

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.

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.”

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 slave 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.

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.”

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.

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.

Years ago, I think it was about 1985 or so, I wasn't a photographer yet, but we had gone to the ghost town of Bodie. And I was standing in the parking lot, and from the other direction, from the Aurora side where that road comes in, a guy came rolling into the lot, and he was in a 1959 Thunderbird.

Now for all you neophytes, that was the first model with a back seat, if you can picture the one I'm talking about, but this one had a cowboy behind the wheel, hat and all, and someone had taken the thunderbird body and put it on a 4 wheel drive truck chassis. It had 7.00-15 truck tires, those were tall and skinny compared to now, and it was about a foot and a half in the air, and I remember turning to Pam and saying, "I can die now, I've seen everything."

Well, this morning we're going to meet the original guy that coined that phrase. You didn't know that came from the Bible did you. Well it did.

Luke has got one job. He wants to convince you that Jesus is the Messiah and that He offers you salvation from sin and sin's resulting judgement.

He's going to use almost 38,000 words to do that. Luke and Acts, 37,932 words. And beginning in chapter 3 of Luke he's going to focus on Jesus himself, what He said, what He did, and then in Acts, same thing, what did Jesus do at the right hand of God working through His apostles and the church that resulted.

50 chapters of direct contact. But in these first couple of chapters, Luke is going to call on witnesses to build a case that this Jesus is in fact the messiah of Israel.

Because don't forget, by the time Luke wrote this, the jews had rejected that very truth.

So Luke is building his court case and he's calling on witnesses to tell the court what you saw, and what you heard.

But we'll preface that even further. In Israel, the jews, the people of God, the chosen people, are apostate.

There were 4 sort of distinct groups. There were the Saducees, these were the religious liberals of their day. They didn't believe in the supernatural at all. No angels, no resurrection, probably, if they were honest, no God, and they didn't pay any attention to the scriptures. No biblical authority.

Then there were the Pharisees, and these were the folks who were the legalists. And they had re-invented a God who kept all the rules, most of them they invented in their own traditions, a God who only kept them slightly better than they did, and they thought they were righteous for their rule keeping, and God couldn't stand them. Jesus couldn't stomach those guys.

Then there were the zealots. The guys with the little daggers who

were terrorists against the Romans. Free Israel from Rome!
Murder the romans. Murder the infidels. Make Israel Great Again.

And last there were the Essenes. And these were the monkish
navel gazer types who were most happy away from everyone else
contemplating the deep things of religion. Having deep
philosophical religious discussions far above everybody else.

And that was Israel at the time of Jesus advent. A truly Godly
righteous jew who understood that the holy scriptures were the
authoritative word of God and who understood that they were
helpless, hopelessly sinful, and that God alone could save them
from their sins: thin on the ground.

A tiny remnant. Reflected in the one number we have, of all of
Israel and Jerusalem, after Jesus was resurrected and descended
into heaven, and he told them to wait for the Holy Spirit, out of the
millions in Israel, there were 120 people.

True Israel, as Paul later named the remnant, true righteous God
fearing people of the book were just a tiny tiny remnant.

So then, if Luke is going to present witnesses for his court case for
Jesus, his pool to select from just got really really tiny.

Zacharias and Elizabeth. Some shepherds, the dregs of society.
Mary and Joseph. And two more insignificant nobody's we'll meet
this morning, Simeon, and Anna.

Luke is careful to provide witnesses from a little group of true
Israel, a tiny little remnant of people who God considered His own
and who He has declared righteous.

Credible witnesses. And that's important. Because you don't build

a case for righteousness by employing witnesses that are counter to your standard.

We'll see that in Acts as Paul, after the demon possessed girl follows him around for days shouting, "*These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.*"

It's the right message from the wrong source. Paul eventually had had enough and ordered the demon to come out of her, which it did, and then her employers / owners were angry because she didn't have any magic any more.

It's the right message from the wrong source. And that isn't helpful. So Luke has called on 2 witnesses who are true Israelites, Israelites indeed, who are righteous before God, even as Abraham was.

These true Jews understand that God is their saviour, and they are looking for THE Saviour who will provide the possibility of the salvation they already have; Once for all time. The Messiah of Israel.

Their imputed righteousness is looking forward to the Messiah. Ours looks backwards to the same Messiah.

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.

Jewish boy babies were named eight days after birth, at their circumcision. That was the custom, and it was also customary for family members and elders to have some say in the naming, as we saw with Zacharias and Elizabeth.

There was a little bit of an argument. John? Where did that come from? You don't have any John's? And Zacharias put his foot down, and got his voice back in the bargain.

