

Gospel and Presentation of Jesus

Outline

1. Jesus Presentation Event (Luke 2:21-33, 38)
2. Simeon's remarkable prophecy (Luke 2:28-35)
3. Jesus will cause the rise and falling of many (Luke 2:34)
4. Jesus will cause division within your heart (v35)

Read Luke 2:21-38

1. Jesus' Presentation Event (Luke 2:21-33,38)

Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses throughout His life as the second Adam. He fully obeyed God's Law till He died on the cross. There, He gave His righteousness to us in exchange for our sins (2 Cor 5:21).

His godly parents had him circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21) and named Him Jesus (Hebrew, it is *Jehoshua*, which means God saves). Thirty-three days later, on the fortieth day after His birth, Mary underwent purification rites for mothers who gave birth to a son by offering a lamb sacrifice. But the poor could offer two doves (Lev 12:1-4,8). Joseph and Mary offered two doves. The firstborn sons must also be consecrated and presented to God for sparing the Hebrew firstborn sons during the Passover event in Egypt (Exod 13:2,12,15). Luke combines the purification rites for Mary and the presentation of Jesus to God in Luke 2:22-24.

The Holy Spirit led two godly and elderly Jews, Simeon and Anna, to witness the presentation. The Holy Spirit revealed to them that this baby, born of poor parents, was the long-awaited Messiah (Luke 2:25-32, 38), not only Israel's Saviour but the whole world. Simeon also made a remarkable prophecy concerning the ministry of Jesus (Luke 2:34-35).

2. Simeon's remarkable prophecy (Luke 2:34-35)

Luke 2:34-35 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,³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Simeon prophesies that Jesus will cause the falling and rising of many people, and it will disclose their secret thoughts. Many people will oppose Him (v34). Mary will also suffer much (v35).

The critical point is that nobody can be neutral when faced with Jesus. They either reject Him altogether or will accept Him as Lord and Savior. In one way or another, He will expose the thoughts and purposes of their hearts as they draw near to Him.

The principle to understand is that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He comes to reconcile us to God and give us peace. Jesus lived the life we should have lived in perfect obedience to God—but we didn't. Then He died and rose again to fully pay for our rebellion against God, which we couldn't. He did all this because He loved us. This is the gospel.

But, many people don't want to think they rebel against God. So they reject Jesus and His gospel. But in doing so, they rebel against God and are condemned. Other people repent of their rebellion, receive Jesus and are saved. Thus, Jesus divides people between those who receive His gospel and those who don't.

He divides between the sheep and the goats, good and bad fish, wheat, and weeds. There is no neutral ground—you either fall (reject Him) or rise (accept Him). In doing so, the thoughts and purposes of your heart are disclosed and exposed.

3. Jesus will cause the falling and rising of many

Many people acknowledge that Jesus is a great moral teacher.

- Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) spoke highly of Jesus' life and His profound words.
- Jewish scholar Joseph Klausner (1874-1958) wrote, *"It is universally admitted... that Christ taught the purest and sublimest ethics ... which throws the moral precepts and maxims of the wisest men of antiquity far into the shade."*
- Hindu guru Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) said Jesus is the greatest guru.
- Even today, most leaders of other religions highly respect the moral teachings of Jesus. No one finds fault with it.

But when you read the gospels, besides His teachings, Jesus does some supernatural miracles that leave the onlookers in shock and awe. They would ask, *"Who is this man that even the wind and the waves obey Him?"* (Mark 4:41, Luke 8:25). He would perform a miracle or speak with astounding wisdom and then forgive sins. And the people would ask, *"Who is this man who forgives sins? Only God could do that* (Luke 5:21, 7:49).

As Jesus' ministry progressed, He began to give Himself Divine titles using **"I am"** with double emphasis. (*John 8:58 Before Abraham was, I am*). He declared what no other religious leader could declare. He said, *"I am the resurrection and the life"* (John 11:25) and followed it by raising Lazarus from the dead after he was buried four days in the tomb. The double emphasis "I am" is the title of the Creator God Himself, *"I am who I am"* (Exodus 3:14). Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. It greatly angered the Jews. They wanted to stone Him. They did not crucify Him for His teachings or miracles but because He claimed to be the Son of God, which in Jewish understanding is equal to God (John 10:33, Mark 14:61-64).

President Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of the USA, loved the teachings of Jesus but did not believe in His Divine claims. Jefferson cut out the claims of Jesus from his copy of the New Testament he carried in his pocket.

What Jefferson and others like him do is deny that, in Jesus, God came down to earth in bodily form (flesh) to save humans from their sins and consequent human misery. The spirit of the anti-Christ blinds them (1 John 4:2-3).

1 John 4:2-3 This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

As the Creator God, Jesus commands total obedience. Some will accept Him as Lord and God, and others will say no. There is bound to be division. There can be no neutral ground. Therefore, Jesus tells the following:

Matt 10:32-36 "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. ³⁴ "Do not suppose I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— ³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household."

People say many others, besides Jesus, claimed to be God, even a Divine Creator God. Yes, maybe so. But

they have very few followers. Indeed, no founder of any significant religion claimed to be the Creator God. So, how could Jesus manage to convince people to follow Him? How could Jews, who would never agree that God could become human, follow Him? They followed for two reasons:

- i. His sinless character (John 8:46), wisdom (John 6:68-69) and miracles.
- ii. His resurrection from the dead

But if Jesus came to divide people, why are many people neither rising nor falling when they hear the gospel? Why is it that most people are moderately religious, even Christians?

Many people in the world hate the claims of Jesus. There are also Christians who are great followers of Jesus. But most people neither hate Jesus nor follow Him when they hear the gospel. They are moderately religious. What about them?

The answer is that they need to find out who the real Jesus is. There's no evidence of their kind of Jesus in the Gospels. Is your Jesus Christ who says, *"I did not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword?"* Is your Jesus the one who makes people rise or fall but allows no one in between? If not, then the Jesus you believe in is a fantasy. But that's not enough. It's not just that Jesus divides people, but He also divides you in your heart.

4. Jesus will cause division within your heart

Simeon says, *"... the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed."* He means Jesus will reveal the rebellion in man's heart against God. Simeon also tells Mary, *"... a sword will pierce your soul too."* God did not allow Simeon to speak about Joseph, even though he stood with Mary as Simeon talked to her. Why? Because God knew Joseph would die before Jesus became an adult and began His ministry. But Mary would continue living. She was at Jesus' side as He died on the cross. I don't want to minimise her suffering, for Mary was Jesus' mother. Like any other mother, she would suffer to see her son die a horrible and unjust death. Yet, I want to say anyone who loves Jesus and with faith sees Jesus on the cross will also have a sword pass through their heart. Mary, in that way, represents all faithful followers of Jesus.

The initial sword of repentance cuts away the rebellion and circumcises the heart of an unbeliever. It turns them around to surrender to Jesus as Lord and Savior. Let me explain from the History of the Jews by Josephus. Besides being a historian, Josephus was also a commander of the Jewish army that fought against the occupying Roman army in Israel. When he realised the Roman army was too strong for them, Josephus told the Jews to "repent" and surrender to Rome. By "repent", Josephus meant to turn from rebellion against Rome and surrender. The war is over, and you will have peace with Rome. Josephus used the same word for "repent" that the gospel writers used when saying, "Repent and believe in the gospel". When an unbeliever does that, they have peace with God.

But rebellion against God runs so deep in our lives that we need ongoing repentance and surrender to Jesus, even as believers. We do this in four ways:

- i. By reading God's word and submitting to Him daily.

Heb 4:12-13 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- ii. Secondly, we also need the fellowship of believers in a Bible-believing church. The fellowship also uncovers ungodly behaviour in which we are unaware that we need to repent and meekly surrender to Jesus.

1 John 1:6-7 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

iii. Thirdly, believers may still have stubborn sins they want to hide. There are two ways to follow simultaneously to be set free from them.

- Confess your sin and be accountable to a trusted confessor.
- By faith, look at the cross of Jesus. Ask Him to reveal His abundant love for you. Let His love rule higher in your heart than the love for your stubborn sin.

iv. Fourthly, there's also a repentance of absolute surrender. When you still lack peace in your life; it generally means you haven't fully surrendered to Jesus

Phil 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Nick Vuijicic, born in 1982 without arms and legs, found great joy and purpose when he surrendered fully to God at 15. He has become an international evangelist today. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beeaXdv_mGg