

## Jesus presented in the temple.

### Luke 2:22-40

The angel Gabriel had revealed to Mary what she was to name her Child (Luke 1:31). The name “Jesus” comes from two Hebrew words: *the Lord* (Jehovah) plus *save*. Matthew 1:21 gives this interpretation of the name *Jesus*: “*He will save His people from their sins.*” Truly an appropriate name for this Child!

We don’t know just where Mary and Joseph might have stayed while they remained in Bethlehem after Jesus was born. Undoubtedly, they were able to find more suitable shelter than the stable after the rush of people had left Bethlehem following the census registration.

When Jesus was 40 days old, they made the short trip to Jerusalem for the purification of Mary and the presentation of the Child in the temple. The law of the purification of a mother is found in Leviticus chapter 12. A poor person was required to bring two doves or young pigeons as her sacrificial offerings. The law also required that a firstborn male was to be consecrated to the Lord (Exodus 13:2). If the child was not given into the service of the Lord, the parents needed to redeem him by a payment of five shekels (Numbers 3:46-47). Mary and Joseph did not make this payment since Jesus was consecrated to the Lord in the fullest possible way. On the 40<sup>th</sup> day of His life, Jesus is presented to the Lord.

We are now introduced to two very pious and aged persons, Simeon and Anna. They remind us of those other two persons, Zechariah and Elizabeth, whom we met at the beginning of this story of the births of John and Jesus. And just as Zechariah sang a hymn of praise, so does Simeon.

Simeon had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. When Mary and Joseph come into the courts of the temple, the Spirit directs Simeon to do the same. Seeing the child Jesus, he takes the infant in his arms and praises God with the song commonly called the *Nunc Dimittis* (from the opening words of the hymn in Latin). We continue to sing this song as part of our communion liturgy.

Simeon is not really making a request of the Lord- he is making a statement of fact: “*You are letting Your servant depart in peace,*” (Luke 2:29). Simeon’s service in the temple as a watchman waiting for the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises is at an end. The watch is over; the servant can retire in peace. With the eyes of faith, Simeon sees more than a

Babe in arms; he sees a Saviour dying on the cross; he sees salvation for all people, both Israelite and Gentile.

Joseph and Mary marvelled at the words spoken by Simeon. But the old man is not finished. He shows insight that could come only by special revelation of the Spirit concerning the destiny of this Child. Israel would be divided over Jesus - He would cause some to fall and some to rise. For some, Jesus would be a rock of offense over which they would stumble; for others, He would be the living stone of salvation. Mary would herself witness His suffering on the cross; her own soul would be pierced with the sword.

Simeon passes from the scene to be replaced by Anna, a widow who was very old. She had faithfully served the Lord for many years with worship, fasting, and prayer. Now she adds her thanksgiving to that of Simeon's and speaks of the Child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Joseph and Mary had much to discuss as they proceeded on their way back to Bethlehem following their visit to the temple. For the time being, they decided to stay in Bethlehem. Luke skips over the story of the coming of the wise men and the flight into Egypt (Matthew 2). He simply reports that after doing everything required by the law of the Lord, Mary and Joseph returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Here Jesus grew up, becoming stronger day by day, and was filled with wisdom and the grace of God.