

1. True Piety is Humble Faith in the Lord's Word

- a. Joseph and Mary desired to honor and obey the LORD by following the law (2:21-24)
 - i. Jesus' parents had him circumcised on the 8th day, according to the law (Lev 12:3)
 - ii. They followed the purification rights "according to the Law of Moses" (Lev 12:1-8)
 1. The giving of a pair of turtledoves indicates that Mary and Joseph were among "the poor" listed in Lev 12
 - iii. They also dedicated their firstborn to the LORD
 1. Why did they go up to the Temple?
 - a. Already nearby for the census?
 - b. Nobody knew them there (the whole illegitimate child idea?)
 - c. They wanted to see the Temple and make this presentation special?
 2. There seems to be a summary of two primary events by Luke - purification of Mary/Joseph (made unclean by delivering Jesus, see Mishnah Nid. 5:1), and the consecration of Jesus to the LORD as the firstborn (Ex 13:12-16; Num 18:15-16?)
 - a. There is no mention of the 5 shekel price paid to ransom him to the Levites, however
 - b. What does seem to be emphasized, however, is that Jesus was unique and had come to the Temple
 - c. Next, we will see Him teaching in the Temple when they make a return visit, giving evidence that this is "His Father's house" - Jesus and the Temple have a unique relationship that Luke seems to be emphasizing (and will emphasize in his gospel)
- b. They named Him "Jesus" just as the angel had told them to (trusting obedience).
 - i. The piety and subsequent obedient actions of Mary and Joseph were done out of faith in the Lord and in His Word
 - ii. Thus, they followed their conscience, informed by the Law, and presented Jesus as their firstborn son as was required by the Word of God
- c. Luke is showing Theophilus that Joseph and Mary, while still having much that is unknown about their son (hence their confusion later in the chapter), they desired rightly to honor the LORD as they knew it: they were pious and God-fearing because God had shown them grace
 - i. This would defend against any anti-semitism that may have existed in the early Church
 1. Just as there was anti-Gentile sentiment, there was also anti-Semitic sentiment (see Acts 6:1; Rom 11:17-24), neither of which is consistent with the gospel of grace
 - ii. It also sets them up as a foil to the Pharisees, who obey the law in order to make themselves righteous
 1. Legalism: "perform acts of obedience so that God and others will see your righteousness and reckon you good"
 2. Grace: "perform acts of obedience because God has reckoned you good and you want to respond out of grateful love"
 - iii. Mary and Joseph didn't get everything that the incarnation of Jesus meant, yet, but they knew enough to trust the LORD and obey Him because He had blessed them so much already
 1. They obeyed at great cost

2. Jesus is the Hope for Pious Men

- a. Simeon is revealed as a pious humble layman who lives in Jerusalem
 - i. He is not a priest, though he spends time in the Temple
 - ii. Interestingly, he is never called old, but that is the assumption since he states that the Lord was "letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word" (v29)
 - iii. He is called "pious" or "devout" - related to the word "righteous"
 1. That is, consistent with the character of the LORD
 2. "pious" was used in secular literature to refer to the "ideal statesman", "conscientious and cautious"

3. Here it is indicative of the spiritual condition of Simeon – He was a God-fearer and faithful law-abider who sought to honor God
- iv. This piety is revealed in great humility, for once God has fulfilled His promise Simeon tells God that He can do whatever He wants with him
 1. “now you are letting your servant depart in peace”
 2. He’s not saying that he’s going to die that afternoon, but that God can do what He want
- b. Simeon hoped for God’s promised Messiah
 - i. Waiting for the “consolation of Israel”
 1. Key element in much of the OT and Jewish eschatology
 2. Hope of *deliverance* for his people and *comfort* in being God’s people in God’s place under God’s sole rule
 3. Messiah was referred to as Comforter as the Servant of God
 4. “consolation” has the idea of *encouragement, comfort, strengthening* in joy
 - ii. Simeon was waiting for God’s promise of the Comforter to be fulfilled
 1. This hope characterized God-fearers
 2. Jesus is the Comforter
 - a. John furthers this promise to the coming of the Holy Spirit
 - b. Jesus promised “another Comforter” – “another” meaning “another of the same kind” (John 14:16)
 3. This “comfort” or “consolation” is expected in Zechariah’s song and Mary’s song
 - a. Knowledge of salvation, sunrise into our darkness, path of peace (1:77-79)
 - b. Fill the hungry with good things, exalted those of humble position, helped His servant Israel (1:46-55)
 - iii. This hope and the following prophecy come from the Holy Spirit of God
 1. God has prepared Simeon for this moment
 2. God is writing His story, working out His plan for His glory
- c. Simeon finds and blesses Jesus
 - i. Luke is very emphatic on the role of the Holy Spirit throughout his gospel and the book of Acts
 1. It is the Holy Spirit that leads Simeon to the Temple that day and to the child
 2. This indicates that it is not merely Simeon who is testifying to the child’s identity, but it is God Himself who is testifying to the Messiah through the prophet Simeon
 - ii. When Joseph and Mary bring Jesus into the Temple, Simeon finds Him and takes Him in his arms and *blessed God*
 1. This would have occurred in the outer court of the Temple (Mary would not have been in the inner courts and Luke uses the broader term for the locale)
 2. This would have been a very meaningful location for pious Jews to hear of the blessing of the Messiah
 3. We must not think of this as some “trance” or such, but rather as a meeting of an older Jewish man and a couple with a newborn
 - a. “Beautiful baby, may I hold Him?”
 - b. He then proceeds to prophecy over Him the words of God
 - c. Thus, Joseph and Mary are perplexed about what was being said about Him
 - i. What was it that perplexed them?
 - ii. The expansion of the promise to the Gentiles?
 - iii. “glory” being used in reference to Jesus?
- d. Simeon’s Blessing is Both Personal and Universal
 - i. God kept His personal promise to Simeon
 1. Thus he says that he can depart in peace
 2. “rest”
 3. He has seen, with his own eyes, the LORD’s “salvation”
 - a. Simeon refers to Jesus as the “Deliverance of God”
 - b. The LORD’s deliverance is public and in the sight of all the peoples
 - i. This “peoples” is plural, thus not only Israel

