

**Sunday morning December 30<sup>th</sup> 2018 at CBC**  
**Sermon outline: Luke 2:22-40**

The obvious thing about the early sections of Luke's gospel is that what we are reading about is deeply set in Jewish culture and background.

**[1:5-25]** takes place within the Jewish sacrificial system operating in the temple in Jerusalem.

**[1:26-38]** describes the visit of the same angel to Mary, who will be the mother of Jesus Christ.

**[1:39-56]** Mary visits Elizabeth and subsequently gives praise to God.

**[1:57-80]** When John the Baptist is born, his father Zechariah is inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak in praise of God.

**[2:1-21]** The birth of Jesus takes place and is announced by an angel to very startled shepherds – considered outcasts by many in Israel.

**[2:22-40]** And when we come to today's section the theme clearly continues. If we include verse 21 we find three separate Jewish religious observance practices:

- The circumcision of Jesus after 8 days [21]
- The purification rituals for mothers – after 40 days [22]
- The consecration (redemption) ritual for new-born sons [23]

We also find emphasis in this section on observance of the Jewish law (rituals laid down in the OT), the 'Law of the Lord' in vv 22, 23, 24, 27, 39.

What does this mean for non-Jewish readers, like Theophilus and ourselves today?

## **[1] THE LOCATION OF THE WORLD'S HOPE IN GOD IS SPECIFIC**

If real hope for the world is to be found, it is to be found in the history of Israel, or nowhere. Theophilus needs to know that. The gospel of Luke brings it home to him.

## **[2] THE LOCATION OF THE WORLD'S HOPE IN GOD IS HISTORIC**

Luke has done his research before writing his gospel. He wants his readers to be in no doubt that what he is writing about is not some kind of Jewish legend.

So Mary and Joseph are following traditional and long-held Jewish practices in verses 22-24. We have the additional detail about the sacrifices they offered [24] which tell us that they were not a wealthy couple.

But their son is not just an ordinary new-born Jewish baby. By no coincidence two elderly Jewish people, a man and a woman, are separately inspired to identify this new-born baby. Jewish law required that evidence in court be supported by at least two witnesses. Here they are – Simeon and Anna.

Notice what is said of each:

Simeon was waiting of the consolation of Israel – 25

Anna was (implied) looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem – 38.

And both Simeon and Anna are brought to the temple by no accident. It is clearly said of Simeon that he was moved by the

Spirit of God to go into the temple courts, and it is implied of Anna that she did not arrive 'at that very moment' [38] purely by chance.

### **[3] THE LOCATION OF THE WORLD'S HOPE IN GOD IS PERSONAL**

Not only is the world's hope in God specific, ie located in Israel and nowhere else, not only is it historic, located in real time and space, it is also, and supremely personal, to be found in the person of Jesus Christ, who was born to Mary in Bethlehem and for whom the appropriate Jewish rituals were carried out in the temple in Jerusalem.

#### **[a] He is identified by the Spirit of God**

It is very clear that just as (we saw last week) John's father Zechariah was inspired by the Holy Spirit to identify John as the one who would prepare the way for Jesus, so now Simeon is inspired by the Holy Spirit to identify Jesus as the Messiah/Saviour [26]. Indeed, Simeon is clearly God's chosen man [25] on whom the Spirit of God rested.

Now Simeon's inspiration was unique historically, as was that of Anna. It happened on that day in that place. It will never be repeated. But, the work of the Holy Spirit continues and it has always been his role to identify Jesus to those who look for him.

#### **[b] His salvation brings ultimate peace**

Simeon's words have struck a chord down through the centuries because they encapsulate the ultimate safe departure point for a fallen human being leaving this world. If you have come to faith in Jesus Christ, you know that your sins are forgiven. And if by faith you have seen the man Jesus as the

Messiah of God and, thus, your saviour, you can – in the ultimate sense of the term – depart in peace when your time comes.

### **[c] His ministry is for the world**

It is Simeon, inspired by the Spirit of God, who tells Theophilus – and all Gentile readers of the gospel – what we are waiting to hear: This child will be *‘a light for revelation to the Gentiles’* as well as *‘for the glory of your people Israel.’* [33] Here is our warrant, as Gentiles, to put our trust in Jesus Christ.

### **[d] His ministry brings division**

It may seem strange to sound a negative note, but that is what Simeon does. Mary was greatly privileged to be the mother of the Messiah, and in chapter 1 we shared her joy. But the time would come when she would have much anguish of heart.

And would Israel welcome the longed-for Messiah?

Some people certainly did, but there were also those who thought they could see but were actually spiritually blind and those who believed that they had no need of a Messiah/Saviour because they thought they had no reason to repent.

Where the authentic message of Jesus Christ is preached today his authentic ministry continues – namely to raise up the humble and to bring down the proud.

A personal question – *has Jesus brought me out of darkness into light, or do I see no need of the salvation he has brought to the world?* The answer is of eternal significance.