

07 – Baby Jesus in the Temple **Luke 2:21-39**

Step 1: Review (back to last time)

Last time we read the Christmas story. We saw that Jesus' parents and the first visitors were all probably teenagers. Who were baby Jesus' first visitors? (... *shepherds*) Were shepherds highly respected by people? (... *no, it was a "3K" job, and they were very low in society*)

Two weeks ago we read about the birth of John. In that story, two special things happened on the eighth day. Do you remember what happened to John on his eighth day? (... *circumcision and naming*) There was a problem with John's name. Do you remember the problem? (... *there was no ancestor named "John"*)

Step 2: Background (offering a sacrifice)

There was another tradition that was not included in the story of John's birth. According to God's law, when a baby boy was born, his mother was unclean for 33 days. On the 33rd day, the parents would go to the Temple and offer two animals on the altar to God. God's law required one sheep and one bird, but a sheep was an expensive animal. If the parents were very poor, they could use two birds.

Step 3: Key Questions

- **What did God promise Simeon?** (*v.26: that he would not die until he had seen Christ the Lord*)
- **Who praised God?** (*v.28: Simeon and v.38 Anna*)

Step 4: Read **Luke 2:21-39**

Step 5: Answer the questions

Step 6: Talk about it

Last week the shepherds came to see baby Jesus. This week it is Simeon and Anna. Were Simeon and Anna also teenagers? (... *no. v. 37 Anna was 84 yo.*) Anna was 84 years old. What about Simeon? Do you think Simeon was a young man, a middle-aged man, or an older man? (... *let them answer*) Why? (... *again, let them, no right or wrong answer. We think he was old, but the Bible doesn't say. Just let the students interact with the text.*)

Why was Simeon in the temple that day? (... *v. 27: the Spirit told him to go into the Temple*) Simeon knew the Spirit of God and obeyed Him.

Why was Anna in the Temple that day? (... v.37 *she was there night and day*)

Again, God promised Simeon that - ? (... *quick review: v.26: he would not die until he had seen Christ the Lord*)

What did Simeon say to God when he saw baby Jesus? (... v. 29: *now I can die, because You have kept your promise!*)

So – who was the baby? (... *Christ the Lord!*) Somehow God told Simeon that this little baby was Christ the Lord, that Simeon, and all Israel, were waiting for.

Where is baby Jesus when Simeon is praising God? (... v.28: *in Simeon's arms*) Simeon is holding baby Jesus while he praises God. Look at verses 29-32. This is Simeon's praise. What does Simeon say about Jesus in vs. 30? (... *what God has done to save His people; some trans. Your salvation*) Simeon is holding a tiny newborn baby – and he says this is what God has done to save His people! Isn't this amazing? What can a helpless little baby do? Simeon had great faith!

Look at vs. 31,32. What else does Simeon say? (... *a light for the nations, the glory of Israel*) Did God send Jesus just for Israel? (... *no*) No, God is sending Jesus so all nations can see and have the light of Christ.

What did Jesus' parents think about what Simeon said? (v.33: *they were surprised*) What did Simeon do next? (v.34: *he blessed Mary and Joseph*) Remember that a blessing goes from a greater person to a lesser person. Simeon was certainly much older than Mary and Joseph. He was also probably a very highly respected person.

That's really all the time we have.

Do you have any questions or comments?

Teacher's Notes for Week 7 were so voluminous they became a separate document, which is appended below.

Teachers' Notes for Week 7 – Baby Jesus in the Temple:

1. When I (Linda) believed in Christ, in college, I thought that it was something new, for young people. The concept of sharing it with my parents was a paradigm shift for me. Recall that one of our overarching questions is whether Christ is for the nations. Is He for all ages as well?
2. I am emphasizing the low position of shepherds because Jesus identifies Himself with them, and us with the sheep. Good for students to get a truer picture of what He was saying.
3. Luke does not record a problem with Jesus' name. There are two likely reasons for this, 1. Mary and Joseph were still in Bethlehem, far from home, and so may have been the only ones from their family present at His naming ceremony; and 2. Jesus is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name "Yeshua" which becomes "Joshua" in English. There might have been a Joshua in the family line.
4. The reason for going over the sacrifice for purification (the "Background" section) before the students read the passage, when it's kind of explained in the passage anyway, is to do what is called "softening" the passage. If you explain ahead of time, then there is one less new thing for the students to encounter when they read, and therefore they are more likely to get more out of the whole passage, which is what we want. There is actually much more to this sacrifice for purification than we are explaining here, and Luke's original readership would have had this background, so that the pieces that Luke includes would be pegged on their much deeper knowledge of God's law, and would serve to indicate how poor Mary and Joseph were, which is what we also want our students to realize. Do you see how deeply interconnected the Old Testament is with the New? This is one reason we spent so much Bible time in Genesis. Remember the original readership of the gospels knew God's law! Our students are clueless!
5. Simeon prophesies concerning Jesus. (from M. Henry's Concise Concordance)
The same Spirit that provided for the support of Simeon's hope, provided for his joy. Those who would see Christ must go to his temple. Here is a confession of his faith, that this Child in his arms was the Saviour, the salvation itself, the salvation of God's appointing. He bids farewell to this world. How poor does this world look to one that has Christ in his arms, and salvation in his view! See here, how comfortable is the death of a good man; he departs in peace with God, peace with his own conscience, in

peace with death. Those that have welcomed Christ, may welcome death. Joseph and Mary marvelled at the things which were spoken of this Child. Simeon shows them likewise, what reason they had to rejoice with trembling. And Jesus, his doctrine, and people, are still spoken against; his truth and holiness are still denied and blasphemed; his preached word is still the touchstone of men's characters. The secret good affections in the minds of some, will be revealed by their embracing Christ; the secret corruptions of others will be revealed by their enmity to Christ. Men will be judged by the thoughts of their hearts concerning Christ. He shall be a suffering Jesus; his mother shall suffer with him, because of the nearness of her relation and affection. (Lu 2:36-40) [I highly recommend you read Henry's regular concordance on this passage, it's very rich.]

6. "glory" means "weight" in the sense of "weightiness, importance."

7. This was part of the original "Let's talk about it" section, and might help if students ask you about Simeon's saying about "rising and falling in Israel": Simeon talks about standing and falling. Remember that we are reading a very easy English translation. In the better translations the word "others" is not there. It might mean the same people are falling and then standing. What could "falling and standing" mean? (. . . *give some time for answers*) Simeon knew that this baby was Christ the Lord. But most other people in Israel were not waiting for a baby-Christ. They were waiting for a strong political leader-Christ who would free their country from Rome. These people could not believe the real Jesus until they gave up their own ideas about the political leader-Christ. This is a very difficult thing. It is very hard for people to change their ideas or beliefs. It's like falling down. The wrong belief about Christ will make the person fall down. But when they believe the truth about Christ, they will rise again. I think Simeon is talking about coming to faith. It is very difficult to come to faith. But there are great rewards in believing in the true Jesus. I hope that you will see the true Jesus in the book of Luke.

8. Some helps with answering questions about the other things Simeon says to Mary. What is left is that Jesus will be rejected (happened at the cross for one example, when only a handful of women were left on His side) and that a dagger would pierce Mary's heart (happened throughout Jesus' public ministry, because of her special bond with him as his mother, but especially at the cross – how many times have I heard that no parent should have to lose a child, and to see her child die in such a painful and shameful way!) [Read Matthew Henry, or another good commentary!]