

Text: Lk 2.25-27

We are talking about the Holy Spirit at Christmas.

The first message pointed out that the Messiah's forerunner, John the Baptist, was filled with the Spirit from Birth.

The second message noted the filling of both of John's parents, Elizabeth and Zacharias, prefiguring the filling of ordinary believers in the New Testament age.

Our last message talked about the miracle of Christmas, where the Holy Spirit created new life in Mary's womb, simply by God's divine creative power. A New Creation began in Jesus Christ.

Today is our last message, and we look to one of the minor figures of the Christmas story for this one, the aged (we assume) Simeon, who created the little family in the temple forty days after the Lord's birth. (If December 25 was the actual day, that would make this event occur on February 2, not that there is anything more than coincidence in that date!)

First, let's read the passage of the encounter between Joseph and Mary and Simeon:

Read Lk 2.21-35

Our text tells us that Simeon was a devout man, on whom rested the Holy Spirit. In a sense, he is a prophet, though not one who fulfills the prophetic office throughout his life. Yet he utters a prophecy here.

Simeon's prophecy amazes Joseph and Mary, fixing the place of Jesus in their family and in "salvation-history" with one word.

Proposition: This child is appointed for all peoples.

I. The meaning of the law of the firstborn

A. The ceremonies mentioned in our passage:

1. Circumcision on the eighth day (21)
2. Purification on the fortieth day (22)
3. Dedication of the first-born (22)

B. The Levitical legislation

1. The purification ritual (part of the laws of cleanness and uncleanness)

Lev 12.2-4 “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.

2. The law of the first-born (several repetitions)

a. I offer all the relevant passages in context to impress what God said as we think about this

Ex 13.1-2 ¶ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me.”

Ex 13.11-16 ¶ “Now when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, ¹² you shall devote to the LORD the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the LORD. ¹³ “But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem *it*, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴ “And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ then you shall say to him, ‘With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ¹⁵ ‘It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ ¹⁶ “So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.”

Num 3.11-13 ¶ Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,¹² “Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the first issue of the womb among the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be Mine.¹³ “For all the firstborn are Mine; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, from man to beast. They shall be Mine; I am the LORD.”

Num 8.14-19 ¶ “Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine.¹⁵ “Then after that the Levites may go in to serve the tent of meeting. But you shall cleanse them and present them as a wave offering;¹⁶ for they are wholly given to Me from among the sons of Israel. I have taken them for Myself instead of every first issue of the womb, the firstborn of all the sons of Israel.¹⁷ “For every firstborn among the sons of Israel is Mine, among the men and among the animals; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself.¹⁸ “But I have taken the Levites instead of every firstborn among the sons of Israel.¹⁹ “I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the sons of Israel, to perform the service of the sons of Israel at the tent of meeting and to make atonement on behalf of the sons of Israel, so that there will be no plague among the sons of Israel by their coming near to the sanctuary.”

b. God makes it clear — “the firstborn are mine”

C. Why the first-born?

1. The first man, Adam, disobeyed
2. The first-born, Cain, despised God
3. On and on through the Scriptures we have records of failing firstborn
 - a. Reuben displaced because of his wickedness
 - b. Ephraim placed ahead of Manasseh
 - c. David the youngest chosen ahead of seven others
4. The Second Adam is a firstborn who will please God

II. The mission of a Spirit-filled man in the temple

- A. Simeon arrives on the scene (25-26)
 - 1. Description (25)
 - 2. Communion with God (26)
- B. Simeon arrives in the temple by the Spirit's direction (27-28)
 - 1. He is waiting when Joseph and Mary arrive
 - 2. He is on a mission from the Spirit: "he came in the Spirit"

The work of the Spirit at Christmas we have seen so far involves the filling of key figures, and the miracle of the virgin conception.

Now the Spirit comes to make a proclamation through Simeon

III. The message of the Spirit to Mary and Joseph

- A. Now.
 - 1. The first word, very powerful
 - 2. The old order is coming to an end
 - 3. The reign of Adam is over
 - 4. Now.
 - 5. Now the Son of God has come
 - 6. Now Simeon can depart in peace
- B. The reason for Simeon's peace
 - 1. I have seen your salvation
 - 2. Your salvation is for all peoples
 - a. A light to the Gentiles
 - b. Glory to Israel

Notice the order he puts this in

C. A side note: Mary and Joseph amazed (33)

“Mary and Joseph understood that Jesus was the Messiah. However, they had evidently not connected some of the Old Testament revelation about Messiah, to which Simeon referred, with Jesus’ ministry. Perhaps they understood Messiah to be mainly a political leader, as was the view of most of their contemporaries. God used a stranger to inform or remind them of their Son’s significance for the Gentiles.”¹

D. Simeon’s message for Mary (34-35)

1. This Child will bring controversy to Israel

this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed

2. Compare Isaiah

Isa 8.14-15 “Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, *And* a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.¹⁵ “Many will stumble over them, Then they will fall and be broken; They will even be snared and caught.”

3. And a sword will pierce your heart, Mary

a. She will misunderstand Christ’s mission

Lk 2.49 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?”

b. She and his brothers will try to confront him

c. She will attend his crucifixion until John takes her away

But what does she miss?

Ps 2.7 “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Lk 2.33.

Conclusion:

Our title is, *Whose Child Is This?*

Whose indeed? This is the Son of God, the one appointed for the salvation of mankind. Not Mary's child, not really.

God's son, the Second Adam, God's firstborn, the one who redeems men from sin.

Proposition: This child is appointed for all peoples.