

Luke 2:21-40 – Jesus brought to the temple

In every culture, people have traditions. These come at important times – e.g. births, deaths and coming of age. In this passage, Jesus was brought to the temple and named. But this was no mere tradition. It was according to the law of God. Indeed, it was according to God's eternal purpose for his people's salvation. These were no ordinary rituals. They are written down by Luke so that we can learn about eternal life through Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus brought to the temple (v21-24)

Jesus was brought to the temple on the 8th day to be circumcised, as God had commanded Abraham (Genesis 17:12). God gave the Jews circumcision as a promise: they were the chosen line, and the Messiah would be born among them. It was also a testimony: their hearts needed to be circumcised. It was also an initiation: they entered God's covenant and came under the law, with a responsibility to obey it completely. Next, we read that Mary and Joseph brought a sacrifice for uncleanness (Leviticus 12:2-). God wants to teach us that we are all born in a condition of sin and guilty, and we need to be born again by his Holy Spirit. All this was done to obey the law (v22, 23, 24). Jesus came to obey the law. In himself, he had no sin or uncleanness; he alone was born holy (Luke 1:35). Why, then, did he obey these laws? The answer is, he came to live in our place. He lived the holy, sinless life that we owe to God. He came as a substitute, a representative – to present himself to God on our behalf. He was born under the law to redeem us from the law's curse (Galatians 4:4-5). So we must trust in him alone for our salvation.

2. Meeting Simeon (v25-35)

A man called Simeon came to the temple. He was a godly man (v25). God had given him a promise that he would see the Messiah before dying. When Simeon took Jesus in his arms, he praised God. He was satisfied, having seen God's Son – are we? He then spoke by the Holy Spirit. He said that Jesus is salvation (v30). He said that he is the one Saviour for all. He brings light to people in darkness, and is the rejoicing of God's people (v32). What do you see in Christ? Simeon looked at a poor baby, but he believed God's word about him – do you? Joseph and Mary were amazed (v33), but there was more. Jesus would also bring division and opposition (v34). He would reveal the secrets of peoples' hearts (v35). The preaching of Christ reveals your heart – do you rejoice in him as a Saviour, or do you see nothing, and feel no sins you need forgiveness for? Are you more interested in gain in this world than in heaven? Simeon spoke in verse 35 of the cross. Years later (John 19:25) Mary would see Jesus die at Calvary – her firstborn son. She needed to be ready. Are you ready for the cross? Christians must be ready to be humbled and abused, for the sake of Christ.

3. Meeting Anna (v36-40)

Another woman came into the temple, brought by God's Spirit – Anna. She was a faithful Israelite and a prophetess (v36). She had known pain in her life, being a widow only 7 years after marriage; but she had turned to God and served him faithfully ever since. She came in, saw Jesus, and gave thanks to God. Then she spoke about him to everyone who was looking for salvation. Do you want salvation? Then you need to look to Jesus, and him alone. Then go out and speak about him too!