

The setting vs. 21-24

Mary's purification – Jesus circumcision

ver. 21. This was the time prescribed by the Divine law for circumcision was the eighth day. Ge 17:12 Le 12:3.

Now, Jesus as the God/man, in one of His many offices such as Prophet, Priest and King, will be the New Testament Lawgiver and as such is not tied to the observance of the law.

But - he was also made of a woman, made under the law, Ga 4:4; and the law was, Le 12:2, that if a woman had conceived seed, and borne a man child, in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin should be circumcised.

So in this way He was to make himself appear the Son of Abraham; and so this was God's covenant, according to Ge 17:10, with Abraham and his seed after him Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

This law Christ was bound to fulfill, and by the fulfilling of it in this point he showed himself a debtor to do the whole law, Gal 5:3. He was to be a minister of the circumcision, Rom 15:8, and to the circumcision, which they would never have allowed him to be, had not he himself been circumcised. By his circumcision also we were to be circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, Col 2:11.

It was therefore reasonable and necessary that Christ should be circumcised the eighth day. He must be a perfect son of Abraham to be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of those He will save, His people, the reason He came into this world of sin..

His name was called Jesus; it was in circumcision before witnesses publicly declared to be so, for God by his angel had given him his name, Mt 1:21. It is interesting to note that we read of four men in the Old Covenant Scriptures, to whom God gave names before they were born; Isaac, Ge 17:19, Josiah, 1Ki 13:2, Ishmael, Ge 16:11, Cyrus, Isa 44:28; and in the New Covenant Scriptures we find two, John the Baptist, Jesus.

This lets us know the sovereignty of God for though the parents of Ishmael, and Isaac, John the Baptist, and Christ, imposed those names in obedience to the command of God, and there was only a short time between the giving of these four their names and their birth, yet the case was otherwise as to Josiah and Cyrus.

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^{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"),^{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.

Ver.22-24.

Jewish law required that after the birth of a male child his mother was regarded as 'unclean' for seven days and had to remain at home for a further thirty-three, after which on the fortieth day a purification sacrifice had to be offered (Lv. 12:1-8). This could be done only at Jerusalem and necessitated a journey there (24). Although Luke says *their* purification, it was only Mary and not her child who needed to be purified. Luke has run together the purification of the mother and the 'redemption' of her child (see below).

a. she was to bring a year old lamb for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle dove for a sin offering, to the priest to the tabernacle, who was to offer it for her, and to make an atonement. If she were poor, and not able to bring a lamb, (which seems the present case), then she was to bring only two turtle doves, or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt offering, the other for a sin offering.

The sacrifice offered was the less expensive one, permitted to poor people—a deliberate reference to the 'humble' status of Joseph and Mary (*cf.* 1:46-55).

b. The law required that a firstborn child had to be 'redeemed'. All firstborn creatures were regarded as consecrated to God. This was expressed by sacrificing the firstborn of animals and by making a payment of five shekels in lieu of children when they were a month old. (Ex. 13:13; Nu. 18:15-16). The law did not require the presence of the child at the temple for this purpose.

c. Jesus was present because Mary seems also to have made a special offering of

her child to God for his service, just as Hannah had given Samuel to God at the tabernacle. (1 Sa. 1:11, 21-28).

In these ways all possible requirements of the law were fulfilled (See Gal. 4:4).

And this brings us to Simeon.

"25* ¶ 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."

The Servant

He lived in the wonder of it all and in him we see three things that all genuine believers must possess.

The joy of salvation just

The joy of service Devout

The joy of satisfaction waiting for the consolation of Israel

The joy of salvation just

He was characterized as a truly holy, pious and religious man in the eyes of Judaism and of God.

He was just - justified by God, and therefore righteous because of God. He was faithful in duty to God and man. In the Old covenant scriptures when righteousness is being discussed in a context of men, there are many times a direct link between God's righteousness and God's justice being done and men not doing as they should concerning righteousness and justice. By justice we mean in the treatment of people. It means standing by the oppressed, the downtrodden those who are victimized. It does not necessarily mean that anything particularly spiritual is the result of offering help but the help is offered because the person is godly and devout. His faith precedes his actions, his works are defined by what he believes. Often, when God is chiding Israel for a lack of righteousness, He also mentions their lack of justice.

Here is a verse we quoted last week regarding Abraham's election by God;

Ge 18:19 "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household

after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

Pr 21:3 To do righteousness and justice is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice.

Ec 3:16 Furthermore, I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness.

Simeon was able to live according to the standards of God - the Law and the Prophets because He was made righteous by God's salvation just like Abraham. Therefore he could exceed the normal standards of men - He could exceed them morally, ethically and religiously because He believed in Jehovah-Jesus.

The joy of service Devout

Simeon was also devout. He was of good reputation, well received because he was cautious, circumspect, and careful in the worship of God. He prayed, worshipped and served and in his duties toward man he was careful not to offend.

The joy of satisfaction waiting for the consolation of Israel

He was waiting - looking, not with anticipation (expecting something) but with great expectation (strong belief-sense of certainty) for "Menachem", the consolation of Israel.

