

The Birth of Jesus 3
Luke 2:21-32

21

Circumcision = peritemno = peri = around & temno = cut off

- a) Circumcision has health benefits
- b) Circumcision is the mark of Israel's national identity
- c) Circumcision was an object lesson to trust in the Spirit and not in the flesh

Jesus "was born of a woman, born under the law" (Gal 4:4) and so he fulfilled the law of circumcision

Submission to circumcision was an element in the Savior's required obedience, and without this obedience he could not be truly Jesus, that is, Savior.

The word *law* is used five times in Luke 2:21-40. Though He came to deliver His people from the bondage of the Law, Jesus was "made under the Law" and obeyed its commands (Gal. 4:1-7). He did not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17-18). Jesus' parents obeyed the Law first by having the child circumcised when He was eight days old.

Jesus later declared "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill (every jot and tittle - Mt 5:18KJV)." (Mt 5:17+)

Matthew Jesus declared to John when he hesitated to baptize Jesus "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he *permitted Him." (Mt 3:15)

Jesus (Iesous) is transliteration of the Greek Iesous, which in turn is the transliteration of the Hebrew name Jehoshua or Yeshua which means *Jehovah is help* or *Jehovah is salvation*. Iesous was translated into Latin as Jesus.

The giving of the name was a part of the ceremony of circumcision as in the case of John the Baptist (Luke 1:59-66). Don't miss the unusual way He got His Name - like John the Baptist, Jesus was named by God His Father, even before He was conceived (Lk 1:31)! And notice also that this Name was so important that God made sure He gave the Name to both Joseph (Mt 1:21+) and Mary (Lk 1:31+)

Luke 1:31 - *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.*

Matthew 1:21 - *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*

For He who knew no sin, and who never was to know sin, was already in His circumcision made sin for us. He was not so much as eight days in this world till He began to be numbered with the transgressors.

Alexander Whyte

Our Saviour put Himself under the law for our sakes, and in every jot and tittle He observed it. So we are delivered from its dominion; for if Christ has fulfilled the law on our account, it has no more claim upon us. "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Ro 6:14)

Charles Spurgeon

22

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

Purification = katharismos from katharizo = to cleanse (catharsis)

He was circumcised 8 days after birth but brought to the Temple for purification 40 days after birth.

After the days for Mary's purification were completed and she was again permitted to enter the temple. After the birth of a boy child, a woman was considered unclean for forty days or eighty days if it was a girl infant. Mary could otherwise engage in normal activities, but she could not take part in any of the Jewish religious ceremonies because she was considered ceremonially unclean.

Present = (paristemi from para = near, beside + histemi = place, set) literally means to place or set beside or near and hence to place at someone's disposal.

Paristemi in the Septuagint was used as a technical term for priest's placing the offering on the altar. This act conveyed the general idea of surrendering or yielding up which Paul picks up on in

Romans 12:1 – *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present (paristemi) your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."*

The purification involved 3 elements:

- a) Mary's purification (Lev 12:6–8), which involved a sacrifice being offered at the Nicanor Gate in the court of the women;
- b) the redemption of the firstborn son (Ex 13:1–2), which involved five shekels (Nu 3:47–48) and which Luke did not mention;
- c) and the consecration of the firstborn son (cf. 1 Sa 1:11, 22, 28).

23

Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")

Ex 13:12 - *You shall devote to the LORD the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the LORD.*

The unusual choice of words in this passage reflects the connection with the deliverance of the firstborn in the exodus when the Lord passed over the Israelites (Ex 12:12, 23). Here the Law said, "you will cause to pass over to Yahweh."

The word law occurs in this chapter five times; oftener than in all the rest of this Gospel put together. Luke emphasizes the fact that Jesus "was made under the law" (Galatians 4:4), and accordingly elaborates the details of the fulfilment of the law by the parents of both John and Jesus.

The underlying idea of the redemption ritual was this: in the night of Israel's deliverance from "the house of bondage" all firstborn Egyptians were slain (Exod. 12:29). However, in God's holy sight not only the Egyptians but also the Israelites had forfeited their lives. In place of death God was willing to accept from the tribe of Levi lifelong service in the tabernacle or (later) temple, and from the firstborn of the other tribes five shekels, as a symbolic offering, a confession, as it were.

The dedication was not a redemptive act which cleansed from sin but an act of setting someone aside for a special purpose.

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and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Mary offers a pair of turtle doves, one of which is for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. The fact that she offers the doves shows that Joseph and Mary are the poorest of the poor, for which this was allowable.

The bringing of two turtledoves or two young pigeons

- a) one for a burnt offering [cf Lev 1:3+] – This is for Jesus
- b) the other for a sin offering [cf Lev 4:3, 8, 14) – This is for Mary

This not only emphasizes the poverty of Mary and Joseph, but it also shows that Mary did not consider herself to be sinless. Having made her offering, Mary was once again ceremonially clean.

John MacArthur makes the interesting observations that Mary's offering of two birds "indicates that they had not yet seen the wise men (Mt. 2:11) since the valuable gifts they brought would have allowed Joseph and Mary to afford a lamb for the sacrifice.

25

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.

