

Divine Encounters

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. Good morning. The typical Christmas play ends when Mary and Joseph are seeing the shepherds off.

! The shepherds had been there to greet the Christ child and now it was time for them to go back to the fields and back to their sheep and so long as we're set.

And that's kind of it. And if you ask a lot of folks, what comes next? What's the rest of chapter 2 about?

A lot of people wouldn't know the answer to that question. Matter of fact, that probably for a whole lot of folks in our world today, that's probably the way they like it.

Because they actually like the Jesus who's the baby in the manger. They'd like to kind of keep him there. And forget about or not know about, not surrender their life to the soon coming king and judge of all.

[1 : 12] They'd rather not think about that. And so we're going to spend some time in Luke chapter 2 and we're going to see some, I think, some pretty incredible things here.

Jesus is going to meet some people today that we'll see as a baby. So I don't know how much he got out of it. A lot we don't understand about baby Jesus or teenager Jesus even.

And so we get just a little glimpse of that from Luke. We get information from Luke here. We don't find any other three gospels. It's not much. But what we find, I think, is quite fascinating.

So this middle section of Luke chapter 2 here, we're going to see three important meetings. Three meetings that Jesus has. And the first one is with Moses.

Now I say this figuratively because he doesn't actually get to meet the person of Moses. But what Moses represents, that's what Jesus meets in this section.

[2 : 15] Here he is brought under the law as given by God through Moses. And so a lot of folks would refer to the law as the law of Moses.

Certainly it's God's law, but given by God through Moses. And so we see in this text how Joseph and Mary are following through with what their responsibilities to the law are with the baby Jesus. And so that's what they do. And some people might think, well, why did they bother? Why did they bother? Certainly when they went back to Nazareth, I think there would have been some heads kind of turning sideways looking at them.

I think there would have been gossip behind their back. Why would they bother trying to keep the law when they so obviously disobeyed? This is a child born out of wedlock.

And they've heard some stories, but how could that be? And so what is it with these two? But here we find them coming into Jerusalem to take Jesus to the temple.

[3 : 24] And we see in this, just this brief passage here, all of these instances where we see what they do, what they are doing with baby Jesus. They're doing these things according to the law.

So verse 22, we'll see according to the law of Moses. Verse 23, as it is written in the law of the Lord. Verse 24, according to what is said in the law. Verse 27, according to the custom of the law.

And so we see what Joseph and Mary are doing here with Jesus in following through with. And certainly I think that would have taken courage for them to do this. But let's pick up in verse 21 where we see this.

At the end of eight days when he was circumcised. And again, that's actually something that predates the law. It goes back to Genesis 17 when God commanded Abraham to circumcise his son and all the people in his family, in his camp, all the males.

He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And so this is step one of his introduction to the law of Moses. It goes on, verse 22.

[4 : 35] And when the time came for their purification, which singularly, it really deals with Mary, her purification. We'll talk about that in a moment.

According to the law of Moses, they brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. There's actually two things going on here. And we'll get into those two things. There's the purification, but there's also this redemption tax or fee that has to be paid. As it is written in the law of the Lord, verse 23, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.

Now, that's an interesting statement. Every male who first opens the womb. So basically it's the firstborn male that every woman has. That family then, their responsibility, according to the Old Testament, was to take that firstborn male.

Didn't matter if you were female. That didn't count in this. If you were the secondborn male, didn't matter. But you would take your firstborn male to the temple and offer him there as if he belonged to the Lord.

[5 : 42] Because the Lord says he's mine. That firstborn son is mine. But they could, in a sense, buy him back. If he was of the tribe of Levi, he would be committed to the priesthood.

Jesus was not. He was of the tribe of Judah, the priestly tribe. And so he is able to be bought back. And so they do that. And so I'll show you this from, well, here.

There's this redemption tax that was required to buy back the firstborn of every couple. And so that's what we see happening here.

And this goes back to the book of Numbers where we see this law given. Nevertheless, the firstborn of man you shall redeem.

