

Luke 2:22-40

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[0 : 0 0] well as some of you are aware i've been taking groups to the land of israel and sometimes to jordan over many years and we were supposed to go in march this year and because of the pandemic we've had to postpone until april next year and we're still wondering if this will this will happen i hope it does because it's such a tremendous visit to be to to bring people to on our previous tour in september 2018 it was on the last sunday sorry the last saturday in in september that we came into the city of jerusalem and that was a special day in the city of jerusalem it was their sabbath sorry it was on the friday night we came in the eve of their sabbath and this was a special sabbath a very important one it was a high holy sabbath it was the day of atonement in the distant past there were rivers of blood flowing out from the temple as people uh sacrificed their animals or as their animals were being sacrificed and the people of israel expressed sorrow for their sins now during our visit that time the streets of jerusalem were empty we were actually walking on the tram tracks in the middle of the road that day on shabbat and the only other people on the road that day were stragglers like ourselves visitors to the city and and some of the more orthodox jews going to the synagogues now the the jewish religion was and still is full of symbolism handed down generation to generation since the law of moises was given there are rituals ritual washings there are blessings there are sabbaths there are festivals there are rites of passage like bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah and brit millah as well and that's what we'll talk about tonight i'll explain a little bit later on if you don't know the term visit the western wall and you often see bar mitzvah taking place it's it's so very moving to see those 13 year old boys reading the scroll for the very first time this is part of the ritual of becoming a man the boys progression from childhood to be into adulthood now children are aren't obligated to to keep the commandments but are encouraged to do so under jewish law so they learn their application their obligations very early on so that when they when they move into adulthood they know what they should do now a jewish girl has a ritual as well it's it's called bat mitzvah it's a year sooner than boys it's a year later than boys it's a year later than boys it's a year later than boys and they're in comparison to what we're going to talk about uh tonight and circumcision what happens to boys at the at on the eighth day so here in our passage we find this jewish sermon ceremony of brit brit milah which is the act of the covenant of circumcision it's performed eight days after the child the male child is born and this goes back to to genesis to the time of abraham there in genesis 17 we read such shall be the

covenant between me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep every male among you shall be circumcised you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin and that shall be a sign of a covenant between me and you and throughout the general and throughout the generations every male among you shall be circumcised at the age of eight days thus shall my covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting covenant of all the commandments in judaism even until today the brit milah or the covenant of circumcision is thought to be one of the most universally observed it was and still is of great important to the jewish people to have their sons circumcised on the eighth day to the jew circumcision is an outward physical sign of that eternal covenant made in the days of abraham between abraham and god it's also a sign for the jewish race and a sign that will be perpetuated through the generations through the man who's circumcised now if a father doesn't have his son circumcised the son has to have himself circumcised as soon as he becomes an adult and here in luke 2 the story we find is is an earthly father taking the infant jesus and he was doing what was right in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of the lord and jesus is presented in the temple on the eighth day when it was time to circumcise him he was named jesus the same name he had the angel had given him before he had been conceived when the time of the purification according to the law of moses had been completed joseph and mary took him to jerusalem to present him to the lord as is written in the law of the lord every firstborn child male is to be consecrated to the lord that's in exodus 13 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the law of the lord a pair of doves or two young pigeons now this account in the gospel of luke takes us into the heart of the jewish customs and laws and since luke doesn't tell the reader about the space of time we need to go to the old testament or we might otherwise miss some pointers all the rights mentioned here in verses 21 to 24 are the right of circumcision on the eighth day the redemption or the consecration of the firstborn and also the right of purification now we could gloss over these things but they're here mentioned in luke so what did they all mean just briefly well after the circumcision on the eighth day of the boy's birth there was to be the redemption of the firstborn this is what exodus says exodus 13 and 1 the lord said to moses consecrate to me every firstborn male the first offspring of every woman among the israelites belongs to me whether man or animal or animal now why was that law given well some of the scholars think it's to to make the jewish people different and the jewish race different from others because on the in the and amongst the other peoples there was child sacrifice there was no child sacrifice amongst the jews this was not as a