Well, that same angel also informed Mary what this child's name would be. So, we don't have to wait for the eighth day. It's a done deal. And His name is Jesus.

Jesus is the greek version of jesh-shuah and also Joshua, and it means; Saviour. So the Saviour is named Saviour.

We could ask the question; If Jesus is going to live a sinless life, and circumcision was given by God to remind us of our sinfulness, that seed of Adams that is passed to every succeeding generation by pro-creation, why does Jesus need to be circumcised?

And Jesus himself gives the answer at His baptism, which He also did not need in the same sense as we do. From Matthew 3

13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. 16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Jesus parents, Joseph who was acting as dad, and Mary His mother were careful to fulfil the Law of Moses in every way. And we learn later that Jesus was the perfect fulfilment of every aspect of

God's law.

For us the law defined us as sinners. For Jesus the law defined Him as the one perfect sinless person. And that righteousness is what is imputed to us.

In Christ I have perfect righteousness, imputed to me, a righteousness not my own. Jesus perfection is given to me. My sin is given to Him and He bears my punishment, at the cross.

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.”

Again, Joseph and Mary are careful to observe the law of Moses in all of it's details.

Mary's purification would take 40 days to complete. And this presenting Him to the Lord was something God instituted to Israel after He freed them from Egypt.

Recall that the final plague when Pharoah would not let Israel go, was that God smote every firstborn male. Animals and humans. And God told Israel, likewise, your firstborn male animals and sons did not die, but they belong to me.

That never changed, but what did change was that after the priesthood was given to the tribe of Levi, God said, all of these priests are mine, and the firstborn sons in all the other tribes no longer have to be set apart to God, like the priests, but the parents

from every tribe, upon a first born male, will pay a 5 shekel tax to support the priesthood.

I did the math, and that wasn't an easy amount for young families. It would be right around \$800 in our money. So, between 4 and 8 days of labor perhaps.

It didn't have to happen at the temple, but Mary and Joseph have walked from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to present their firstborn, at the temple of God.

And there was a sacrifice involved. Two turtledoves, if it was the time of the year when they were present, or two young pigeons, which always seem to be around.

So Mary and Joseph go to the temple, and they would have been in the area where women were allowed, the porch of the women, and my imagination kicks in here.

I'm just making this up, but I picture them talking to the first priest that comes along and sharing with him the importance of this event, virgin birth, angels, the saviour of the world and we need to see the high priest; right?

And typical of government services they get a slug who can care less and can't be bothered with any of it. He needs to get them serviced and out of his hair with as little bother as possible.

We've already had 3 messiahs today. Every mother in Israel thinks her kid is the messiah. Good for you.

But nearby, an old man, and again my imagination kicks in. I should write the movie script. An old man who was there six months ago when Zacharias, one of his favorite priests, because

both men are true believers and righteous before God, Zacharias was struck dumb. Why.

Because an angel told him he was going to be the father of the forerunner of the messiah. And the time is just about right, that was a bit over a year and some months ago, this young couple could actually have THE messiah.

Plus the Holy Spirit has providentially led him there this day. *And he came in the Spirit into the temple* And it all falls in place. That's my version. No extra charge. Now I'll read you the biblical account.

There are no halo's over Jesus or Mary, in spite of pictures you have seen. But the Holy Spirit makes this connection happen.

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;

The consolation of Israel is a name in that culture for Messiah. It's all over the old testament. Judgement, and then comfort.

Isa. 40:1 "*Comfort, O comfort My people,*" says your God.

*2 "Speak kindly to Jerusalem;
And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,
That her iniquity has been removed,
That she has received of the LORD'S hand
Double for all her sins."*

Simeon was 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.

Remember, this is pre-pentecost, pre-church age.

The Holy Spirit is the same person in the old testament as He is in the new. But after pentecost, the Holy Spirit dwells inside us. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

In the old testament, the Holy Spirit would come along side a person who God had declared righteous.

Remember David's plea in Psalm 51. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

In Simeon's case, the Holy Spirit was upon him. Perhaps moving him towards the temple that day. And also the Holy Spirit had revealed to this man, Simeon, that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's messiah with his own eyes.

Perhaps he was very old. We really don't know, but it seems to be unusual for him to be alive, and the Spirit has told him, there's a reason. Your eyes will see the Lord's Christ before you die.

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 slave 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.

Nothing he said there is shocking, until, until you get to the part about the gentiles.

The jews felt about the gentiles just about how Jonah felt about them.

