

Luke 2:21-35
July 15, 2018

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: When you hear the word “law” in a religious context, what does that conjure up in your mind? [Let people engage...legalism, bondage, structure, etc]

Q: If you were raised in a Jewish home, how important do you think it would be to follow the Law? What would be the “or else?” [Very important! The Jewish relationship with God is a COVENANT relationship. Thus, following the Laws expresses their desire to honor the covenant relationship with God as His chosen people.

So their mindset is that in exchange for the many good deeds that God has done and continues to do for the Jewish People...

- The Jews keep God's laws
- The Jews seek to bring holiness into every aspect of their lives.]

Transition: Luke did his homework. He became familiarized with Jewish Law so that we can appreciate what Joseph and Mary do following the birth of Jesus. The word “Law” is stated five times in this passage. Mary and Joseph are no different than any other devout Jew. By following the Law, they were confirming their covenant relationship to God. Jesus’s relationship to the Law is an important part of His salvation ministry. As a bonus, Luke will introduce us to two godly people who lived with expectancy in meeting their Messiah. We’ll want to observe the ways they respond when they meet Jesus. It is my hope that we CAN express our devotion to Christ BY following the EXAMPLES of Simeon. Let’s read v.21-24 to begin our study.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.21:

- On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

V.22:

- When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord

V.23:

- (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”),

V.24:

- and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.21: What's the first Law that Mary and Joseph observe? [They had Jesus circumcised when he was eight days old. Circumcision was required of every Jewish male and was the permanent mark of God's covenant.]

Q: What else was a part of the Law that was supposed to happen on the 8th day? [The child was to be named.]

Q: What was the name given? [Jesus – This was very fitting for “Jesus” is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means “Yahweh is salvation.”]

Q V.22: There was another Jewish Law in play. What do you see? [The purification of Mary according to the Law of Moses]

X-REF Lev 12:1-8: In order to appreciate the “purification” law, let's read Lev 12:1-8.

Q V.23: So the Leviticus passage helps explain what Luke is describing in the first half of v.22. But there's another Law they need to fulfill stated in v.22 and 23. What is it? [The Law of the Lord requires that “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord.”]

Q: What does that entail? [Offering a sacrifice to the Lord]

Q V.24: Luke references “a pair of doves or two young pigeons,” but what does God prefer based on the Leviticus passage we read? [A year-old lamb for the burnt offering and two doves, two pigeons for the sin offering.]

Q: Since Joseph and Mary only brought the doves and pigeons, what does that suggest about their “financial” means? [They were a poor couple with humble means.]

[Read Luke 2:25-35]

V.25:

- Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel (messianic hope), and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

V.26:

- It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

V.27:

- Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,

V.28:

- Simeon took him in his arms and **praised God**, saying:

V.29:

- “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.

V.30:

- For my eyes have seen your salvation,

V.31:

- which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
- V.32:
- a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”
- V.33:
- The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him.
- V.34:
- Then Simeon **blessed them** and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,
- V.35:
- so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.25: Who does Luke introduce at this point in the story? [Simeon]

Q: What do we know about Simeon? [religious and devout; he was waiting with expectancy for the “consolation of Israel,” and the Holy Spirit was upon him]

Q: What do you think Luke meant by the phrase “consolation of Israel?” [Simeon was looking for the Messiah, the One who would bring comfort to the nation of Israel.]

Q V.26: What did the Holy Spirit reveal to Simeon? [He would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.]

Q V.27: What does this revelation cause Simeon to do? [He was moved by the Spirit to head to the temple courts]

Q: What happens upon his arrival? [The parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required. So Simeon gets to perform the **consecration** of the Messiah according to the Law!]

Q: Since the Holy Spirit revealed that Simeon wouldn’t die before seeing the Messiah, what might we conclude about his prayer life and what he was seeking? [Simeon must have shown an intense desire for the Messiah and prayed about getting to see Him. This is a beautiful picture of fervency and persistence in prayer.]

Q V.28-32: Let’s observe what Simeon does once he’s introduced to the Messiah and given the privilege of consecrating him. What do you see?

- V.28 He started with praise.
- V.29 He blessed God for keeping His promise and sending the Messiah. He joyfully praised God that he has been privileged to see the Messiah and is now prepared to “depart.”

