

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 5

Jesus' Circumcision

Luke 2:21

Luke 2:21 And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was *then* called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

The whole family gathers for the occasion of Jesus' circumcision just as they did when John was circumcised! Lesson Three covers the details of this circumcision ceremony. The important thing to consider in this passage is the unspoken fact that Joseph, Mary and Jesus remain in Bethlehem until the eighth day and most likely present Jesus for circumcision in the Synagogue in that same city.

Mary's Purification

Luke 2:22-24

Luke 2:22 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."

To grasp a full understanding of the concept of purification, we need to look at the actual law as recorded in the book of Leviticus.

Leviticus 12:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: 'When a woman gives birth and bears a male *child*, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean. ³ ~'On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. ⁴ ~'Then she shall remain in the blood of *her* purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed. ⁵ ~'But if she bears a female *child*, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation; and she shall remain in the blood of *her* purification for sixty-six days. ⁶ 'When the days of her purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the doorway of the tent of meeting a one year old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. ⁷ ~'Then he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a *child*, *whether* a male or a female. ⁸ ~'But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.'"

The offering for the birth of the male child was a lamb under a year old for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. Both were required.

Burnt offering – The person bringing the offering would place a hand on the animal to indicate that the animal was taking his place and then kill it. The priest collected the blood and sprinkled it around the altar and the sanctuary as the worshiper skinned and cut up the animal. After the priest arranged the various parts on the altar, the entire animal was burned as a sacrifice. The only portion that remained was the hide, and the priest received it as payment (Leviticus 7:8). The person who made the sacrifice did so to restore the relationship with God by atoning for some sin.

Sin offering –The person bringing the offering placed a hand on the animal and then slaughtered it. The priest sprinkled a little of the blood before the veil in the sanctuary seven times and placed some on the horns of the incense altar. The priest then poured the rest of the blood out at the base of the sacrificial altar. Once the animal was cooked, the priest would eat it. However, if a priest presented the sin offering, then the remains had to be burned outside the camp and not eaten (Leviticus 6:24-30). The person who made this offering did so to deal with sin committed unintentionally.

The purification law does not allow Mary to enter into a Synagogue or to touch any holy thing for 33 days. Do Mary, Joseph and Jesus wait in Bethlehem for 33 days before traveling to Jerusalem for her purification ceremony? The distance between Jerusalem and Bethlehem is fewer than five miles. If they stay in Bethlehem, Herod's men surely will kill Jesus in the slaughter that he has ordered. Where do Joseph and his family find safety during the days they remain in the area before presenting Mary for her ceremony in the Temple in Jerusalem? According to the other Gospels, the days are spent in traveling to Egypt and back where Herod cannot hurt the Child.

Simeon's Announcement of Jesus

Luke 2:25-32

Luke 2:25 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. 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. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, ²⁸ then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹ "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word; ³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹ Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel."

Simeon, a devout Jew who lives in Jerusalem during the days of Jesus' birth, has spent the majority of his life seeking the fulfillment of messianic prophecy and the restoration of Israel. God had promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. When Joseph and Mary enter the Temple with Jesus for the purification rites, Simeon announces to them God's plan for the boy. Notice the important points of his lofty announcement about Jesus.

The word "Salvation" represents the deliverance from evil, danger, guilt and the pollution of sin exposed by Jesus Christ. Hebrews 2:3 says, "how shall we escape if

we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard."

The passage "Thy salvation . . . prepared in the presence of all peoples" affirms the Messiah's purpose for everyone and not just for certain people!

The phrase "A light of revelation to the Gentiles" offers the Messiah's salvation to all those who had not been privileged to know the God of Israel as the God of all people.

This phrase "And the glory of Thy people Israel" confirms the salvation from God to the people of Israel.

Simeon's Blessing of Jesus' Parents

Luke 2:33-35

Luke 2:33 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."

Simeon does not become so taken by Jesus that he forgets His parents. He blesses them as he continues to tell of the greatness of their new Son.

The statement "Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel" indicates that trouble will come to the people of Israel before they are ultimately blessed by the Child's life. Paul continues the same idea in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 9:6 But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel;

The words "And for a sign to be opposed" specifies that Jesus will be denied by many. Sixty years later, John, the youngest Apostle, confirms this statement in his letter called First John.

1 John 2:22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

The statement "And a sword will pierce even your own soul" looks forward to the time when Mary is standing at the foot of the cross witnessing her Son's death or perhaps when she is standing outside the tomb as John the Apostle reports in his Gospel.

John 20:11 But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;

This line "To the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed" reveals that the Lord looks at the heart and not the actions. He knows the true thoughts of a person, a concept He explained to Samuel about a thousand years before Simeon says these words to Mary and Joseph.

