

## Jesus' Naming and Presentation Luke 2:21-40

It's 3 weeks since we celebrated the birth of Jesus. It's a good time to think about some of the things that happened to him, and to his parents Mary and Joseph, in the weeks after he was born.

After a baby is born here in Britain, the father usually has to register the birth.

This used to create some amusing situations, if the father wasn't too certain how to spell his name! (Slide 1) The story of Karl's name. Any other funny stories?

Lk.2:21 When Jesus was eight days old Joseph & Mary took him to the local synagogue in Bethlehem for his circumcision, which was also the official naming ceremony. They probably had relatives nearby, who might have come to the service. Mary's cousin Elizabeth lived in the hill country of Judea. (Slide 2)

The name 'Jesus' is the Greek form of Joshua, 'The LORD saves'. (Slide 3)  
(In Heb.4:8 'if Joshua had given them rest' the Greek is Iesous.)

Many Jewish boys were and still are named Joshua. There's some evidence that Barabbas was called Jesus (Mt.27:16). If so, this would have been a bit of a coincidence, but not an enormous one.

After we've named a child, another thing we do some time afterwards is to have a service in church: a dedication service.

M & J took J to Jerusalem. (Slide 4)

(Not far - only about 7 miles. Even so, that's 3 hours' walk with a new baby!)

(Slide 5) There were 2 ceremonies to be performed: Presentation and Purification.

1. Presentation of the first-born son. This goes back to the time of the Exodus, when the first-born sons of the Egyptians were killed, but the Israelites were spared. (Slide 6) Ex.13: 11-15 "After the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your ancestors, you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD. Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons. "In days to come, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed the firstborn of both people and animals in Egypt. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.'

The Law stipulated that the first-born son be brought to the temple 30 days after his birth. He was then 'redeemed' with 5 shekels of silver. This was approximately a day's wages - say £50 in our money.

This redemption recalls the Exodus story of the sparing of Israel's first-born on the night of the Passover.

**(Slide 7)** Redemption is an important word in the Bible. 1 Pet.1:18,19 'For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

**(Slide 8)** ii) Purification after 40 days. Lev.12: 6-8

'When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood. These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. But 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.'

Note that they made the poor people's offering (v.24 'a pair of doves or two young pigeons').

Luke seems to suggest that M & J combined these 2 ceremonies in one visit to the temple.

When you think about it, this must have happened before the coming of the wise men (Mt.2), because after the wise men's visit, Joseph was instructed by an angel to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt, and they stayed there until Herod died.

While they were in Jerusalem at the temple, they met Simeon and Anna. **(Slide 9)**

**(Slide 10)** Simeon had been told that he would see the Christ (vv.25,26). '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 on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.'

Just think what he might have been expecting. What are we expecting, as we wait for the Second Coming?

Christ will come and take control so decisively that this present world order will come to an end, to be replaced by something completely new and different. That may well be what Simeon had in mind!

And when he saw the child, he recognised that this was the one! (vv.27-32)

**(Slide 11)** Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

But he also foresaw that this would involve suffering, not least for the child's mother (v.35).

**(Slide 12) vv.33-35** The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. 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.”

Think of the scene at the foot of the Cross, when Jesus entrusted his mother to the care of his best friend.

There is also a warning that the coming of the Christ leads to judgement and division (v.34). The way we respond to Jesus already divides us into two groups, and that division is simply confirmed on Judgement Day.

Anna evidently also recognised Jesus as the promised Redeemer. You get the impression that there was quite a community of ardent believers around at the time, committed to prayer and responsive to the Holy Spirit.

They were ready for the Messiah, and they recognised him.

**(Slide 13)** John 1:12 'To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.'

Are we obedient to the Lord like Mary and Joseph?

Are we responsive to the Holy Spirit like Simeon and Anna?

Are we ready for all that the Lord may wish to do in our lives in 2018?

[Prayer]