

# What Are You Waiting For?

## **Luke 2:21 (ESV)**

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus (Jehovah is salvation), the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

*His circumcision was His first suffering for us!*

Don Barnhouse

Jesus' circumcision symbolized the work He did on the cross dealing with our sinful nature.

## **Colossians 2:11 (ESV)**

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

When Jesus was 40 days old, Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the Temple for the purification described in Leviticus 12. They also dedicated and redeemed Jesus because He was Mary's first born (Ex. 13:1-12). They had to pay 5 shekels to redeem the Redeemer who would one day redeem us with His precious blood.

## **1 Peter 1:18-19 (ESV)**

knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

## **Luke 2:22-24 (ESV)**

And when the time came for their purification (Mary's purification and baby Jesus' dedication) according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (set apart as the Firstborn) <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy (set apart and dedicated) to the Lord") <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Their humble sacrifice declares their poverty and their inability to provide a lamb. Jesus was the LAMB!

To understand these times and ceremonies, it will help to understand the background. Jewish families went through several ceremonies soon after a baby's birth:

1. Circumcision. Every Jewish boy was circumcised and named on the eighth day after birth. (John)

## **Genesis 17:9-14 (ESV)**

And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup> This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> 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, <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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.”

Circumcision symbolized their unique relationship with God.

2. Redemption of the firstborn. A firstborn son was presented to God 30 days after their birth.

The ceremony included buying back—"redeeming"—the child from God through an offering. Through this, the parents would acknowledge that the child belonged to God, who alone has the power to give life. Luke explained for his Gentile audience that this command came from the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord". So Mary and Joseph brought him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.

3. Purification of the mother. For forty days after the birth of a son and eighty days after the birth of a daughter, the mother was ceremonially unclean and could not enter the temple. So when the time came for their purification they went to the temple to present Jesus to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law.

Mary and Joseph were to bring an offering—a lamb for a burnt offering and a dove or pigeon for a sin offering. The priest would sacrifice these animals and declare the woman to be clean. If a lamb was too expensive, the parents could bring a second dove or pigeon instead.

### **Luke 2:25-26 (ESV)**

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout (carefully observing the Law), waiting for the consolation of Israel (Messiah), and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> 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.

Luke introduced another person who would be divinely told of the Messiah's arrival and who would confirm the baby's identity. His name is Simeon. He was spiritually in tune with God: righteous, devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, with the Holy Spirit upon him. His occupation is unknown. He had all his life held on to God's promise of a coming deliverer, so through the Holy Spirit, God promised that Simeon would not die before seeing the Lord's Christ.

The "consolation of Israel" was another way of describing the Messianic hope. "Consolation" refers to the restoration and comfort of Israel as a nation. One of the traditional Jewish prayers was "May I see the consolation of Israel!" Simeon's prayer was answered that day, he was led of the Spirit, knew the Word of God, was obedient to the will of God and was privileged to see the salvation of God!

It is so important that people see Jesus the Christ, God's salvation, before they die!

Simeon was, a righteous, devout, and Spirit-filled man who confidently hoped in the future God had promised and stands forever in Scripture as a model of devotion and faithfulness to God.

### **Luke 2:27-32 (ESV)**

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, <sup>28</sup> he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, <sup>29</sup> "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation <sup>31</sup> that you have prepared

in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to present him to the Lord, Simeon also went into the temple courts, having been prompted by the Spirit to be there on this particular day. God was ordaining this meeting and keeping His promise to Simeon.

**Galatians 5:25 (ESV)**

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

**Galatians 5:16-17 (ESV)**

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Mary and Joseph arrived in the temple to do for Jesus what the custom of the Law required. This obedience to the Old Testament law is mentioned several times in Luke. It points out Jesus' credentials as one who obeyed the law, even from birth, because His parents knew the Law and did exactly as they were commanded. At the temple, Mary and Joseph met Simeon who took baby Jesus in his arms and praised God. The Spirit led Simeon to recognize this baby as the the Lord's Messiah".

Simeon's response to seeing the Savior was the 5<sup>th</sup> and last Christmas song in Luke. Simeon's song is often called the "Nunc Dimittis," the first words of its Latin translation. Simeon praised God that He had done what He promised and could be dismissed in peace. In other words, Simeon was now ready to die in peace because he had seen God's salvation or Savior. To see Jesus is to see salvation.

The word “depart” in Greek has several meanings and they all describe an aspect of the death of a believer. It means to release a prisoner, to untie a ship and set sail, to take down a tent and to unyoke an animal.

Believers are not afraid of death because it only frees us from the burdens of this life and ushers us into the blessings of His presence.

**Vs. 31-32** - This salvation has been prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

Jesus Christ is the completest manifestation of God's "glory" that His people had ever seen. Luke pointed out that from the very beginning God's plan was to offer salvation to Gentiles as well as to Jews. The mission to the Gentiles is a key theme in Luke and Acts. The prophets had predicted this:

**Isaiah 42:6 (ESV)**

“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 (ESV)**

he says: “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 (ESV)**

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.

It is so encouraging to know that this is always been God's plan and He will finish what He has started. Jesus our anointed King will return! Let us be like Simeon and be faithful and confident in our waiting!

### What do waiters do?

The Jews were well acquainted with the Old Testament prophecies that spoke of the Messiah's blessings to their nation. They did not always give equal attention to the prophecies saying that He would bring salvation to the entire world, not just the Jews. Luke made sure his Greek audience understood that Jesus had come to save all who believe, Gentiles as well as Jews.

#### **Luke 2:33-35 (ESV)**

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> 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 <sup>35</sup> (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

They marveled that this stranger in the temple recognized their small son and prophesied His coming as a light to all nations, not just the Jews. Simeon blessed Mary and Joseph and then prophesied that Jesus would have a paradoxical effect on Israel. He would bring light and salvation, but His coming could also cause division. Some would "fall" because of him, while others would "rise".

#### **Isaiah 8:14-15 (ESV)**

And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup> And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken."

#### **Malachi 4:2 (ESV)**

But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.

There would not be overwhelming acceptance of the promised Messiah—in fact, many would not recognize Him and would reject Him altogether. With Jesus, there would be no neutral ground: people would either joyfully accept Him or totally reject Him.

So Jesus was a stone and He would indeed be a sign – God's miracle, but He would be spoken against by many, His birth was a miracle and yet He was slandered, this only revealed what was inside many people's hearts.

The most important question we answer is who is Jesus?

And finally a sword an image unique for Mary. This would have surprised and saddened Mary. Simeon told Mary that a sword would pierce her soul. As Jesus' mother, Mary would be grieved by the widespread rejection she and He would face; she would experience great pain when He died. Although she could not have known it and Simeon had only a hint of it, Mary would be the only person on earth who would witness both His birth and his death. He was God's Son, but she would always be His mother and she would love Him as dearly as any mother loves a son. The sorrow and horror He would face would affect her deeply.

The Greek word means large sword and a verb meaning "constantly keep on piercing"

Although Simeon was very old, he had never lost his hope that he would see the Messiah. Led by the Holy Spirit, he was among the first to bear witness to Jesus.

In the Jewish culture, elders were respected and their prophecies carried extra weight. Contemporary society values youthfulness over wisdom, and potential contributions by the elderly are often ignored. Christians should reverse those values wherever they can. Encourage older people to share their wisdom and experience. Listen carefully when they speak.

**Luke 12:40 (ESV)**

You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

**Closing Prayer**