



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Obedience Displayed (Luke 2:15-40)

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When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 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. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

*"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel."*

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him

Thank God for Paul's sidekick Luke:

Without Luke's investigation, we would be ignorant of these details and in a number of respects all the more poor.

Last session we spent time considering God's sovereignty in terms of Augustus' decree.

The same is true relative to Paul's two year imprisonment at Caesarea, allowing Luke the freedom to roam and research! Was this simply happenstance? Not on your life! It was Divine Sovereignty at work. Just think of all Luke learned during that time, much of which is incorporated into his Gospel, a gospel oriented primarily toward gentiles. I find that interesting, given the orientation of Matthew's gospel and the likelihood it was a tool of Paul's ministry til he came to Antioch of Pisidia where he made a monumental decision.¹

The theme of Obedience in this narrative:

Implicit in the angelic announcement is the need to investigate what had been announced, which these shepherds did, immediately. We are given a number of examples in scripture of those who responded immediately when an obligation was made apparent: Boaz² and Philemon³ and an admonition of that type given to the believers at Corinth⁴.

Local Impact of Angelic announcement:

Whatever the impact, it was neither upon the religious nor on the political leadership. The temple and the Throne were "at rest", for now. Neither the high priest nor Herod was alarmed at this moment. (That would come a bit later!). In fact, they were ignorant of what was happening.

Application:

God is currently at work directing all things toward His pointed ends.

It does appear the word of this wonder may have come to Simeon and to Anna; suggesting God brings word to the sensitive and obedient heart⁵. The shepherds passed on the information, while Mary "treasured these things in her heart", suggesting she did not understand, other than to know something unusual was happening. Remember: Mary, at this juncture is probably no older than her mid-teens!

Imagine the impact of this event in the psyche of the parties: 1) Simeon and Anna: they are ready to depart this life with the knowledge of God's fidelity to his promise; 2) the shepherds; odds are they are somewhat ignorant, but informed enough to know they have to spread the news; and now 3) Mary/Joseph.

Up to this point in the narrative we have little information relative to the biblical knowledge and understanding of Mary and Joseph. Mary's submission to the angelic announcement regarding her pregnancy and

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Joseph's submission to the angelical announcement when he was considering a private divorce suggest they are spiritually sensitive.

Still, the reality of what they are to experience must have been staggering! In today's vernacular we would call it "mind-blowing". Never before in biblical history had a virginal conception occurred.

Old and aged wombs had been re-juvenated, after years or dormancy: but a virginal conception? This was beyond the realm of reasoned consideration.

At the same time, think of this impact in the mind of the general public in Jerusalem. The text says, "**and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherd's had told them**".

Put this into your mental "computer". In Approximately BC 4, God insinuates into the minds of select individuals "what is happening". We know of the case of Simeon and Anna. What we are ignorant of is the impact of their sharing of this information upon others within their circle of influence.

Parental Obedience:

Circumcision and dedication. Jesus was circumcised on the 8th day with the sign of God's Covenant with Abraham⁶ and then his parents made the compulsory Temple offering. Both actions are indicative of covenantally obedient individuals/parents.

How much did they understand? Did they grasp what we, in the New Covenant era, understand? They walked in harmony with what they understood just as we, in the New Covenant are obligated⁷.

Did they grasp the sign of circumcision was a sign of Abraham's faith and not theirs? Historically, the bulk of the community assumed this "sign" was a sign of their status before God. They were children of Abraham, therefore elect and unique⁸. (Much the same is probably true today in terms of those who baptize infants on the basis of presumptive faith).

This is one of the inherent dangers of any "sign". All too soon people forget the signification and focus simply on the outward act.

Sovereign Witness:

Ever since Genesis 3, God has been crafting History in accord with His plan. Outwardly, it may have seemed chaotic, but even this seeming chaos was part of God's plan. Through every century, every era, God has had a witness: a Noah, an Abraham, a Moses, a Joshua, a Samuel, ad infinitum culminating in John the Baptizer and Jesus. Each witness knew just enough to be faithful though suspecting there was more⁹. And now, in the birth of this infant, everything in terms of the divine plan is about to burst forth!

Human Witness:

Simeon and Anna are two saints of the Old Covenant era and illustrative of the many unnamed folk who believed and died "in the faith¹⁰" since God's promise to Abraham¹¹. No commentary on their lives, simply a testimony to their faith near the end of their lives, as with that of the Apostle Paul¹².

Imagine their excitement on that day as Mary and Joseph entered the Temple area. In contrast to the spiritual sensitivity of the religious and temporal leadership, these two saw clearly.

Personally, I find it interesting we have no record of their spreading the news throughout Jerusalem. Odds are, they did just that, being human. But, God the Spirit is interested in communicating to you and me the particulars of Jesus early life insofar as it pertains to Covenantal fulfillment.

Normal Childhood Growth:

In contrast to the content of Gnostic Gospel records, we don't see Jesus healing birds, etc. Instead, we see him growing up as you and I would have grown up in that cultural context.

The daily and mundane particulars are as important as the principles of submission and obedience during childhood. The writer **To The Hebrews** gives us an interesting insight when we read "**although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered**"¹³

Application:

In what environment and under what tutelage are these principles most naturally taught? Family? Church? Government? What might be the associated concerns in each authority environment? In the event, the family and/or local community fail in this teaching, to what degree is the "larger" community obligated...or is it obligated?

¹ Acts 13:47, 48

² Ruth 3:18

³ Philemon 1:21

⁴ 2 Corinthians 8:11

⁵ Luke 8:8 & 14:35

⁶ Genesis 17:10-12

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:7

⁸ John 8:39

⁹ 1 Peter 1:10-12

¹⁰ Hebrews 11:13

¹¹ Hebrew 11:13

¹² 2 Timothy 4:7

¹³ Hebrews 5:8