

**THE MEETING OF THE LORD (BRINGING THE CHILD JESUS TO THE TEMPLE
IN JERUSALEM), FEBRUARY 2/15, 2007**

HEBREWS 7: 7-17

ST. LUKE 2: 22-40

by

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Gospel: *And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord;*

(As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him after the custom of the law,

Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word:

For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,

Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.

And Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him.

And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

(Yea, a sword shall pierce through Thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him.

The Purpose in bringing Christ to the Temple

The Law commanded that a woman who had conceived and brought forth a male child have him circumcised on the eighth day, wait another 33 days in which she abstained from coming to the temple and marital relations: and then on the 40th day bring him with sacrificial offerings to the temple.¹ Saint Bede comments:

The Virgin did *not* (emphasis supplied) receive seed, but even as our Lord willed to be under the law, so that He might redeem us [Gal. 4:4,5], so too did the blessed Mother,...for the sake of showing us an example of humility.²

The Holy Spirit Comes to Simeon – His Revelation

Simeon of Jerusalem was not a priest, but a God-fearing man, who was waiting for the Messiah to come bringing “consolation to the Hebrews, delivering them from their slavery to sin, and, thereby, can we not say, even from their slavery to the Romans and Herod”.³ The Holy Spirit came upon Simeon and revealed to him that he would see Christ before his death. Thus, Simeon hurried to the Temple whilst the Spirit was upon him at the time the Theotokos took Jesus to it. He, then, lovingly, took the Infant Jesus in his arms and “confessed Him to be God”.⁴ How do

we know? He says to the Christ Child to let him depart in peace this earthly life because he has seen the world's salvation:

All the saints and the just regard the present life in the flesh as a kind of bondage; they pass this life as strangers and sojourners, always desiring a higher life, and striving and struggling to attain it. For in *that* (emphasis supplied) life there is rest, consolation and tranquility, whereas in this life all of us disquiet ourselves in vain; today we are alive and tomorrow we die.⁵

He confesses that the Child is Lord over both life and death. Simeon asks he be relieved and allowed to die now that he had received the promised Divine revelation. He was to be at peace, leaving all his troubles behind. He is also at peace having seen the Lord – he has been set free.⁶

Our Salvation

... for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation:

...

Thy salvation is the Incarnation of the Only-begotten Son, which God has prepared from *before* (emphasis supplied) all ages. God has prepared this salvation *before the face of all peoples*, so that He might save the world, and so that His Incarnation might be revealed to all.⁷

The salvation emanating from the Incarnation is twofold: It reveals Christ to the heretofore unenlightened Gentiles who “were in darkness” and acts for the glory of the Israelites who would have the Saviour as theirs.⁸ Simeon knows that Christ is the salvation of *all* people. God prepared salvation before all ages! Christ's Incarnation, His taking flesh, brings the long-promised prepared salvation into final fruition in order for the world to be saved.⁹

The Child and the Fall & Resurrection of Many in Israel

Simeon, then blessed Joseph and Mary, both having “marveled” at his words, and addressed the Theotokos:

Behold, this Child is set for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel;

According to Bl. Theophylact and the Fathers, there are three interpretations of this: (1) that those who do *not* believe will fall and those who do will be resurrected (2) Christ is “set for the fall of evil things in our soul and for the rising up of good things” and (3) the Lord Himself is set for the fall, His death, and because of this many will be resurrected. Bl. Theophylact suggests placing a comma after “fall” to fathom the third interpretation.¹⁰

The Sign

Now consider Simeon's following phrase: “; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;”. He means the Cross, which as the Christian Symbol is spoken against and rejected by those unwilling to believe:

This sign is spoken against by heretics and unbelievers, but by faithful Orthodox (Christians) it is truly believed, venerated, magnified and proclaimed.¹¹

In addition, the sign is the Lord's Incarnation and it is wondrous indeed:

For God became man, and a virgin became a mother. And this sign, Christ's Incarnation, is indeed spoken against and denied.¹²

The Sword

What about Simeon's further words to Mary “yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also...”? We can consider “sword” to mean the grief (anguish) coming from Christ's Passion. Yet, sword also “means the doubt and temptation that the Virgin would experience, seeing the Lord crucified on the Cross”. She might have wondered how it was possible for Christ, born without human seed, the worker of miracles, Who raised the dead, to “be crucified, spat upon, and killed”?¹³ (She was human, and these would be the human feelings of a mother.) Yet, we must remember that the Lord voluntarily goes to His death from which He is resurrected in order to save us. He suffered as a man, but His Passion and Resurrection are the Divine Plan.