Simeon waited for Christ, that is meant by the consolation of Israel. The prophets ordinarily comforted the people of God amongst the Jews against all their sad tidings they brought them, with the prophecies of the coming and kingdom of Christ

Most of what Simeon says about Jesus is an application to Him of prophecies from Isaiah.

Isaiah 52:10 says, "The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

Simeon says, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all the peoples." Jesus is the Jewish Messiah who comes to bring glory to Israel, but the mercy shown to Israel extends beyond the banks of Israel and brings revelation to all the nations. Isaiah described the mission of the Messiah like this:

"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (49:6; cf. 42:6).

Isaiah implies that it would be a dishonor to God's servant-Messiah if he did not give him more to do than simply restore the glory of an oppressed and sinful Israel. That's too light a thing. So Simeon, following Isaiah, assigns two tasks to Jesus (this little baby!). As the light of the world he brings revelation to the nations and glory to Israel. That means that he will reveal the true God and the true way of salvation to the Gentiles who, as Paul says in Ephesians 4:18, "are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their heart."

In Isaiah 42:6,7 God puts it like this: "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to 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. I am the Lord, that is my name. My glory I give to no other." Therefore, the mission of Jesus to the nations is to open their eyes to who is truly God and to bring back glory to Him which has been given to all sorts of created things (Romans 1:20-25; 15:9-12).

Here old Simeon showed the truth of his piety and devotion, that he believed and waited for the coming of Christ; he had a true notion of the Messiah promised, he believed that He should come, He would come and he waited for His coming.

Because he knew the presence of God - the Holy Spirit was upon him

Because he knew the voice of God concerning His promises: He knew the Word of God

And he responded to the impelling of God's will for his life.

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.

God, in His providence and good will, by the Holy Spirit, gave Simeon this special revelation that he should live to see Christ born. The same Holy Spirit moved him to go into the temple, at that very time when Joseph and Mary brought in Christ, to present him to the Lord according to the law, the same Spirit did reveal to him that that Child was

If you believe, as I do, that God "accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will" (Ephesians 1:11), then there are no such things as accidents in an absolute sense. That is, while there are many events that are not willed by any human (and in that sense they are accidents), nevertheless there are no events not willed by God who controls all things. That means there is divine meaning in all events if we could only see it.

He blessed (Eulogeo) God for promises received – publicly

He called Jesus Lord (despotes)- the one who has unlimited authority

ver. 29-32. The song consists of an eulogium of Christ, whom Simeon here calls:

1. The Lord's salvation;
2. A light to lighten the Gentiles;
3. The glory of Israel;

and a petition, that now the Lord would let him depart in peace. But I shall take the words in order.

Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word.

He desires to die, having now lived to see what alone he desired life for. It is a speech much like Jacob's, Ge 46:30, when he had seen Joseph, whom he thought lost, but spoken here upon a much more weighty consideration. The word translated depart, signifies to absolve, and forgive, Lu 6:37; to dismiss, and to deliver as from bondage and misery. It is used to express the death of good men, by the Septuagint, Ge 15:15 Nu 20:29; and the noun from it is used so by the apostle, 2Pe 1:15. Simeon owns God to be the Lord of his life, who had the power of it, and could alone dismiss him; and signifies himself to be an old man, satisfied with days, willing to be at rest from the miseries of this life; but he begs to be dismissed, and to die in peace, that is, happily: see Ge 15:15 2Ki 22:20 Ps 4:8.

According to your word, that is, your promise, mentioned Lu 2:26. But the putting of

these words in before those words in peace, seems to mean that he could not die in peace before he had seen God's word fulfilled to him, in which God had made him to hope.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, that is, your Christ, according to the revelation I had from you. Simeon had a special revelation of a corporeal sight of Christ; he could not die happily till he had had that. None of us can die in peace, till we have seen the Lord's salvation with a spiritual eye, and made application of the promises of the gospel, in the more general revelation of his word.

Your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all people; that is, the author of salvation, for there is no salvation in any other, Ac 4:12. Simeon declares that this salvation was prepared for all kinds of people, meaning Jew and Gentile.

Isa 52:10, The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. So Ps 98:2. Simeon speaks the same thing more particularly, Lu 2:32, A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

All the people mentioned Lu 2:32 were either Gentiles or Jews. Simeon here prophesies, that Christ should lighten the Gentiles. The state of the Gentiles (by whom were understood all the people in the world except the Jews) is often in Scripture expressed under the notion of darkness, both in respect of the ignorance of the true God who was amongst them, and of their idolatry and superstition, and their lewd and wicked lives sometimes as expressions of their religions, think of temple prostitutes for example. Hence Paul is said to be sent to the Gentiles, to turn them from darkness to light, Acts 26:18. Christ is called light; John 8:12, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. So John 9:5. Conformable to the old prophecies: Isa 60:1-3, Arise, shine, for thy light is come. Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light. And speaking of Christ, Isa 49:6, I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Included in Isa. 42:1-9 is vs 6 "And give you for a covenant of the people, for a light of

In all of this is Christ who is Covenant who is the Servant –the suffering Servant,

1. So the first thing we can say about this covenant is that the covenant promised here in Isa. 42:1-9 is a person, none other than the Suffering Servant in this passage. The Suffering Servant is going to embody a covenant.