Q: What do you think Simeon meant by “depart?” [He is ready to die now that he has laid eyes on Jesus]

Observation: The word *depart* in the Greek has several meanings, and each of them tells us something about the death of a Christian. It means to release a prisoner, to untie a ship and set sail, to take down a tent (see 2 Cor. 5:1–8), and to unyoke a beast of burden (see Matt. 11:28–30). *God’s people are not afraid of death because it only frees us from the burdens of this life and leads into the blessings of the next life.*

- V.30-31 He has “seen” God’s salvation that was prepared in the sight of *all people*.

Q V.32: Since Jesus is our salvation, how will he be perceived among Gentiles vs the Jews? [For the Gentiles, Jesus is a light for all of them. For Israel, Jesus restores the “glory” to Israel]

Q V.33: Mary and Joseph are marveling at what Simeon is saying. Why do you think they are marveling? [Maybe because of his prophecy in v.31-32; or maybe it was a normal reaction in the experiencing of a divine revelation or the witnessing of a miracle.]

Q V.34-35: Simeon concludes the consecration ceremony by addressing Mary with some strong prophetic statements. What does he tell her? [“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”]

Q: That is LOADED! First, what do you think Simeon means when he says Jesus is destined to “cause the falling and rising of many in Israel?” [There are two possible interpretations: Luke may be describing one group that falls (humbles itself) and rises (is lifted up by God). Or, Luke may be describing two groups. One that falls (negative) and other that rises (positive). Most theologians feel the latter interpretation is more likely and reflects the double significance of Jesus’s ministry.]

Q: Then Simeon said that Jesus will be “a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.” What is Simeon saying? [Jesus would be a sign from God *rejected by Israel*. He will know the innermost thoughts to know someone’s spiritual condition.]

Observation: Jesus’s rejection by His own people was announced early in His infancy. This is serious foreshadowing.

Q: Imagine being at your son’s consecration ceremony and hearing that? What do you think you’d feel? [Let people engage]

Q: Simeon also said, “a sword will pierce your own soul too.” What do you think he meant by that? [Most likely he’s describing the sorrow Mary would experience in seeing her son rejected and crucified.]

Q: But why all the heaviness in a consecration ceremony? Couldn’t this wait until he got older?! [Simeon was being led by the Holy Spirit to say these things.]

LOOK:

God appears to work through dedicated people like Simeon who was fully devoted to God. We always have the opportunity to humble ourselves before the Lord and seek Him. One of the most powerful ways we can make a difference in God's kingdom is our devotion to prayer. When we're fervent in prayer, He reveals Himself to those who are dedicated to Him.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 177–178). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Moses (vv. 21–24). Note that 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. This was the sign and seal of the covenant that God made with Abraham (Gen. 17), and it was required of every Jewish male who wanted to practice the faith. The Jews were proud to be God’s covenant people, and they scornfully called the Gentiles “the uncircumcision” (Eph. 2:11–12). It is unfortunate that circumcision became an empty ritual for many Jews, because it proclaimed an important spiritual truth (Deut. 10:15–20; Rom. 2:28–29).

“His circumcision was His first suffering for us,” said the late Donald Grey Barnhouse, a Philadelphia minister and author. It symbolized the work the Saviour did on the cross in dealing with our sin nature (Gal. 6:15; Phil. 3:1–3; Col. 2:10–11). In obedience to the Lord, Mary and Joseph gave Him the name *Jesus*, which means “Jehovah is salvation” (Matt. 1:21).

But circumcision was only the beginning. When the child was forty days old, Mary and Joseph had to come to the temple for the purification rites described in Leviticus 12. They also had to “redeem” the boy since He was Mary’s firstborn (Ex. 13:1–12). They had to pay five shekels to redeem the Redeemer who would one day redeem us with His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18–19). Their humble sacrifice would suggest that they were too poor to bring a lamb (2 Cor. 8:9). But He was the Lamb!

Our Lord’s relationship to the Law is an important part of His saving ministry. He was made under the Law (Gal. 4:4); and though He rejected man’s religious traditions, He obeyed God’s Law perfectly (John 8:46). He bore the curse of the Law for us (Gal. 3:13) and set us free from bondage (Gal. 5:1).

Simeon (vv. 25–35). Simeon and Anna, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, were a part of the faithful Jewish remnant that eagerly looked for their Messiah (Mal. 3:16). Because of his readiness and eagerness to die (Luke 2:29), Simeon is usually pictured as a very old man, but nothing in Scripture supports this. Tradition says he was 113 years old, but it is only tradition.