The Revelation of Hearts

What does it mean “that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed”? Simply this – those who doubt Christ will be discovered and revealed, even the Virgin's doubt will be “uncovered and revealed”, and her faith in Christ confirmed. Similarly, Peter's denial will be discovered, revealed and by God's power he will be received back into the spiritual fold by repentance.¹⁴ Additionally, when Judas the betrayer appeared, his spiritually-defective heart was revealed. Yet, this ‘revelation of many hearts’ also applies to those such as Joseph of Arimathea, who showed his love for the Saviour when he went to Pilate requesting the Lord's body. It also is germane to the “women disciples who waited at the foot of the Cross”.¹⁵

Today's Gospel ends with St. Luke providing the evidence for the truthfulness of his account:

The Evangelist gives this narrative about Anna, noting her father and her family and suggesting many witnesses who knew her father and her tribe.¹⁶

He discusses Anna the prophetess, who didn't leave the temple serving God with her fasts and prayers day and night. She came in at the same hour/time that Joseph and Mary brought the Infant Jesus:

She gave thanks to the Lord and taught many concerning the Lord, that He was the Saviour and consolation of us who were awaiting redemption.¹⁷

Return to Nazareth Where Christ Grew in Wisdom

They returned to Nazareth where they lived and Jesus grew into manhood. Being Christ, He could have been ‘grown up’ from the beginning. But He didn’t do this because it “would have appeared to have been a phantasy”. So, He grew normally, little by little.¹⁸

His Wisdom, Revealed But Not Received –

His Wisdom of God the Word showed forth consistent with His physical growth so He “advanced and grew strong in spirit”. In this way, He avoided being considered a “miraculous prodigy”. So, He shows Himself as proper for His years “fulfilling the divine plan of salvation”. He exercised His Wisdom; after all, Christ is Perfect from the beginning, “the One perfect *before* (emphasis supplied) the ages”.¹⁹ What was there from inception could not be subsequently received or improved upon. He was “filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him”.²⁰

Have the faith of Simeon, who cradled the Lord in his arms, accepting and proclaiming the Infant Child as his Saviour, the Child Who would die on the Cross for our sins and deliver our salvation through His Resurrection. Remember not only the righteous Simeon but eldress Anna, who gave ‘testimony’ to our God. Give thanks to our Saviour, Who actively seeks our salvation, hopes for our repentance and reformation. “He is the Liberator and Redeemer of our souls.”²¹ Show our faith by revolutionising our lives in His image!

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ Lev. 12:6

² “Homily 1.18, Feast of the Purification,” *Homilies on the Gospels*, Bk. One, 179, 180 cited in *The Orthodox New Testament, The Holy Gospels, Volume 1*, Holy Apostles Convent/Dormition Skete, Buena Vista, CO, 2000, fn 45, pp. 303-304.

³ Bl. Theophylact’s *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke, Vol. III* in the series, Bl. Theophylact’s *Explanation of the New Testament* (tr. from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade), Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, p. 34.

⁴ *id.*

⁵ Hieromonk German Ciuba, (tr. from the Slavonic into English; tr. from the Greek into Slavonic in the year 6851, A.D. 1343), *The Gospel Commentary*, Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, PA, 2002, p. 767.

⁶ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁷ *id.*

⁸ *id.*

⁹ *id.*

¹⁰ *id.*, pp. 35-36.

¹¹ Ciuba, *op. cit.*, p. 769.

¹² Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹³ *id.*

¹⁴ *id.*

¹⁵ *id.*

¹⁶ Ciuba, *op. cit.*, p. 770.

¹⁷ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹⁸ *id.*

¹⁹ Ciuba, *op. cit.*, p. 771.

²⁰ Bl Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²¹ Ciuba, *op. cit.*, pp. 771-772.