Now, the word redeem here means to purchase. Okay? So it's not a religious word. Redeem is not a religious word. It's a word that Christianity and Judaism kind of uses.

[6 : 51] And we've kind of turned it into a religious word. But it just means to purchase. So when Jesus redeems us, he purchases us through his shed blood.

And so we see where this comes from here. And their redemption price, at a month old, you shall redeem them. So when the child is, firstborn son is born, when they're a month old, you bring them to the temple.

You present them to the priest there. And then you give them the five shekels of silver. Shekel is just a measurement of silver. So basically, this five shekels of silver was about three days' wages in their world and their economy.

So it wasn't a small amount of money. For them, it was significant. Three days' worth of wages. It was basically that they would give to the temple, give to the priest. And then they would be able to buy back their child and take him home and raise him.

Even though he still, in a sense, belonged to the Lord. So they literally had to purchase, get this, see the irony of this. They had to purchase the one who had come to redeem us through his death and resurrection.

[8 : 02] And so here we have them redeeming the Redeemer. And so you see the irony of that.

And that's literally what they had to do, was to pay this redemption tax for their firstborn son. It goes on, and this is the second part now.

And to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. Now, this part of what they're doing involves Mary and her not being pure because she has given birth.

And there was blood involved, and so that made her ceremonially unclean. In other words, she couldn't go to the temple because of the blood and because of giving birth to a child.

She had to wait 40 days. She would wait 40 days and then once again go to the temple and offer a sacrifice that would allow her to once again be pure and come in or clean and come into the temple.

[9 : 09] And so we get this in Leviticus, the book of Leviticus, chapter 12, verse 6. And when the days of her purifying were complete, that's the 40-day period, when they were complete, she would then go to the temple.

So this would give mothers 40 days to just kind of go home and kind of recuperate, which is pretty cool. Where she wouldn't, they basically just stay in the house and let other people in her family, let other people, community come in and kind of take care of her and the baby and to let her recuperate and bounce back.

And so that's pretty sweet, 40 days to do that. So I don't know, you moms, how long did you get to stay in the hospital? Or if some of you had like a home birth, how long were you laid up for? It's getting shorter and shorter, right? I mean, it used to be back in the day, probably like when my mom was having me, they'd probably stay four or five days, sometimes longer in the hospital. And then even when our firstborn, our firstborn Sarah was born, it was pretty sweet because they gave us at the end of our stay, a steak dinner for just the two of us.

[10:32] So the kind of purpose of that, I don't know, did any of you ever have like a candlelight dinner when you gave birth or a little, or, you know, for us it wasn't a candle, it was a flower with a steak dinner?

Any of you have that? I mean, it's not done, most of the people have a little age on them. They don't do that anymore, do they?

And matter of fact, my daughter is going to be having a baby this week, I think. It's due this week, anyway. And my thinking is if everything goes well, she might have one night in the hospital. Any of you have just the one night in the hospital? See how that's becoming more and more common. And I think there's a, I think it was pretty cool.

The goal of the hospital that did this for us was the idea of emphasizing the importance of husband and wife. And so they provided this sweet little dinner to kind of make sure that, hey, you guys, you just had a baby, but don't lose that connection between husband and wife.

[11:38] And that's important. And so anyway, so her days of purification were over, and so she was due then to come to the temple and do this sacrifice. She shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering and a pigeon or a turtle dove for a sin offering.

So there were the two things that she would bring, a lamb for the burnt offering and then a turtle dove or a pigeon for the sin offering. But we saw back in the text in Luke chapter 2 that Mary brought two birds.

What's that about? And so in verse 8, we see what's that about. If she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtle doves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering.

And so we see the poverty, if you will, of Joseph and Mary. They're not wealthy by any means. And so she is able to then offer the two birds to then be qualified for this offering and then be considered clean, ceremonially clean, to be able to return back to the temple and to the sacrifice and so forth. So I think this is interesting because when they would present the two birds or if you were wealthy enough, if you had enough, a lamb and a bird at this offering, you didn't watch it happen.