“The consolation of Israel” means the messianic hope. One of the traditional Jewish prayers is, “May I see the consolation of Israel!” That prayer was answered for Simeon when he saw Jesus Christ in the temple. He was a man who was led by the Spirit of God, taught by the Word of God, and obedient to the will of God; and therefore he was privileged to see the salvation of God. How important it is for people to see God’s salvation, Jesus Christ, before they see death.

In Luke 2:29–32 we find Simeon’s response to seeing Jesus. This is the fifth and last of the “Christmas songs” in Luke. (Elizabeth, 1:42–45; Mary, 1:46–56; Zacharias, 1:67–79; the angels, 2:13–14). It is first of all a *worship* hymn as he blesses God for keeping His promise and sending the Messiah. He joyfully praises God that he has been privileged to see the Lord’s Christ.

But his song is also a *salvation* hymn: “For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation” (Luke 2:30). Now he is ready to die! The word *depart* in the Greek has several meanings, and each of them tells us something about the death of a Christian. It means to release a prisoner, to untie a ship and set sail, to take down a tent (see 2 Cor. 5:1–8), and to unyoke a beast of burden (see Matt. 11:28–30).

God's people are not afraid of death because it only frees us from the burdens of this life and leads into the blessings of the next life.

Simeon's song is a *missionary* hymn, which is something unusual for a devout Jew standing in the temple. He sees this great salvation going out to the Gentiles! Jesus has restored the glory to Israel and brought the light to the Gentiles so that all people can be saved (see Luke 2:10). Remember that the compassion of Christ for the whole world is one of Luke's major themes.

Then Simeon stopped praising and started prophesying (Luke 2:34–35), and in his message used three important images: the stone, the sign, and the sword.

The stone is an important Old Testament image of God (Gen. 49:24; Pss. 18:2; 71:3; Deut. 32:31). Messiah would be a "rejected cornerstone" (Ps. 118:22; Luke 20:17–18; Acts 4:11), and the nation of Israel would stumble over Him (Isa. 8:14; Rom. 9:32). Because of Jesus Christ, many in Israel would fall in conviction and then rise in salvation. (Simeon seems to be speaking about one group, not two.) Even today, God's people Israel stumble over the Cross (1 Cor. 1:23) and do not understand that Jesus is their Rock (1 Peter 2:1–6).

The word *sign* means "a miracle," not so much as a demonstration of power but as a revelation of divine truth. Our Lord's miracles in John's Gospel are called "signs" because they reveal special truths about Him (John 20:30–31). Jesus Christ is God's miracle; and yet, instead of admiring Him, the people attacked Him and spoke against Him. His birth was a miracle, yet they slandered it (John 8:41). They said His miracles were done in the power of Satan (Matt. 12:22–24) and that His character was questionable (John 8:48, 52; 9:16, 24). They slandered His death (Ps. 22:6–8; Matt. 27:39–44) and lied about His resurrection (Matt. 27:62–66). Today, people are even speaking against His coming again (2 Peter 3).

But the way people speak about Jesus Christ is evidence of what is in their hearts. He is not only the "salvation stone" and the "judgment stone" (Dan. 2:34, 45), but He is also the "touchstone" that exposes what people are really like. "What think ye of Christ?" (Matt. 22:42) is still the most important question for anybody to answer (1 John 4:1–3).

The image of the sword was for Mary alone, and it spoke of the suffering and sorrow she would bear as the mother of the Messiah. (This suggests that Joseph was dead when Jesus began His ministry thirty years later, or Joseph would have been included.) The Greek word means a large sword such as Goliath used (1 Sam. 17:51), and the verb means "constantly keep on piercing."

During our Lord's life and ministry, Mary did experience more and more sorrow until one day she stood by His cross and saw Him suffer and die (John 19:25–27). However, without minimizing her devotion, Mary's personal pain must not in any way be made a part of Christ's redemptive work. Only He could die for the sins of the world (1 Tim. 2:5–6).