habit or a sacrifice or a practice that the children of israel had embraced consecration to god of the firstborn was a thank you for a human life numbers 18 says the firstborn of every woman both man and animal that is offered to the lord is yours you must redeem the firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals when they are a month old you must redeem them at the redemption price of five shekels of silver according to the sanctuary sanctuary which weighs 20 giras or about 55 grams a couple of ounces the sum had to be paid to the priests it could not be paid sooner than 31 days after the birth and shouldn't be very long after that before the 40th day so the third rite of passage we read of here is a purification after childbirth a woman giving birth to a son was unclean for 40 days if it was a daughter she had she had given birth to she was unclean for 80 days under the jewish law so while a woman could do her household chores and and whatever she could not enter the temple 40 days after 40 days after 40 days of her son being born or 80 days after a daughter being born she couldn't share in any religious ceremony when the days of her leuiticus 12 says at verse 6 when the days of her purification for a son or a daughter are over she is to bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a year old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering she'll offer them before the lord to make atonement for her and then she will be ceremonial ceremonially clean from her flow of blood if she cannot afford a lamb she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering in this way the priest will make atonement for her and she will be clean so we see something else here that is quite significant what mary brought on that day was something that was normally given by the poor and and in this we discover the humble nature of the birth of the lord jesus christ mary and joseph were probably among those who i think it was uh teresa may that said who were just managing at that time you know there are many people who are just managing from week to week or from month to month and i think mary and joseph would have been in that kind of circumstance just managing to get along with what they had just to keep solvent and if life is tough for us we need to remember that jesus's family knew all about these difficulties of making ends meet these three ceremonies that are mentioned here briefly may may seem strange old ceremonies to us today but they all testify to the conviction that the child is a gift from god now even though this child born to mary was god's son his family carried out these rights according to the law of the jews the law of moises and this shows us something of the character of the earthly father of jesus of joseph

so we know that jesus was about 40 days or nearly six weeks old or nearly seven weeks old when he was brought to the temple in jerusalem and in those verses we come across those other two characters this old man and this old woman now as far as i know they only make appearance in these these final acts of the drama of the nativity as we call it the one is named simeon and the other is a woman named anna they don't appear on in any nativity scenes not normally in any case they don't usually appear in christmas cards but both are significant players in the birth of the son of god both of these individuals were waiting for something actually they were waiting for someone a significant someone a significant someone now there was a man in jerusalem called simeon who was righteous and devout he was waiting for the consolation of israel and the holy spirit was upon him luke used a word that reveals that they were waiting with expectation you know yourselves when you're waiting with expectation for something you can't wait you can hardly wait for it to happen like like children going on holiday or our children are christmas coming how many more sleeps it was almost that situation with simeon and anna how many more sleeps until messiah comes they were alert to his appearance of his imminent appearance they were ready to welcome these two old people living and working in the temple in luke 2 25 simeon was waiting and and 238 says anna was looking forward to things hadn't been going too well for the nation of israel for many years god had been silent for 400 years until this great event the nation was under roman rule with no independence of their own the people and nation had lost their way they were living in fear of a very capable a cruel king called herod and many wondered is the messiah ever going to come are we ever going to be saved and yet here are simeon and anna waiting waiting waiting for the messiah to come verse 26 shows us that simeon was not famous he wasn't rich he wasn't influential but we read something about him that's very crucial he was righteous and devout verse 25 simeon without doubt was a man of god and he had good reason for hope and anticipation because listen to verse 26 again it had been revealed to him by the holy spirit this was a man who was in touch with god that he would not die before he had seen the lord's christ no wonder he was waiting with anticipation no wonder he was waiting how many more days how many more hours until i see until i hold

the savior of the world the savior of the world the savior of the world simeon was part of a faithful remnant who was waiting for the coming of the messiah that is the consolation of israel the one who would bring peace the one who would bring comfort the one who would bring great joy to individuals comfort comfort comfort comfort my people says your god said isaiah so long before the holy spirit at that time had prompted simeon to go into the temple courts at a certain time and i'm sure the holy spirit prompts us to do things at certain times again as well and we don't know why and yet something happens so here was simeon prompted to go into the temple courts on the right day at the right time why so that he would meet with this jesus because jesus and mary were bringing jesus joseph and mary were bringing jesus to the temple and when simeon looked at the infant jesus now just six and a half weeks older thereabouts he knew that god's promise to him had been kept here was emmanuel god with us luke 2 and 28 says that simeon reached down and took jesus out of mary's arms and began to worship the child can you imagine the scene acknowledging and praising and worshipping god for what he had done that he had not only fulfilled his promise to him but but the promise to all those who had come before to the prophets and to the kings now he had sent his anointed one into the land to comfort both jews yes and gentiles sovereign lord as you have promised you now dismissed your servant in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all people a light for revelation to the gentiles and we're glad that he came for gentiles as well and for the glory of your people israel what a moment that must have been when simeon held his child and gazed upon his face imagine imagine a gargling smiling jesus smiling up at simeon then he lifted his eyes towards the heavens and worship and in awe of god and his greatness on what he had done my eyes have seen your glory my eyes have seen your salvation wouldn't you like to have been in in that place at that time oh i can imagine that simeon was there holding holding jesus and hardly seeing him for tears in his eyes his eyes and his response to god for giving him this opportunity this moment of unimaginable and pure joy was his sovereign lord as you have promised you now dismissed your servant in peace i'm finished with this world