[13:06] You had to leave because only the priest was allowed to be there to do this. And so they stood outside and here's Mary holding her baby and they're waiting for word that it's done.

And imagine what's going through their head. As Mary lurked on, did she realize that she was holding in her arms the sacrificial lamb of God, the final sacrifice for sin?

And I'm reminded of that song. Some of you are familiar with Mary, did you know? You wonder. And then Jesus meets someone else. Man named Simeon. A man, this is probably an older man, given revelation from the Holy Spirit, directly from God through the Holy Spirit, that he will not die before he would see the Messiah.

This is remarkable, what's happening here with this man named Simeon. And so he is there at the temple. And you can imagine him day after day coming to the temple and he sees a little boy maybe running across the plaza or the court there at the temple, wondering, is that the one?

[14:29] Is that the one? Sees a mom holding a baby. Is that the one? Is that the one? And today, this is the day that he's finally going to see the Messiah for himself as God promised him.

So verse 25. Now, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, lived godly in his way, waiting for the consolation, the comfort of Israel, when Israel would be redeemed, when Israel would be finally given the promises of God and taken out of the circumstance that they were in, being subservient to Rome.

And the Holy Spirit was upon him. Again, this is in an Old Testament economy. The New Testament, the church hasn't begun yet. Jesus hadn't died and risen from the dead, and the Holy Spirit now resides within us.

But in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit only came upon certain people for certain tasks for a certain time. But this man had the Holy Spirit upon him during this time.

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. And again, this is an amazing statement. He would not die before he would meet Jesus.

[15 : 51] He would meet the Messiah. And I would recommend to you, don't die before you meet Jesus. I mean, that's it.

If you wait until after you're dead, that will not be good for you. Before you die, surrender your life to him.

Trust him as your Lord and Savior before you die. Don't wait. This man had this promise, this unique promise.

We don't have a promise that says how much life we will have. How long we will live. And it is difficult.

I think the Lord, we have a funeral tomorrow. Our brother Todd passed away, Todd Howell.

[16 : 50] And many of you are familiar with that. We're having luncheon here afterward. And I think the Lord that he was a Christian man. That he knew the Lord.

And so there is some comfort in that for the family and for the loved ones, the friends who knew Todd.

So this man had this promise. And every day you can imagine him coming. And he came in the Spirit into the temple. It makes me wonder, did he know this was the day? Or did he not know until he saw Jesus?

But at some point it was revealed to him, this is him. The Holy Spirit impressed upon this man in this moment that this child that Mary was carrying was the one.

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, And then he chants probably kind of like this Hebrew chant song, we might call it, but it was more of a chant.

[18 : 02] But I wonder, did he get Mary's permission? Or did he just go up and snatch the baby and hold him up?

And we're not told this. But I'm sure at this point Mary and Joseph are like, I don't know if they're used to it at this point. Because they go in the barn and probably a cave and they deliver the child and then people start showing up looking for him.

What's that about? So they have that happened in the past. And so this guy, he takes up Jesus in his arms and he blessed God and he said. Now this song that he's about to chant, to sing, if you will, has two stanzas.

The first part is personal. The second part is prophetic. And we'll see that as we make our way. It's very short. So this first part is personal.

Now, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace. According to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation. He looks at Jesus and he says, I have seen your salvation.

[19 : 10] And he says, I'm ready. I'm done. Take me home. I don't need to live anymore on this. Sin-filled world.

I'm done. I'm ready to go. I've met people. I know people who kind of have that mindset. You know, they love the Lord. They've trusted the Lord. And it's like, I'm ready. Take me home.

Anytime. And so it's a good place to be in the sense of you know where you're going. You know that you know the Lord. And heaven is your home. The Lord is your family.

And all of that. And again, to know the Lord, to know that you will be with him for all of eternity.

To have that. That's an important thing in your life. And this man had that. So he had this promise.

He's seen the Messiah. He knows. And he's like, okay, Lord.

[20 : 07] I'm ready. I'm ready to go. Ready to depart. And then here's the prophetic part. That you have prepared in the presence of all peoples a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

Now this is kind of a shocking statement that this old, probably a priest, Simeon, this old man, is actually talking about the salvation of Gentiles.