How much did Mary and Joseph understand of God's great plan for this miracle Child? We don't know, but we do know that Mary stored up all these things and pondered them (Luke 2:19, 51). The word means "to put things together"; Mary sought for some pattern that would help her understand God's will. There were times when Mary misunderstood Him (Mark 3:31–35), and this would add to her suffering. The last time you find Mary named in Scripture, she is in the Upper Room, praying with the other believers (Acts 1:14).

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 208-209)

c. *Jesus' circumcision (2:21).*

2:21. Mary and Joseph carried out the pronouncement of **the angel** by naming their Son according to the word which had come to her before the Baby's conception (1:31) and to him after the Baby's conception (Matt. 1:18–21). The name **Jesus** is very fitting for it is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua which means "Yahweh is salvation" (cf. Matt. 1:21). As was the custom, Jesus was circumcised **on the eighth day** (Lev. 12:3), perhaps in Bethlehem.

d. The presentation of Jesus to the Lord (2:22–38)

(1) Mary and Joseph's offering. 2:22–24. The couple was required by the Law not only to have Jesus circumcised (Lev. 12:3), but also to present their **firstborn** to God (Ex. 13:2, 12) 33 days later and to bring an offering for Mary's **purification** after childbirth (Lev. 12:1–8).

The offering which they presented for her purification showed that they were a poor couple. They could not afford a lamb, so they bought a pair of doves or pigeons, which were all they could afford. They traveled the short distance from Bethlehem **to Jerusalem** for the presentation and purification at the temple.

(2) Simeon's prophecy and blessing of the family (2:25–35). 2:25–26. **Simeon** had been told **by the Holy Spirit that he would not die** till he had seen the Messiah. Simeon was **righteous** (*dikaios*) and **devout** (*eulabēs*, "reverent") before God. Unlike the religious leaders, **he was waiting for the consolation of Israel**, that is, the Messiah, the One who would bring comfort to the nation (cf. "the redemption of Jerusalem," v. 38). The notation that **the Holy Spirit was upon** Simeon reminds one of the Old Testament prophets on whom the Holy Spirit came. Since Anna was "a prophetess" (v. 36), Simeon was probably also in the godly prophetic tradition of Israel. The special revelation from the Holy Spirit about seeing the Messiah was apparently unique and perhaps came because of Simeon's intense desire for the Promised One.

2:27–32. On seeing **the Child** and picking Him up, **Simeon ... praised God**, the response of godly people toward the Messiah throughout the Gospel of Luke. He then uttered a psalm of praise extolling God for fulfilling His promise by bringing **salvation**. The Messiah is the Source of salvation, as His name Jesus indicates. In all three of the hymns of thanksgiving and praise recorded by Luke in his first two chapters (1:46–55, 68–79; 2:29–32) lie the deep significance of the births of John and Jesus for the salvation of Israel and the world. Simeon noted that the Messiah was to be for **the Gentiles** as well as for **Israel**. The idea of salvation for the Gentiles is set forth many times in the Gospel of Luke.

2:33. The words of Simeon caused Mary and Joseph to marvel (*thaumazontes*; cf. comments on v. 18). Though they had been told that their Son was the Messiah, perhaps they had not comprehended the scope of His ministry to the entire world—to the Gentiles as well as to the people of Israel.

2:34–35. **Simeon** revealed **to Mary** that her Son would be opposed (**a sign ... spoken against**) and that she would be hurt greatly. Her grief would be like **a sword** piercing her **soul**. The Son would **cause the falling and rising of many in Israel**. Throughout His ministry Jesus proclaimed that the only way to the kingdom, something the nation had long sought, was to follow Him. The ones who did so would receive salvation; they would "rise." But the ones who did not believe Him would not receive salvation; they would "fall." These consequences would reveal what they thought about Mary's Son.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1515). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

2:22–24 Luke here combined references to Mary’s postpartum purification (Lv 12:2–8) and Jesus’ dedication to God (Ex 13:2; Nm 18:1–16). “Their purification” was not due to Luke’s ignorance of Jewish custom but instead either means “the Jews’ purification law” or, more likely, “the purification sacrifice offered by the family.” Others have suggested that the phrase either referred to the two ceremonies performed for mother and child, using the one term “purification” for both, or that Joseph had been defiled in assisting the birth and thus offered a sin offering (Lv 5:11) alongside Mary’s purification sacrifice.

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 113–117). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

2:21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him. For the “eighth day” see comments on 1:59; for similar chronological references, cf. 1:23, 57; 2:6, 22. Even though it is not emphasized, Jesus’ circumcision reveals the solidarity of God’s Son with his people, namely, that he was born under the law (Gal 4:4).

