

Candlemas

Luke 2 v 22-40

Context:

It was only a few weeks ago that we celebrated the birth of Jesus at Christmas, though it already seems a long time ago! There aren't many details in the Bible of Jesus' childhood following his birth but, in his Gospel, Luke does invite us to look in on a few significant milestones in Jesus' early days and in today's study we will explore one of these family celebrations.

Observation:

1. When, why and where did Mary and Joseph take Jesus in v 22-24?
2. How is Simeon described in v 25?
3. What amazing thing had the Holy Spirit revealed to him (v 26)?
4. Why did he go into the Temple Courts (v 27a)?
5. What did Simeon do when he saw Jesus (v 27b-28)?
6. What was the theme of his song in v 29-32?
7. How did Joseph and Mary react according to v 33?
8. What blessing did Simeon pronounce over them in v 34-35?
9. How is Anna described in v 36-37?
10. What did she do when she saw Jesus (v 38)?
11. What did Jesus' family do afterwards (v 39)?
12. How is Jesus described in v 40?

Meaning:

1. What was the cultural and spiritual significance of the two rituals Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to observe in v 22-24? – see Exodus 2 v 1-16 & Leviticus 12 v 1-8.
2. What do these details tell us about the economic circumstances of Mary & Joseph?
3. What do you think Luke means when he says that Simeon was 'waiting for the consolation of Israel' in v 25?
4. In what different ways was the Holy Spirit at work in Simeon's life according to v 25-27?
5. Read Isaiah 42 v 1-9. How does this Old Testament prophetic promise help us to understand Simeon's song of praise in v 29-32 and how does it explain why he was so excited as he took Jesus in his arms?
6. What had Joseph and Mary already learned about the identity of Jesus before this point and why do you think they marvelled at Simeon's words (v 33)?
7. What do you think Simeon's prophetic blessing means (v 34-35)? In what ways was it both good news and bad news?
8. What does v 37 tell us about the spiritual state of Anna?
9. What do you think Luke means in v 38 by 'the redemption of Jerusalem'? How does this phrase relate to the similar phrase in v 25 ('the consolation of Israel' - see question 5)? Can you think of any Old Testament passages that shed light on what these two phrases might mean?
10. What impression of family life do we receive from the final verses in this passage (v 39-40)?

Application:

1. Describe the various ways Joseph and Mary demonstrated their obedience to God in this passage. How might we follow their example today?
2. Simeon was saturated in the Holy Spirit. How might we follow his example today?

3. Anna was totally dedicated to the service of God. How might we follow her example today?

Pray:

- For grace to follow the examples of Joseph, Mary, Simeon and Anna.