Jews wouldn't often talk about that, even though that's why God chose Israel in the first place, is that they would be a light to the Gentiles, that they would draw people to the Lord through their faithfulness.

And they took that charge that God had given them and they flipped it and said, no, God chose us. That means we're special and you're not. And so they looked at Gentiles and thought they were like

dogs or pigs or subhuman in a sense.

And here is this old Jewish man, a priest, who's saying, no, no, no, no, no. God's intention is that we would be a light to the Gentiles. And so Messiah would come and he would be salvation not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles.

[21 : 26] So that's a remarkable statement. That says something about the author of this book that he would make sure to include that. He is a Gentile himself, Luke is, and he's writing for a fellow Gentile, Theophilus.

And in a sense, he's writing to us so that we would know this, so that we would be convinced. It is an apologetic, this is not for Luke just a story.

This is not just a biography. The Gospels are not biographies. They are written to be convincing. So that we could be confident.

So that we would have assurance. So that we would know who Jesus is and what he has done. And how we can be saved through that. And then he goes on.

And his father and his mother marveled, were amazed. Again, we talked at the beginning about how Luke uses this word over and over again. Of the people who were responding, even when Jesus is an infant here, they're amazed.

[22 : 28] And this time it's Joseph and Mary. They're marveling at this guy after what they've already been through and seen and witnessed. And so it's like one amazing thing and one marveling thing after another.

And it just continues. And Simeon blessed them both. And then he starts talking to Mary. And he said to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Now it's interesting here that Simeon does not include Joseph. He's talking to Mary. This is an indication that Joseph is not going to be around for what Simeon is talking about. So this is prophecy. This is Simeon saying something specific and sad concerning Joseph.

And we know that Joseph had died before Jesus began his public ministry. We don't know when he died. But we know that Mary's husband, Joseph, and it would be Jesus' adoptive father, died at some point.

Either when he was a teenager or at some point. We know that Mary and Joseph had other children. So it wasn't soon. But somewhere in this timeline, Joseph dies.

[23 : 36] And Simeon speaks just to Mary about what's going to happen during the public ministry of Jesus. And he says this, Behold, this is startling.

It would be startling for any mother to hear something like this. But she is the mother of the Messiah. Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel.

In other words, there's going to be some Israelites who will rise and some who will fall. Because of this man. Because of Jesus.

And for a sign that is opposed. Now this is kind of an awkward statement here. But Jesus was going to be a sign that the word opposed here means to speak against. People would speak against him. They wouldn't accept him as Messiah. Some would accept him. Some would want him dead. Some would want him to be delivered over and killed. So that the thoughts, and there's a pause in there.

[24 : 36] We're going to come back to this three little dot ellipsis here. I'll show you that in just a moment. So that the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. And that's true.

That is absolutely true. And then this part, again, specifically for Mary. And a sword, Mary. Not a small, like a Roman sword, which was a shorter sword.

A long, heavy sword is the word that's used here. A sword will pierce through your own soul also. How would you as a new mother like to hear that about your child?

So when Mary receives this news that she's going to be the mother of the Messiah. That she's going to be, she was going to conceive through the Holy Spirit this child.

And be the mother of the Messiah. The mother of the Savior of the world. But it would be at a cost. A heavy cost for Mary. That this man would describe a sword piercing through your own soul.

[25 : 48] And you can imagine, we know that Mary was there at the cross. For the gathering of other women and the Apostle John. And so she witnessed, close up, personal.

Her son being crucified and beaten. And his death. And so, in a sense, Simeon is preparing her for this.

And so Simeon spoke bluntly. He didn't hold back. And basically saying that this baby would grow up and cause a lot of trouble. He was going to be a troublemaker.

And there was going to be division and heartache out of this. And people would either love Jesus or hate him.

And when you met Jesus, and that's true for us today as well. His life would represent an intersection and an ultimatum for every person he would come into contact with.

