people most ready to recognize what God is doing are those who have learned to wait on Him with patient devotion?

Personal Reflection: Luke tells us that the boy Jesus “increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (v. 52), growing over time in every way a real human being grows. Where in your own life have you stopped expecting to grow, perhaps settling into the idea that you are too old, too set, or too far along to change? What would it look like this week to ask God to keep increasing you in wisdom and in favor with Him?

Read Luke 2:21–52

Study Questions

1. On the eighth day Jesus was circumcised and named, and after the days of purification His parents brought Him to Jerusalem “to present him to the Lord” and to offer “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons” (vv. 22–24). Why does it matter that Jesus was “born under the law” (Galatians 4:4) and that His family carefully kept the Law of Moses, and what does this teach us about why He came?
2. Simeon had been waiting “for the consolation of Israel,” trusting the promise that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ (vv. 25–26), and he spent his years devout and watchful. Are you living with that kind of expectancy toward God, or have the busyness and disappointments of life dulled your watchfulness? What is one promise of God you need to start leaning toward again?
3. Taking the child in his arms, Simeon blessed God and said his eyes had seen God’s salvation, “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel” (vv. 30–32). What does this declaration teach about who Jesus is and about the reach of the salvation He brings, and how does it fit into God’s purpose for all the nations?
4. Simeon warned Mary that her child was “appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel,” a sign “that is opposed,” and that a sword would pierce her own soul (vv. 34–35). Jesus still divides hearts and exposes what is hidden in them. How has following Jesus cost you something or set you against the grain of those around you, and where are you tempted to want a Savior who never disrupts your life?
5. Anna, a widow of great age, “did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day,” and she gave thanks and spoke of the child “to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem” (vv. 37–38). What does Anna’s life of worship, fasting, prayer, and faithful testimony teach us about devotion to God and about the place such godly women hold in His people?
6. After fulfilling everything required by the Law, the family returned to Nazareth, where “the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom” in an ordinary town far from the centers of power (vv. 39–40). God did His deepest work in Jesus through years of hidden, ordinary life. How do you tend to view the ordinary, unseen seasons of your own life, and how might God be forming you in them right now?

7. When His parents found the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple, He was “sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions,” and “all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers” (vv. 46–47). What does this scene reveal about Jesus, and how does it both display His unique wisdom and show us a genuine human boy growing in understanding?
8. Mary said, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress” (v. 48), and even she and Joseph “did not understand the saying that he spoke to them” (v. 50). There are things about Jesus that even those closest to Him did not fully grasp at first. When Jesus does something you do not understand, or that disrupts your plans, how do you respond, and what would it look like to trust Him through what you cannot yet explain?
9. At twelve, Jesus answered, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (v. 49), yet He also “went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them” and “increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (vv. 51–52). How does this passage hold together the truth that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, fully divine and uniquely aware of His Father, with the truth that He was genuinely human, really grew, learned, and obeyed His parents?
10. Look back across the whole passage, from the obedient eighth day, to Simeon and Anna’s worship, to the boy in His Father’s house. Luke shows us the One who is fully God and fully man, the salvation of all nations, beginning His life in obedience, poverty, and ordinary growth. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from Luke 2:21–52 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Galatians 4:4–5, God sending His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law; John 1:1–14, the eternal Word who became flesh and dwelt among us; Philippians 2:5–11, the Son who emptied Himself, took the form of a servant, and was obedient; Hebrews 4:14–16, our great high priest who was tempted as we are yet without sin; Isaiah 49:6, the servant given as a light to the nations that salvation may reach the end of the earth.