He was named Jesus. As in the case of John, the emphasis falls not on the child’s circumcision but rather on his naming. Unlike Matt 1:21, however, no interpretation or etymology of the name (*Jesus* means *Yahweh saves*) is given, although Acts 4:12 suggests that Luke may have been aware of the etymology due to the play on the words “salvation” and “name.” Luke did not specify who named the child (cf. Luke 1:31).

The name the angel gave him. Compare 1:31.

2:22–24 The “purification” contained three elements: Mary’s purification (Lv 12:6–8), which involved a sacrifice being offered at the Nicanor Gate in the court of the women; the redemption of the firstborn son (Exod 13:1–2), which involved five shekels (Num 3:47–48) and which Luke did not mention; and the consecration of the firstborn son (cf. 1 Sam 1:11, 22, 28). We find in 2:22–24 a chiasmus.

2:22 When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed. This would have been forty days after Jesus’ birth (seven days after birth, circumcision; thirty-three days after circumcision, purification; cf. Lev 12:3–4). The law is mentioned five times in this account (Luke 2:22, 23, 24, 27, 29 [cf. RSV]), and thus its value as a moral guide is revealed. The reference to “their purification” is difficult in that only Mary needed the purification rite. Also does “their” refer to Jesus and Mary or to Joseph and Mary? The clearest antecedent of “their” appears to be subject of the verb “took,” i.e., they. (The names Joseph and Mary are not found in the Greek text.) If it refers to Joseph and Mary, the pronoun “their” gives a sense of family solidarity in which Mary’s need of purification is seen as a need for this “one flesh” (Gen 2:24) unit. Since a child did not need to experience any such purification, if the “their” refers to Mary and Jesus this would indicate that Luke simply used the term “purification,” which was one element of the ritual, to describe the entire ritual that Mary and her son needed to experience. Compare 1 Sam 1:22–24.

Took him. “Took him” is literally *took him up*. One always goes up to Jerusalem, even though in this instance Bethlehem is slightly higher than Jerusalem. Since Nazareth is not mentioned in Luke 2:1–39, Luke expected his readers to think of this trip as originating in Bethlehem, which is five miles south of Jerusalem. It is uncertain about whether the purification-redemption-consecration had to be done in the temple in Jerusalem, although Neh 10:35–36 at least portrayed this as the ideal. Since Bethlehem lay so close to Jerusalem, there is good reason to think that

Joseph and Mary would have sought to perform these rites in the temple. For Luke this scene is crafted after such passages as Exod 13:2, 12, 15; Lev 12:6, 8; 1 Sam 1–2 (esp. 1:24–28).

To present him to the Lord. This was seen by Luke as the main reason for going to Jerusalem. One should not interpret the verb “present” as the offering of Jesus as a sacrifice to God along the lines of Rom 12:1. This goes beyond the Lukan teaching.

2:23 (As it is written). The tense of this verb is an “intensive perfect” and indicates that what has been written in the past has an abiding value, i.e., what has been written in the Scriptures remains written. This verse demonstrates that the main element in this account for Luke was the Savior’s consecration rather than his redemption or Mary’s purification. One should not read into this a Nazirite dedication, for Luke made no mention of this.

2:24 And to offer ... “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” Why did Luke describe the sacrifice? Was it purely for historical reasons? Was it to demonstrate that Joseph and Mary obeyed the law? Or was it because he expected his readers to know that according to Lev 12:8 the normal sacrifice involved a lamb and a dove or pigeon and thus to understand that Joseph and Mary were of a “humble state” (Luke 1:48), i.e., too poor to be able to afford a lamb? Certainty is impossible, but the latter explanation fits well the Lukan emphasis in 1:48, 52–53; 2:8. That Mary offered a dove as a sin offering (Lev 12:6) for her purification indicates that the mother of God’s Son also needed the forgiveness and redemption that her son brought. (The description of Mary’s offering also suggests that Joseph and Mary were not yet in possession of the rich gifts of the wise men mentioned in Matt 2:11, i.e., the wise men had not yet come. Cf. also Matt 2:7, 16.)