[26 : 51] When you are introduced to Jesus. When you hear someone preaching the gospel, sharing the gospel. Sharing with you about Jesus and what he has done for you.

You are coming to an intersection in your life. And your life will never be the same once you are introduced to Jesus. Because at that moment, you will either choose to accept him, to trust him, and your life will be changed forever.

Or you will choose to reject him and walk away. And your life will never be the same. That's what Jesus represents.

And then thirdly, that should be the number three up there. I think it's number three on your notes. He meets a woman named Anna.

And not our Anna here. This is a much older Anna. And we'll see as we read this.

[28 : 03] An elderly widow and prophetess who served at the temple in Jerusalem for over 60 years. So that's, she lived there.

She lived most likely in a temple apartment. Serving women who would come to the temple. Helping them, assisting them as they needed whatever help in doing that.

And so we know in the temple there were basically these women. Usually widows. Who would basically give their life over to serving in the temple. And they would be provided an apartment. They would be fed. And taken care of in that way. And they would provide a service there at the temple. And so here, we read the text here. And there was a prophetess named Anna.

The daughter of Phenuel. And of the tribe of Asher. Now, what does it mean that she was a prophetess? That's a good question. I don't think it was the office of a prophetess.

[29 : 09] But that she was a prophet. And that the Holy Spirit spoke through her to her. And gave her wisdom to share. Not only in this moment, but previously in her life.

As she served in her ministry there at the temple. And she was advanced in years. Having lived with her husband seven years.

And so when she got married. They were married together for seven years. And then her husband died. We don't know anything about that. Seven years from when she was a virgin. And then as a widow until she was 84.

So it was a long time. And she'd been at the temple there. Probably over 60 years. So here's this woman. She did not depart from the temple.

Worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. That was her life to serve there at the temple. And coming up at that very hour. In other words, she's now just coming into the temple court area.

[30 : 04] And she sees Joseph and Mary and the baby. And she began to give thanks to God. And to speak of him, of Christ, of Jesus, this baby. To all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

So whoever would listen. She was willing to share. She was willing to share the good news. Here is this baby. Here's the one who's come to redeem us. Here's the one who has come to bring the salvation of God to us.

And so Anna became another early evangelist. Like the shepherds before. Like Simeon just moments before.

She became an evangelist on that day as well. To share the message of this good news of the Christ child in their presence. And she announced to any and all who would listen.

That their long-awaited redeemer had arrived. Now I kind of wish there was another verse.

[31 : 11] Tucked in here. Between verses 38 and 39. But there's not. But I kind of wish there was. And I wish it would have went something like this.

And a great crowd gathered. Gathered around Mary and Joseph and the Christ child. And Anna and Simeon. And this great crowd began to worship the Christ.

And praise God for sending the Messiah. To bring salvation. And to redeem them. That didn't happen. It didn't happen that way.

There's no verse like that. And there isn't any record. Of any crowds. On this day.

When the Messiah. Is brought to the temple. You see people were busy.

[32 : 16] They had places to go. They had things to do. They had pigeons to sacrifice. And hardly anyone noticed. The one who was their redeemer.

They didn't see him. They didn't notice. They didn't hear the message. They didn't hear the message. They didn't hear the message. You see the temple. In every way.

Pointed. To Jesus. And most people there. Didn't notice. Jesus himself.

He was. He was. The bread of life. On the table of showbread. In the holy place. He was the light of the world.

The light that came off the candelabra. There in the holy place. He was the laver. The basin of water.

[33 : 18] That would bring cleansing. From shame. And from guilt. He was the incense. Wafting. Off the altar. That sweet aroma.

That was rising into heaven. He was the lamb. He was the lamb. Who was slain. To pay for the sin. He was the blood.

Sprinkled on the mercy seat. In the holy of holies. He was the high priest. Interceding. On our behalf. He was the veil.

Itself. Torn asunder. So that you and I. Could go into the very presence of God. And no one was there.

To notice him. Jesus himself is the law. He is the Sabbath. He is the festivals. He is all of what the Old Testament represents.