- ii. Direct reference to all the people groups of the world
- c. How can salvation said to be prepared in the presence of all peoples?
 - i. Through Israel's history God has prepared a Savior for all mankind
 - ii. For hundreds of years, God's workings have been seen in Israel for those who would take notice
 - 1. Theophilus was likely one of those who took notice
 - iii. Note: it is "salvation" that was prepared in public, not Jesus, thus people may not recognize Jesus though they expected "salvation" through Israel's Messiah
- ii. God has revealed and fulfilled a promise universally, that is to all peoples
 - 1. This "salvation" of humanity, promised to Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc. was not only revealed to all peoples, but is fulfilled to all peoples through this One, Jesus
 - a. All see the preparation and all benefit through His incarnation
 - 2. Simeon sees Jesus as Israel's "glory"
 - a. What is it that makes Israel worthwhile? JESUS
 - b. What is it that makes Israel significant? JESUS
 - c. He is the nation's glory, it's weightiness, its significance, its shininess
 - i. Israel's glory is not land, or people, or wealth, or military power
 - ii. Israel's glory is its Messiah, its King, its Consolation: JESUS of Nazareth
 - 3. Israel's glory (JESUS) is the light to the Gentiles
 - a. Appositive? – Light = glory which is revealed – the Christ
 - i. Light shines into the darkness of the nations to illuminate the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6)
 - b. God's glory in the OT is typically described as light, illumination, and His Servant is the light to the Gentiles (Isa 42:6-7) where His glory is unshared, i.e. it is HE who is a light to the nations
 - c. Isaiah 60 **READ** and see Jesus as "the LORD will arise upon you and His glory will be seen upon you..."
 - d. The NT commonly refers to Jesus' presence and work as Light
 - i. Acts 13:47-48 – light to the Gentiles so that they rejoiced and glorified the Lord
 - ii. John 1:7ff – John the Baptist testified to the "light coming into the world... which shines upon everyone"
 - iii. Matt 5:14-16 – let your light shine in good works so that people glorify your Father in heaven
 - iv. 2 Cor 4:6 – God has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ
 - e. Light is the increase of truth from error, purity from impurity, knowledge from ignorance, life from death, holiness from profanity, Godward worship from idols worship, etc.
 - f. The Holy Spirit continues the previous theme: God has fulfilled His promise to Israel in the coming of Jesus
 - i. He now adds another theme to it explicitly: Jesus is the *hope of all nations*, the glory of Israel is the light of the nations
 - ii. It is this explicit commendation of Israel's glory being Jesus that causes Mary and Joseph to be amazed
 - iii. Their son is greater than they thought, would do greater things than they assumed, and would take greater titles than they ever could have imagined: Light to the Nations, Glory of Israel, Consolation of Promise

3. Jesus Brings a Sword of Division

- a. Jesus' coming is not all a rosy picture, for it will mean the division of the nation of Israel