2:25–38 Even as John the Baptist’s circumcision and naming was followed by prophetic statements praising God and indicating John’s future destiny, so Jesus’ naming and consecration was followed by praise to God and the foretelling of Jesus’ destiny. Jesus’ destiny, however, involved a surpassing greatness.

2:25 Simeon. Apart from this incident Simeon is unknown. Who he was was unimportant for Luke. Only the role he played in Jesus’ story is important.

A man ... who was righteous and devout. Compare 1:6; 23:50–51; Acts 10:22. Luke had a love for pairs.

He was waiting for the consolation of Israel. This refers to the consolation that would be brought about by the inauguration of the messianic age. Compare Luke 2:26, where this consolation is described as “seeing the Lord’s Christ” (cf. also 1:54, 68–75). For Luke this referred not to the fulfillment of Jewish political hopes involving deliverance from their enemies and restoration of David’s throne but rather to the salvation Jesus brought. This is clear when one compares 2:30 with such verses as 19:10. See the discussion at 1:69. Like other devout model believers (Anna, 2:38; Joseph of Arimathea, 23:51; cf. also 12:36; Acts 24:15), Simeon was looking forward to Israel’s consolation (2:25), i.e., Jerusalem’s redemption (2:38); the coming of God’s kingdom (23:51); the Master’s return (12:36); the resurrection of the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15).

And the Holy Spirit was upon him. See Introduction 8 (3). Luke wanted his readers to understand that Simeon was providing reliable testimony to the person and work of God’s Son.

2:26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Here there is an article before “Holy Spirit.”

Should not die. “Should not die” is literally “to see death,” an OT expression for dying.

The Lord’s Christ. Perhaps this can better be translated “the ‘Anointed’ of the Lord” or “the Lord’s Messiah” (NRSV; REB).

2:27 Moved by the Spirit. This does not refer to an ecstatic experience such as Rev 1:10 but rather to the Spirit's guidance such as referred to in Luke 4:1.

He went into the temple. Here "temple" refers to the temple court, not the temple sanctuary. Luke knew the difference between *hieron* (temple court or temple in general, 2:37, 46; 4:9; etc.) and *naos* (temple sanctuary or holy place, 1:9, 21–22; 23:45).

When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required. Luke omitted the details of the carrying out of Mary's purification, since the readers already knew what was involved due to 2:24. Luke described Joseph and Mary as Jesus' "parents" (cf. also 2:33, 41, 43, 48). He, of course, intended his readers to understand his use of this term here in light of the virginal conception discussed in chap. 1. Joseph was the adopted and legal father of Jesus. Attempts to say that this designation was part of a pre-Lukan source that either denied or was unaware of a virginal conception tradition are both highly speculative and unprovable. Luke at least saw no contradiction between this term and a virgin birth. As a result he avoided any awkward circumlocution for "parents," such as "virgin-mother of Jesus and his adopted, but not physical, father."

2:29 Sovereign Lord. "Sovereign Lord" (Greek *despota*, cf. Acts 4:24) is an appropriate title in light of the use of the term "servant" (*doulos*) in the latter part of the verse.

Now. It is unfortunate that the NIV places this word in the middle of the sentence. It is the first word in the Greek text and thus in an emphatic position: "Now [that salvation, God's Kingdom, the Messiah has come] dismiss your servant in peace because."

Dismiss your servant in peace. A Semitic way of saying, "Let me die." For "in peace" see Gen 15:15. The verb "dismiss" is a present indicative ("you are dismissing") and introduces some difficulties in translating. Perhaps it should be understood as indicating that now that Simeon had seen the Lord's Christ, God was beginning to fulfill Luke 2:26, and Simeon was already in the process of experiencing his "peaceful dismissal." This verse and 2:26 suggest that Simeon died shortly after 2:35.

2:30 For my eyes have seen your salvation. This does not imply that Simeon had been physically blind up to this point. "Salvation" here further describes the "consolation" of 2:25. For "salvation" see comments on 1:69. In the child Jesus, Simeon saw the Savior who would bring about Israel's salvation. There is a clear allusion here to Isa 40:5 (LXX).