2. The Servant-Covenant will be given. There are echoes here of an earlier prophecy, “unto us a Son is given”. This is a covenant that will come from outside of the people... an example of a unilateral action on the part of YAHWEH.

3. The Servant-Covenant will be commissioned by YAHWEH. Not only is he having an effect on the people, He is divinely ordained for this specific purpose.

4. This Servant-Covenant brings justice. Justice is mentioned 3 times in the first 4 verses. Here in this passage the divine commissioning is itself characterized by righteousness. Justice is inseparable from the nature of this covenant and its effects.

5. This Servant-Covenant will be a light. In fact, these two phrase “covenant for the people” and “light for the nations” are so connected that one could say that this Suffering Servant will be a covenant light. IOW, this is a covenant from which light proceeds.

6. This Servant-Covenant acts on behalf of the people. “For the people” suggests not only recipients, but those who are the beneficiaries of the giving of this new covenant. There is a cause and effect relationship between the covenant and the people.

He is the Servant Messiah/King

There is coming a day in Israel in which a Suffering Servant will be embody the covenant for His people. This Servant-Covenant will be a light to those whom he is given. As this

covenant shines forth he brings justice to His people, a people that is broader than mere Israel.

And that leads us to consider a couple of other dynamics at work in this passage.

1. The first is that this “people” is not just Israel. Verse 2 says the Suffering Servant will bring forth justice to the nations. Verse 5 says God gives breath to the people on the earth. Verse 6 places these two words side by side... the covenant for the people is going to be a light to the nations. The benefits of this Servant-Covenant extend beyond Israel to the ends of the earth... including Gentiles. The reach of this covenant isn't limited to the nation of Israel, but is for all people groups.

2. The Servant-Covenant is Spirit empowered. Verse 2: I have put my Spirit upon Him. The same Spirit that has breathed life into creation (vs. 5) breathes life into the nations through this Servant-covenant for the people. The covenant-light is going to be a life source.

3. The Servant-Covenant effects a new creation. Verse 5 places the context of this Servant-Covenant in verse 6 in the original creation. Verse 5 is the language of Genesis 1:2, with the Spirit hovering over the waters in the creation of the heavens and the earth and Genesis 2:7 in which he is the life breath of God into man, or the original “generation”. Here the language of the garden is employed leading into verse 6 because what is needed is a new generation, or re-generation. And that's precisely the effects of this Servant-Covenant in verse 7: opening the eyes of the blind, releasing prisoners from the dungeons, and giving light to those in darkness. This is the language of a new creation. And indeed, verse 9 says as much: these are “new things”, an idea Isaiah continues in chapter 43 verse 19: Behold I am doing a “new thing”. The new creation has a Servant-Covenant bringing life to the nations.

4. The Servant-covenant is inseparable from a new law. Verse 4: “the coastlands are waiting for His law”, a law that will in and of itself effect justice.

5. The Servant-covenant is set over against the false idols of the people. Verse 17 of chapter 42: it is the Servant-covenant that is going to render the idols of the unbelieving Israelites useless. The covenant will shame any and all comers who attempt to usurp the divine right of the King-Covenant. (much thanks to Chad Bresson for these points)

And this brings us to the final phrase, “And the glory of your people Israel.”

All the earth is the Lord's, but Israel is called his son, his first born, Ex 4:22. Christ was the minister of the circumcision, Ro 15:8. To them it was that he was promised, of them it was that he was born, Ro 9:5. Among them he preached and did miracles: He came unto his own, John 1:11. It was written, “I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory, Isa 46:13. Christ is the glory of any people; the preaching of Christ, the owning and professing of Christ, and reflecting His glory, this is a people's glory.

33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.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-35* and a sword will pierce even your own soul--to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

They had revelations of what Christ was; the angel had appeared to Joseph, to Mary, to Zacharias, and Elizabeth; yet they marveled; they did not condemn and mock as many would and still do today, but they did not understand *all* of these things yet.

Many will rise and fall based on their attitude toward the Gospel.

This is clear in Old and New Covenant passages.

Isa 8:14,15, where he is said to be for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

2 Co 2:16, that they were to some the savor of death unto death, to others the savor of life unto life.

The reason is, because they that believe in him shall be saved, they that believe not shall be damned

35* and a sword will pierce even your own soul--to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

He tells Mary her soul should be wounded with the reproaches and indignities which should be offered to this blessed babe, as it proved afterwards, when she heard him reviled, and saw him crucified.

That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. The gospel truth does exactly this.

"The preaching of the gospel is the Lord's fan, by which he purgeth his floor. Persecution is the Lord's sieve, by which he winnoweth churches, and separateth the dirt, and darnel, and tares from the wheat. Gospel times and times of persecution are both of them times which make great discovery of men's spirits." Poole

Simeon knew the grace of God as an Old Covenant believer.

As we have been studying through the Gospel of Mark, we have seen that even the disciples were not in Jesus day, connecting all the dots about him.

But Simeon, by God's grace, rejoiced in the wonder of it all and so should we.