- i. Some will rise at His coming and some will fall
- ii. Fulfillment of Messianic promise:
 - 1. Isa 8:14-15 – stone of stumbling and rock of offense
 - 2. Isa 28:13-16 – whoever believes [in my cornerstone] will not be shaken
- iii. He will be a sign that will be opposed
 - 1. Jesus comes; people choose and take sides regarding Him
 - a. Luke 4:29 – people want to throw him off a cliff in Nazareth because He deigned to say that God sent Elijah to a foreign woman and not an Israelite
 - b. Luke 6:20-26 –there are two kinds of people: proud and humble, and they are divided (rich/poor, hungry/full, weeping/laughing, hated/praised by man)
 - c. Luke 13:28-29 – many who knew Him rejected Him and were cast outside
 - d. Luke 18:9-14 – the proud Pharisee and the humble tax collector
 - 2. Humans will resist Jesus, this sign of God’s grace
 - a. He will not be a hope of promise fulfilled to them, but a figure to be opposed and fought against
 - b. Humanity will not merely ignore Him, but *oppose* Him, a sign of contention not merely rejection
 - c. Not everything will go smoothly for Jesus, nor for His disciples, O Theophilus
- b. This divisive power will even cleave (“pass through”) Mary’s heart in two
 - i. “sword” pictured here is a large two-edged broadsword swung with two hands (1-2m long)
 - ii. Her own soul, the seat of her affections and the core of her being, would be cloven in two by Jesus (“this child”)
 - 1. Watching her son’s ministry that propelled Him to a tragic death
 - 2. Seeing, and wrestling over, the truth that her son gathered a family around Him that was not their own family (a bit of dissension, as mentioned by Mark and Matthew)
 - 3. Seeing the division of Israel would cause her own soul to be cloven, for though He is the Prince of Peace, His presence, teaching, and demands make people choose sides
 - iii. Jesus comes; people choose; nations are divided, families split – even Mary’s family (Mark 3:20-21,31-34/Matt 12:46-50/John 7:5)
 - 1. Not everyone is a child of God and Jesus and His Spirit are not in all people – one must believe in Jesus as the Savior-King – even those of his own immediate family
 - 2. Only those who give up the right to be their own masters find inclusion in Christ and thus He creates division
- c. By this division the hearts of humans are truly revealed
 - i. Jesus comes and reveals Himself and humanity must decide what to do with Him
 - ii. Jesus’ person, words, and ministry show where one’s heart truly is:
 - 1. Some receive Him as He is and are exalted in their humble submission
 - 2. But some oppose Him and fall in their self-trusting pride
 - 3. How humans respond to Jesus reveals their true colors: are they of repentant God-fearing faith, or are they proud self-trusting man-fearers?
 - iii. Jesus comes; people choose
 - 1. Receive Him as King or oppose Him as King
 - 2. There is no third way
 - iv. He comes as Light to the Nations
 - 1. Light which reveals the hearts of men
 - 2. Light which makes wise the foolish
 - 3. Light which presses in on the darkness
 - a. Light and darkness cannot coincide, so one must choose to dwell in one
 - b. And some men love the darkness more than the light (John 3:19)
 - 4. Luke is very candid about the tension that Jesus brings as he recounts Simeon’s prophetic word

Conclusion: This Christ, the Anointed One, is the light of the glory of God, the very purpose for Israel and the light to the nations. He is the image of the invisible God whose presence and word strip bear the very hearts of men and reveal what is truly within them. One cannot be confronted by Jesus and not be confronted with the LORD. As such, He is the hope of the humble, the savior of the sinner, the comforter of the helpless. To those who will close to Him in utter dependence and receive Him as their Savior-King, His arrival brings light and joy. Yet, He also brings a sword of division, for there is no third way, no other king, no other means by which we must be saved than in His name. When Jesus comes, people choose, and their choice is not a mere moral choice, a mere metaphysical exercise of “trying on Jesus” as if they were test driving a sage on the road of their own self-perceived wisdom to see how he handles their curves, but it is the choice of a King who will rule over them and in whom they can trust.

And the choice is the same today: Will you rely upon your own strength, wisdom, and righteousness or the righteousness, wisdom, and holiness of the Messiah. The reality is that many will hate Jesus, despise Him, belittle Him, and reject Him. His coming is not all rainbows and harps, but it comes with the downfall of the proud, the hostility of the self-sufficient, and the hatred of the haughty. It is the humble who find great joy in the King who defends them to the death and is raised up again for their life.

Here’s the thing about this King: He dies for His people. He humbles Himself for rebel fools. He loves with a deep, eternal, and holy love. In His rejection God has unleashed a tidal wave of His love upon the nations and His light of God’s glory is bringing many into the Kingdom, of those whom humbly cry out for salvation in the name of Jesus. He is the King of glory, the light which shines upon all men and reveals hearts. Will you submit to Him today, to entrust yourself to the King who has loved you to the death and lives for your life? Will you trust Him when you think you know better? Will you trust Him when you succeed, just as when you fail? Will you trust Him with your heart when your spouse fails you, your friends attack you, your boss belittles you, your children disobey you, and your heart condemns you? God is greater than your heart.

When Jesus comes, people choose. The light of the glory of God has shone upon us in the face of Jesus Christ, the Light to the Nations, the glory of Israel, our hope and our redeemer, no matter where you come from. Hail the King!