2:31 Which you have prepared in the sight of all people [Greek "peoples"]. Does "people" refer to the Jews alone (cf. Acts 4:25, 27) or to Jews and Gentiles together (cf. Acts 26:17, 23, where the singular is used for Israel and is contrasted with the Gentiles)? It is best understood as referring to both Jews and Gentiles due to the reference to Gentiles and Israel in the next verse and the use of "people" (singular) there for Israel. Luke probably changed the quotation in Isa 52:10 (LXX) from nations to peoples in order to include both Jews and Gentiles. For other prophecies referring to salvation coming to the Gentiles, cf. Luke 3:6; Acts 2:21; 28:28.

2:32 A light for revelation to the Gentiles. "Light" stands in apposition to "salvation" in Luke 2:30 (cf. Isa 49:6). For "light" as a metaphor to describe Jesus see John 1:4–5, 9; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46; etc.

And for glory to your people Israel. "Glory" can be understood as standing in apposition to "revelation" (NIV, RSV) or to "light." All three nouns are accusatives in the Greek text. The latter possibility is better due to the parallels in Isa 60:1, 19; 58:8 so that our text should be translated "light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel." Thus the salvation Jesus brings is light (to give revelation) to the Gentiles and glory to Israel. (The Jews already had the divine revelation but awaited the manifestation of the glory God had promised.) This verse goes a

step further than the angelic song found in Luke 2:14 and is the clearest indication so far of the universal dimension of Jesus' redemptive work.

2:33 The child's father and mother. This is the most natural way of referring to Joseph's and Mary's relationship to Jesus apart from a cumbersome circumlocution. See comments on 2:27.

Marveled at what was said about him. Did Joseph and Mary marvel because Simeon's prophecy in 2:31–32 revealed a new dimension to Jesus' ministry not previously revealed to them? Or was this simply a normal reaction in the experiencing of a divine revelation or the witnessing of a miracle? The latter is more likely.

2:34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary. Simeon addressed his words to Mary rather than to Mary and Joseph. This may be because of Mary's unique relationship to Jesus due to the virginal conception or due to Joseph's death pre-dating the crucifixion, so that a sword could not pierce his soul. Whether Luke intended this to be understood as a priestly blessing (cf. 1 Sam 2:20; Num 6:23ff.) is uncertain. Luke must not have thought the latter was an important issue, however, because he did not indicate whether or not Simeon was a priest.

This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel. The prophecies concerning John the Baptist given at his birth (1:68–79) are now paralleled by prophecies concerning Jesus at his presentation in the temple. Luke may have been referring here to one group that falls (humbles itself) and rises (is lifted up by God). If so, this saying is to be interpreted positively and stands in contrast to the sign being "spoken against," which is negative. On the other hand Luke may have been referring to two separate groups, one of which falls (negative) and the other of which rises (positive). The latter appears more likely and indicates that there is a double significance to Jesus' ministry. For the humble and poor it is positive, salvation; for the haughty and rich it is negative, judgment. This twofold aspect of the coming Messiah is found both in the OT (Isa 8:14; 28:16–17) and the NT (Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:6–8).

Jesus' rejection by his people (cf. John 1:11), which was already known to Luke's readers, was announced early in his infancy. This verse foreshadows such passages as Luke 4:29; 13:33–35; 19:41–44, 47–48; 20:14, 17–19. "Many" here and in 2:35 should be understood in the Semitic sense of "all" (cf. Isa 53:12).

And to be a sign that will be spoken against. Just as in the case of Isaiah and his children (cf. Isa 8:18; 7:14), so Jesus would be a sign from God rejected by Israel (cf. Luke 11:30).

2:35 So that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. This indicates one of the purposes for Jesus' coming. "The thoughts of many hearts" (*dialogismoi*, the innermost thoughts) should be understood negatively here because in its other uses in Luke (five times) and in the rest of the NT (eight times) it is always used pejoratively.

And [in addition] a sword will pierce your own soul too. The meaning of this parenthetical comment is not certain. The most common interpretation is that it refers to the sorrow Mary would experience in seeing her son rejected and crucified. It has also been suggested, however, that this should be interpreted in light of 8:19–21, and this refers to the fact that Mary would also stumble and experience difficulty in her son's mission. Such passages as 8:21; 11:27–28; 12:51–53 and the fact that Mary was not stated as being present at the crucifixion tend to support this interpretation. However, Luke knew that Theophilus was well aware of Jesus' rejection and death and possibly even of Mary's presence at the crucifixion (cf. John 19:25, although Luke did not mention this). It is difficult to be dogmatic about which is the more likely interpretation, although the context favors the second.