God sent him to the gentiles, and the gentiles turn his stomach, so he takes a ship to Tarshish, as far away from God as he can get.

Except he can't. Jonah would rather be inside a whale than preach to gentiles. But God finally wins. OK, God, if you're going to play rough, I'll go.

And the whole place repents. It's Jonah's worst nightmare. And he sits off to the side and asks God to take his life away.

And that's pretty much how every jew thought about every gentile. So when Simeon, a righteous jew, an Israelite indeed see's God's salvation, the consolation of Israel, and declares that Messiah is for all peoples, a light of revelation to the gentiles, and yes, the glory of Israel, it's shocking.

But, isn't that what the angels said too? Evangelion, good news for all the people? And Isaiah was very clear. The Lord's messiah is the saviour not just of the jews, but of the nations.

And we know from 20-20 hindsight that the startling things Simeon went on to prophecy came to pass. Israel didn't want Him. They rejected Him. And it's the nations who have enjoyed all the blessings of knowing the messiah for 20 centuries.

Simeon goes on in his prophecy to say some amazing things.

33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.

Mary and Joseph were good as gold, but anyone in their place

would be stunned to learn that the child in your care will be the fulcrum of history.

Nothing will be the same after this child. Mary and Joseph were perhaps thinking Israel will be changed, for the better. But the nations? Salvation to the gentiles? Revelation to the gentiles. It apparently came as a shock, even after the angelic visits.

*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*

That's a mouthful. And I'm not going to really do it justice.

This child of theirs is going to change Israel. Many will fall. Many will rise. Everything will be different, because of Him.

Behold, I lay in Zion a stone, a precious cornerstone.

*The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief
cornerstone.*

A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

The false religion of Israel stumbled and crashed over this stone. They murdered their Messiah. And God swept the place clean in judgement in 70AD.

Everything was lost, because of Jesus. Their country, their records, everything, gone. And Jesus apostles took the new covenant, the new testament, to the gentiles.

Actually it was the Holy Spirit that did that. If I live long enough and you folks don't run me off, we'll follow that entire story in the

book of Acts.

What was the sign to be opposed? Resurrection from the dead. The elite rulers of Israel paid off the Roman soldiers to cover it up. They ordered the apostles never to speak of it.

This new religion about the resurrection of Jesus must be crushed. That's what we find Saul of Tarsus doing when we meet him in the early chapters of Acts.

And down to this very day the Jews are in defiant opposition to the sign of the resurrection of their own Messiah from the dead. Israel was never the same, after Jesus. But then, neither was the rest of the world. Praise God!

— 35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

What was it like to be Mary? To have to make that transition from being 'mom' to realizing, you need to humbly receive Jesus as your saviour, the same as everyone else.

There are hints that Mary didn't quite know what to do with this child. Jesus. We see her with his half brothers, Joseph apparently is already gone, and they've come to do a family intervention because they think He's lost His mind.

At Cana, Jesus doesn't call her mom, He calls her, respectfully, woman, and He gently let's her know she has no authority to ask anything special of Him. And then He gives her more than she asked for anyways.

That's usually how it works with Him. He owes me less than nothing. He blesses me with triple what I asked for.

And I'm very sure, when Mary looked up at her Son, on a cross, her soul was pierced. As Jesus looks down, dying, with the burden of all of our sin, and says, John, that's your mom. Mom, that's your son.

It wasn't any of His half brothers that He assigned the care of Mary to, it was John, the beloved apostle.

— 35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

Ultimately, every heart will have to reconcile with this child. The Bible says every knee will bow to Him. Every heart will acknowledge that He is Lord of all.

We are the luckiest of the lucky, the blessed of the blessed, because we have heard and understood the good news now, and opened up our hearts and asked Him to come in and be Lord of us, now.

In a day of judgement, every thought of every heart will be revealed. What you did with Jesus, deep inside your inner person, will be revealed.

Mary's heart was pierced, temporarily. Many hearts will be pierced for eternity. All from this one tiny baby that Simeon has in his arms.

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.

Like Simeon, who I'm sure she probably knew very well, this woman, Anna also recognizes that the Lord's Messiah has come. This tiny baby will be the Messiah of Israel.

And Anna becomes the first missionary. She immediately points anyone who was looking for the redemption of Israel, to this child, Jesus.

*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.*

Luke is very careful to keep reminding us that these caretakers of the Messiah are righteous in keeping all things in the law.

We'll finish this morning with Hebrews 4:13 - 16 *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. 14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, **but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.** 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

From the time of infancy throughour His entire life, He fulfilled the law and never sinned. Yet without sin.