[20 : 26] i've seen it all i've seen it all i want to go home seen all i want to see lord i'm ready just take me no other moment could exceed this one or do you remember the exact ecstatic joy you had in your heart when you came to faith in the lord jesus christ when you knew that you belonged to the lord can you remember that day oh the blessedness i knew when first i saw the lord where is the soul refreshing view of jesus and his word this is such an important verse here in this text i don't want you to miss it it's so important for people to see god's salvation before they see death death and simeon saw it now scholars tell us that simeon was a man of about 113 years old however old he was he had made himself ready he was prepared to go and meet his god and his maker and that time can come at any time for any of us death is not always an old age it it may come at any time and it does if you have looked at an old school photo from your primary school or secondary school days there will be faces there that are no longer with us it's sad but you sometimes wonder you might not have seen some of these hadn't seen these people for many years before they died you wonder have they gone to be with the lord were they ready like simeon was ready to meet with a god and their maker you're god's people well well when the song goes i i i i want how does it go i want to go to heaven before but but i don't want to die i can't remember the words exactly it's a country kind of song that's how it is but god's people of course we want to stay with our families but ultimately we're not afraid of death because we know that beyond the moment of death is really when life begins in the presence of the father for that moment for many it's a it's a ceasing of earthly trials but not only that of innumerable innumerable blessings in that life that is still to come verse 33 shows that joseph and mary was were were just amazed at simeon's reaction and from praising god simeon continues with a word of prophecy listen to what he said verse 34 then simeon blessed them and said to mary his mother this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed and a sword will pierce your own soul too with jesus there is no neutral ground you're either for him or you're against him

there never has been neutral ground and there never will be neutral ground. Jesus' mother Mary would be grieved by the widespread rejection of her son, and here we see the first note of sorrow in his young life in the Gospel of Luke spoken to Mary: "A sword will pierce your own soul too." Oh, perhaps Mary felt a stab of pain at that moment as Simeon spoke how much Mary knew or understood we cannot know, but one thing is sure: we're told before in this chapter that Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. How much did Mary know? Did she know that her son was born to die? Mary was there when her son was crucified, and there the sword would really pierce her own soul. Imagine a mother watching her child, her son, on a cross. As Simon or Simeon had prophesied in the temple that day, thronging amongst the crowds, someone else like Simeon was also waiting for the Messiah. There was also a prophetess Anna, a daughter of Phanul of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage and then a widow until she was 84.

This verse always reminds me of my own granny. Her name was Annie, and she lived until she was 84 and she had been a widow for many, many years. Her husband, my grandfather, having died in the Isle Air disaster, so I always think of my granny when I read this passage. Anna here was also very keenly waiting for the redemption of Israel. After her husband had died, she dedicated her life to fasting and praying in the temple. What a tremendous role to have to be known as a praying woman. My granny was known as a woman who prayed people into the kingdom. What a role that is. In fact, what the Bible tells us here is that she never left the temple but worshiped day and night, looking forward to the very same person that Simeon had been looking forward to with a different orientation of course. Instead of looking for comfort, Anna was looking for forgiveness. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke up with the child of all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. The word redemption here is related to being released from captivity. The Passover was the release of Israel from Egyptian slavery, and this student Anna's days as the ultimate redemption, a symbol of God's power coming from heaven to earth to release the captives from sin, ultimately Passover pointed to this day when God would provide a deliverance from the slavery to sin. And when Anna saw Jesus, she gave thanks to God and spoke up with the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. She spoke to all; she couldn't keep quiet about it. She had met with Jesus here at last, was the one who would save his people from their sins, that includes all who hear the message. And when Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee. Galilee to their own town of Nazareth, and the child grew and became strong, and he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. So how long did Mary and Joseph remain in central Israel after the birth of Jesus? Were they there for these six or seven weeks, or did they go home to Nazareth and come back again? We don't know, but Anna truly marveled at the one she had seen. She was moved to the very depths of her being, and so were we when we came into a relationship when we saw Jesus with the eyes of faith, and this amazing experience led her to speak about the child Jesus, this child who came to be the salvation of Israel, the salvation of the world, and she was speaking to all who were looking for answers to the problems of their day, telling them about Jesus, her savior.

in our day a day of great confusion salvation many are looking for answers and they're not finding them even though maybe our homes are laden with gifts after christmas that's not the answer hearts are devoid of the greatest gift of all the gift of salvation salvation in jesus christ the free gift of salvation in jesus christ perhaps we can fill the void in some people's lives by being a modern day anna willing to share with others about our meeting your meeting my meeting with jesus testifying in a simple way just sharing our story of life with jesus and this is a great time of year when people are open to the christmas story to tell what jesus has done for us us he was not only a good man he was a healer as well and he is the savior of sinners do you need a savior tonight here he is right before you in this passage the one who came both to heal and to save may the lord bless these few thoughts from his holy words to each one of us tonight let's just pray our heavenly father we thank you for this tremendous story of this old man and old woman who are waiting for the coming of the messiah of israel the messiah the savior of the world and father we think of the great expectations they had and father we know that there are many out there today looking for answers and the answer to all our needs is ultimately found in jesus christ our lord and our savior and so lord help us to be bold to be brave to be strong and share our own faith with those who with whom we meet those who are around us those whom we love in jesus name we pray amen