[34 : 20] It points to Jesus. All of it pointed to Jesus. And all of these elements. In the tabernacle. In the holy place.

In the holy of holies. All of the prescriptions. In the law. For the Sabbath. And all of that. All of that. Was just the shadow. The shadow. It wasn't real. It was just a shadow.

To give us an image. Of what to look forward. To. Colossians. Paul writes about this. In the book of Colossians. He said. These are a shadow.

He is talking about the Sabbaths. And the festivals. And these things. These are a shadow. He says. Of the things that were to come. The reality. The thing that's real.

[35 : 17] The thing that has substance. Is found in Christ. And that's what Mary was holding that day.

All the stuff in the temple. Was pointing to that baby. Was pointing to Jesus.

And what he would accomplish. On our behalf. So the baby. In their midst that day. Is the reality.

And most people. Didn't notice. Couple did. Maybe a few stopped.

And listened to what Anna was. Saying. Maybe a few people heard. Simeon's song. But only a few.

[36 : 19] Listen. Only a few cared. What about you? Have you listened?

Have you trusted him. With your life. Have you met him.

Do you care? Lord. We thank you for. For. All.

These. Elements. All of these. Things in the temple. All the law. All the Old Testament. How is. It's. It's a story. That points us to Jesus.

All of it's. The shadow. But Jesus. Is the reality. We thank you that. Lord. We can know.

[37 : 26] Jesus. Personally. Intimately. That when we place our life. In his hands. When we trust. Jesus.

With our life. He comes to live within. As the song. The old hymn says.

As he. Walks with me. And he talks with me. Along life's narrow. Way. I pray for.

Anyone here today. Or. Or watching. That don't know you. That have not met you yet. That have not come to the point. Of saying. I trust you.

With my life. All that we look at. When we. When we open the pages. Of the scriptures. It all points. To Jesus.

[38 : 29] Help. Help us Lord. To recognize. It is true. That Jesus.

Is. The Lord. And Savior. Of all. Who would. Simply trust him. So Lord.

Again. We thank you. And we ask. We ask you Lord. That if there are people in this room.

Who are watching. Who need to trust you. That today would be the day. And they would walk across. That line of faith. And say yes to you. If that today.

Would describe. Anyone here today. I'm going to pray. Very simply. And it's not a prayer. That saves. It is your faith. In Christ.

[39 : 36] That saves you. But as I pray. If you would just pray along. With me. Silently right there. In your seat. And just agree with me.

As I pray. If you would say yes. I'm ready to trust. The Lord Jesus Christ. As my Savior. Then let today. Be that day.

And pray with me. Lord. Thank you. For sending Jesus. Jesus. I recognize. My need. My own sin. Plagues my life. I cannot win. Over my sin. I know that I cannot. Earn your favor.

Or your grace. I could never be good enough. We know that the law. Requires perfection. I'll never measure up.

[40 : 35] But Lord. I know that because of Jesus. And what he has done. He has paid. The price for my sin. That Jesus.

Shed his blood. And died on that cross. And was buried. And rose again from the dead. God. And so today Lord.

I want you to know. I reject. My life of sin. And I trust. In you.

As my only hope of salvation. Thank you for paying the price of my sin on the cross. Thank you for rising again from the dead.

Thank you that I can know. That I am saved. And I belong to you. Thank you for that. That promise.

[41 : 35] That covenant. That it's simply through faith. That I come to know you. And be a part of your family.

Have heaven as my home. Thank you for that. Now before we close. If you prayed with me. If that was your prayer.

I would encourage you to talk with someone. Maybe someone who brought you. Or if you would like to talk to myself. Or Pastor Tom. Or Jeff McVannell.

Any of us. We'd love to talk with you. We'd love to. Rejoice. Encourage you. Lord we thank you.

We thank you for your saving grace. We thank you. That everything that we've looked at today. It all just points to you. And yes.

[42 : 39] Baby. The baby that Mary holds. Is just a baby. But we know. That when he grows. He will be the savior of the world.

And Lord we thank you. For that. And we love you. And we rejoice with you. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen.