December 20, 2015

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

DEDICATIONS OF FIRSTBORN

MINISTRY INVOCATION

“My God: We give thanks to You for the manifold blessings to us. We shall remain eternally grateful. Amen.”

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW AND UNDERSTAND

Israel was instructed by God to always remember this deliverance. Each first born of Egypt was taken and each first born of Israel was spared.

Simeon’s joy was obvious in his words from today’s scripture. These words show that though Jesus was a baby Simeon had it revealed to him that this was the Messiah.

THE APPLIED FULL GOSPEL DISTINCTIVE

We believe in Jesus Christ as the Sovereign Giver of spiritual gifts to the Church. TEXT:

Background Scripture –

Key Verse –


Exodus 13:11–13 (NKJV)

The Law of the Firstborn

11 “And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, 12 that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the LORD’s. 13 But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

Exodus 13:14–15 (NKJV)

14 So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ that you shall say to him, ‘By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’

Luke 2:22–32 (NKJV)

22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who 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.”

Simeon’s Prophecy

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just 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. So he came by 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 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.”

COMMENTARY

Exodus 13:11–13 As is the case with the entire Pentateuch, this section comes from a time before the Israelites had entered the promised land and therefore anticipates what would happen once the land was settled. Accordingly, by implication it makes the time of the wilderness wanderings an exception. Presumably, the regular redemption of firstborn humans and animals did not occur with the same regularity during the wilderness period as it did later. Verse 11’s allusion to God’s promise of the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (“as he promised on oath to you and your forefathers”) echoes verse 4’s, further reinforcing the idea that these regulations were for the promised land, not the wilderness.

“The first offspring of every womb” belongs to God, and in cattle it was specifically the “firstborn males” that were His. God did not want to keep (and thus keep away from His people’s homes and families) either the firstborn human babies or many of the firstborn animal babies. The criterion was that the firstborn males of normally edible animals (goat kids, lambs, oxen,—whatever was considered a proper food animal) were given to God as offerings, whereas the firstborn of humans and the firstborn of male animals used for work but not for eating (such as the donkey mentioned in verse 13) were redeemed by payment of a substitute. Thus, the practical meaning of “give over to the LORD” in verse 12 is “bring to the tabernacle as a sacrifice.”

In the case of a donkey, a non-firstborn lamb was an appropriate substitute (since all firstborn lambs must be given to God and none held back to serve as redemption substitutes). For children, the redemption price was five sanctuary shekels, just as it was for an unclean animal (a male work animal that one
wanted to keep). The full explanation of the redemption pricing is found in Numbers 18:15–17. The ruling in verse 13 about breaking the neck of an unredeemed donkey (used here as an example, not as the only instance of its type) may seem odd at first glance, but it was entirely within the principles of the redemption system. A firstborn animal could not simply be kept from God for one’s own use—either for working or for eating. It belonged to God, so if it was not redeemed, it must be destroyed. God did not want people to waste the time of the priests and Levites at the central sanctuary by having people bring unneeded animals to them for destruction. The people could destroy the animals themselves; but by no means could anyone say, “Since God doesn’t need this, I’ll keep it and use it for myself.” God decided what to use and what to destroy of what belonged to Him. This regulation clarifies the process in the case of animals of no use to the sanctuary.

The ultimate purpose of this instruction was to prepare the Israelites for the death of Christ on their behalf. Though most generations of Israelites could anticipate this all-important event only vaguely, they certainly could grasp the basic concepts involved: if a life is to be restored, it must be bought back (redeemed) by a payment; and that payment is often the substitutionary death of something for something else.

13:14–16 Children desire to learn the reasons for the practices they grow up observing. It was therefore expected that in their natural inquisitiveness, Israelite children would ask their parents the meaning of the consecration/redemption of the firstborn. The parents expected, in replying to their children, to link the practice to the exodus, which was triggered by the death of the Egyptian firstborn and the sparing of the Israelite firstborn. In effect, the child was to be told, “Our identity is that of God’s chosen people who were rescued from slavery in Egypt and rescued from the death of the firstborn by faith in Yahweh. We keep showing that faith by dedicating all firstborn children and all firstborn male livestock to God, but we buy back the children, and the livestock that are inappropriate for God’s offerings because God is generous enough to allow us to do that. He still gets an offering, but it is a substitute offering for what He wants us to keep. When we do all this, we are doing something that reminds us of His powerful deliverance from Egypt.”

Verse 15 provides the greatest amount of new material in the passage, even though none of it is new to the overall Exodus story. The Hebrew of vv. 14–16 contains nothing that definitively limits consecration/redemption of the firstborn to male children.
Luke 2:22 When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed. This would have been forty days after Jesus’ birth (seven days after birth, circumcision; thirty-three days after circumcision, purification. The law is mentioned five times in this account (Luke 2:22, 23, 24, 27, 29, and thus its value as a moral guide is revealed.

Took him. “Took him” is literally took him up. One always goes up to Jerusalem, even though in this instance Bethlehem is slightly higher than Jerusalem. Since Nazareth is not mentioned, Luke expected his readers to think of this trip as originating in Bethlehem, which is five miles south of Jerusalem. It is uncertain about whether the purification-redemption-consecration had to be done in the temple in Jerusalem. Since Bethlehem lay so close to Jerusalem, there is good reason to think that Joseph and Mary would have sought to perform these rites in the temple.

To present him to the Lord. This was seen by Luke as the main reason for going to Jerusalem. One should not interpret the verb “present” as the offering of Jesus as a sacrifice to God.

2:23 (As it is written). This verse demonstrates that the main element in this account for Luke was the Savior’s consecration rather than his redemption or Mary’s purification. One should not read into this a Nazirite dedication, for Luke made no mention of this.

2:24 And to offer ... “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” Why did Luke describe the sacrifice? Was it purely for historical reasons? Was it to demonstrate that Joseph and Mary obeyed the law? Or was it because he expected his readers to know that the normal sacrifice involved a lamb and a dove or pigeon and thus to understand that Joseph and Mary were of a “humble state” (Luke 1:48), i.e., too poor to be able to afford a lamb? That Mary offered a dove as a sin offering (Lev 12:6) for her purification indicates that the mother of God’s Son also needed the forgiveness and redemption that her son brought. (The description of Mary’s offering also suggests that Joseph and Mary were not yet in possession of the rich gifts of the wise men.

2:25–38 Even as John the Baptist’s circumcision and naming was followed by prophetic statements praising God and indicating John’s future destiny, so Jesus’ naming and consecration was followed by praise to God and the foretelling of Jesus’ destiny. Jesus’ destiny, however, involved a surpassing greatness.

2:25 Simeon. Apart from this incident, Simeon is unknown. He was unimportant for Luke. Only the role he played in Jesus’ story is important.

A man ... who was righteous and devout. Luke had a love for pairs.

He was waiting for the consolation of Israel. This refers to the consolation that would be brought about by the inauguration of the messianic age. For Luke, this referred not to the fulfillment of Jewish political hopes involving deliverance.
from their enemies and restoration of David’s throne but rather to the salvation Jesus brought. Simeon was looking forward to Israel’s consolation (2:25), i.e., Jerusalem’s redemption (2:38); the coming of God’s kingdom (23:51); the Master’s return (12:36); the resurrection of the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15).

And the Holy Spirit was upon him. Luke wanted his readers to understand that Simeon was providing reliable testimony to the person and work of God’s Son.

2:26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Here, there is an article before “Holy Spirit.”

Should not die. “Should not die” is literally “to see death,” an OT expression for dying.

The Lord’s Christ. Perhaps this can better be translated “the ‘Anointed’ of the Lord” or “the Lord’s Messiah.”

2:27 Moved by the Spirit. This does not refer to an ecstatic experience but rather to the Spirit’s guidance such as referred to in Luke 4:1.

He went into the temple. Here “temple” refers to the temple court, not the temple sanctuary.

When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required. Luke omitted the details of the carrying out of Mary’s purification, since the readers already knew what was involved due to 2:24. Luke described Joseph and Mary as Jesus’ “parents.” He, of course, intended his readers to understand his use of this term in light of the virginal conception. Joseph was the adopted and legal father of Jesus. Luke saw no contradiction between this term and a virgin birth. As a result, he avoided any awkward circumlocution for “parents,” such as “virgin-mother of Jesus and his adopted, but not physical, father.”

2:29 Sovereign Lord. “Sovereign Lord” is an appropriate title in light of the use of the term “servant” in the latter part of the verse.

Now. It is the first word in the Greek text and thus in an emphatic position: “Now [that salvation, God’s Kingdom, the Messiah has come] dismiss your servant in peace because.”

Dismiss your servant in peace. A Semitic way of saying, “Let me die.” For “in peace” see Gen 15:15. Perhaps it should be understood as indicating that now that Simeon had seen the Lord’s Christ, God was beginning to fulfill Luke 2:26, and Simeon was already in the process of experiencing his “peaceful dismissal.” This verse and 2:26 suggest that Simeon died shortly after 2:35.

2:30 For my eyes have seen your salvation. This does not imply that Simeon had been physically blind up to this point. In the child Jesus, Simeon saw the Savior who would bring about Israel’s salvation.
2:31 Which you have prepared in the sight of all people [Greek “peoples”]. It is best understood as referring to both Jews and Gentiles due to the reference to Gentiles and Israel in the next verse and the use of “people” (singular) there for Israel. Luke probably changed the quotation from nations to peoples in order to include both Jews and Gentiles.

2:32 A light for revelation to the Gentiles. For “light” as a metaphor to describe Jesus.

And for glory to your people Israel. “Glory” can be understood as standing in apposition to “revelation” or to “light.” Thus the salvation Jesus brings is light (to give revelation) to the Gentiles and glory to Israel. (The Jews already had the divine revelation but awaited the manifestation of the glory God had promised.)

RELATED DISCUSSION TOPICS

CLOSING PRAYER
My God: I am grateful to have found You and kept You in the forefront of my being. Bless us continually with Your grace and mercy. They represent bountiful blessings for all of us. Amen.