Simeon and Anna, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, were a part of the faithful Jewish remnant that eagerly looked for their Messiah

Simeon was described as righteous as were Mary's husband Joseph (Mt. 1:19), Mary herself, Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke 1:6+) and Joseph of Arimathea (Lk 23:50+). In our modern vernacular of the use of "righteous" we would say "Simeon was saved." Simeon was justified by grace through faith in the Messiah.

- a) Righteous is his character before God and men.
- b) Devout is his character before God with the idea of reverent and careful about his spiritual life.

While you can skim over these two words in a flash, they reflect a lifetime of cultivation. No one accidentally becomes righteous and devout. Simeon cultivated his walk with God.

Righteous *dikaios* from *dike* = *right, just*. It defines that which is in accordance with high standards of rectitude. It is that which is in right relation to another and so in reference to persons defines the one who is morally and ethically righteous, upright or just. Luke uses this same adjective in the previous chapter to describe Zacharias and Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist

They were both righteous (*dikaios*) in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. (Lk 1:6)

In Romans 3:25 it is used of God's passing "over the sins previously committed" as described in

Righteous could have two meanings and probably both are intended in this description of Simeon

- a) declared righteous by faith, justified by faith and/or
- b) practical righteousness, manifesting a daily walk of holiness, growing in grace, exhibiting progressive sanctification.

Devout = *eulabes* from *eu* = *well* + *labano* = *to take hold means literally taking hold of well* ("carefully and surely") and hence a circumspect or cautious person who takes hold of things carefully. He/she is cautious, reverent, devout, pious.

In the NT the idea is God-fearing, sometimes translated "God-fearing" because it shows awe-inspired fear that reveres what is sacred, i.e. "godly respect" for the things of God.

Eulabēs especially suggests piety in the inner being (the soul), defining a devout attitude towards God (His Word).

Looking = *prosdechomai* from *pros* = in compound Greek words implies motion or direction toward = a deliberate and ready reception; to accept favorably, to receive one into intercourse/companionship, to give access to oneself or receive to oneself.

Prosdechomai means to receive one coming from some place and so to welcome with friendliness (Ro 16:2+, Phil 2:29+). This great Greek verb describes one who is waiting for something (in the present context Someone) with a sense of expectancy

Romans 16:1-2 - *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, 2 that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints,*

I never begin my work in the morning without thinking that perhaps he may interrupt my work and begin his own. I am not looking for death, I am looking for Him.

G. Campbell Morgan

The consolation of Israel = the Messianic hope. It is a name for the Messiah.

Consolation = *paraklesis* = *para* – side of & *kaleo* = call. Called alongside to help.

Paraklesis is used in Luke 2:25 "in an eschatological (prophetic) sense...i.e., Messianic salvation....In later times Jews occasionally called the Messiah himself מְנַחֵם = 'Comforter'."

This is important because this same Hebrew noun (מְנַחֵם = Comforter) is used in the lament of the city of Jerusalem after her destruction and the departure of Yahweh from the Temple (final destruction by Babylon in 586 BC).

In this tragic setting the Spirit inspires Jeremiah to record these words as if spoken by the desolate city "For these things I weep; My eyes run down with water; Because far from me is a COMFORTER..."

מְנַחֵם; Lxx = parakaleo which is in same word family as paraklesis), One who restores my soul.)

"...My children are desolate Because the enemy has prevailed." (Lam 1:16)

It is as if Simeon picks up the centuries old lament of ancient Jerusalem as he daily scans the horizon in search of the Comforter!

*Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in Thee.*

*Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.
Charles Wesley*

Beloved, that is enough of a biography for any one of us. If, when we die, so much as this can be said of us—

- *our name—*
- *our business, “waiting for the consolation of Israel”—*
- *our character, “just and devout”—*
- *our companionship, having the Holy Ghost upon us—*

that will be sufficient to hand us down not to time, but to eternity, memorable amongst the just, and estimable amongst all them that are sanctified.

Charles Spurgeon

26-29

30

for my eyes have seen your salvation

Genesis 49:18 - *I wait for your salvation, O LORD.*

Salvation = Jeshua = Jesus = soteria = deliverance, preservation

31

that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

Prepared = hetoimazo = to ready beforehand for some purpose

Presence = prosopon = pros = towards Y& ops = eye – literally, “before the eyes of all.”

32a

a light for revelation to the Gentiles

Revelation = apokalupsis = apo = from & kalupto = to cover or conceal

Apokalupsis conveys the idea of "taking the lid off" and means to remove the cover and expose to open view that which was heretofore not visible, known or disclosed. It means to make manifest or reveal a thing previously secret or unknown. It describes removing of a veil (an unveiling) or covering thus exposing to open view what was concealed. In all its

uses, revelation refers to something or someone, once hidden, becoming visible and now made fully known.

Gentiles = ethnos = ethnic. It probably describes most of the people who read this prophecy. If you have believed in Jesus the Light of the world, then you are a walking fulfillment of this prophecy!

Isaiah 42:6 - *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*

Isaiah 49:6 - “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 52:10 - *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.*

32b

and for glory to your people Israel

Jesus is the glory of Israel.

The descent from Abraham—the covenants—the promises—the law of Moses—the divinely ordered Temple service—all these were mighty privileges. But all were as nothing compared to the mighty fact, that out of Israel was born the Savior of the world. This was to be the highest honor of the Jewish nation, that the mother of Christ was a Jewish woman, and that the blood of One “made of the seed of David, according to the flesh,” was to make atonement for the sin of mankind.