¹ Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God *sees* not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Anna' Blessing

Luke 2:36-38

^{Luke 2:36} And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with *her* husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. ³⁸ At that very moment she came up and *began* giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The name Anna means grace. An eighty-four year old widow, Anna has served as a "prophetess" much like Miriam, Deborah, and Hulduh found in the Old Testament. After seven years of married life, her husband dies and during her long widowhood, she attends the Temple services daily. When she enters the Temple, Simeon utters his memorable words of praise and thanks to God that He has fulfilled His ancient promise in sending His Son into the world. After seeing the Child, she knows she has seen the long-awaited Redeemer. As indicated in verse 38, she will continue to speak about Him to all those who will visit the Temple in search of the Redeemer.

Jerusalem to Nazareth

Luke 2:39-40

^{Luke 2:39} When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

Finally, after presenting Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem with two offerings Mary, Joseph, Jesus and the extended family return to Nazareth. More than likely, they have been gone from home longer than expected.

Return to Jerusalem Each Year

Luke 2:41

^{Luke 2:41} Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

The Lord established the Feast two years after the Jews left the bondage of Egypt while they were still making their journey in the wilderness. They celebrated the Feast of the Passover every year. Moses recorded the Lord's instruction in the book of Numbers.

^{Numbers 9:1} Thus the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, ² "Now, let the sons of Israel observe the Passover at its appointed time. ³ "On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall observe it at its appointed time; you shall observe it according to all its statutes and according to all its ordinances." ⁴ So Moses told the sons of Israel to observe the Passover. ⁵ They observed the Passover in the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the sons of Israel did. ⁶ But there were *some* men who were unclean because of *the* dead person, so that they could not observe Passover on

that day; so they came before Moses and Aaron on that day. ⁷ Those men said to him, "Though we are unclean because of *the* dead person, why are we restrained from presenting the offering of the LORD at its appointed time among the sons of Israel?" ⁸ Moses therefore said to them, "Wait, and I will listen to what the LORD will command concerning you."

The celebration in remembrance of the original Passover in Egypt occurred on Nissan 14th, 1474 BC in the wilderness. The Jews have repeated the celebration every year in a perpetual tradition, even to this day. Coupled with the Passover on the 14th of Nissan is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a seven-day Feast remembering the time when the Israelites ate the unleavened bread after leaving Egypt. The feast begins on the 15th of the month with a holy assembly and ends of the 21st with another holy assembly.

Leviticus 23:6 ~'Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. ⁷ ~'On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. ⁸ ~'But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.'"

A convocation is a meeting and in this case, it refers to a public holy meeting. It is a time to worship the Lord.

During the seven days of worship, the people are to remember three things about the bread.

First, because the bread is unique, it illustrates Israel's uniqueness as a nation.

Second, because yeast is a symbol of sin, the bread represents Israel's moral purity.

Third, because when the Israelites left Egypt, they did not have time to allow the bread to rise. Subsequently, later Israelites left the yeast out of the dough. The unleavened bread remains a reminder to Israel to obey quickly.

The families could celebrate the feast where they lived, but after the return from exile, many Jews traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast in the capital city.

Jesus at the Age of Twelve

Luke 2:42-44

Luke 2:42 And when He became twelve, they went up *there* according to the custom of the Feast; ⁴³ and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, ⁴⁴ but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they *began* looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

At the time of the Feast of the Passover and the Unleavened Bread, Jesus accompanies His family and friends to Jerusalem for their annual visit where they stay for at least eight days. The people from the different towns caravan, probably for safety. Traveling in carts, on donkeys and by foot, they develop relationships and the passage indicates that the parents must have felt comfortable enough with the group to allow children to travel with other friends within the group. Mary and Joseph do not notice the absence of Jesus because of the size of the caravan of family members. His absence probably becomes known at night

when all the families have completed the first day's journey and all the children are expected to return to their parents for the night.

Jesus Teaching the Teachers

Luke 2:45-52

Luke 2:45 When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. ⁴⁶ Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. ⁴⁸ When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." ⁴⁹ And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's *house*?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. ⁵¹ And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all *these* things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

An extremely important point of this passage deals with the time of Jesus' trial and execution. He is known to the priests and Pharisees because He has been in their midst in the Temple every year since He was born. The text indicates that at the age of twelve, He sat listening to the teachers and asking questions. He amazed all the religious leaders with His knowledge. They know the man that they crucify. He is not a stranger to the Pharisees, including Paul, because they have watched Him grow through the years. We must not forget that Luke based his Gospel on Paul's eyewitness account of Jesus' life.

The passage says, "And His mother treasured all the things in her heart." One day, Mary will treasure all the memories that she had pondered about her Son in the past.