

9 January 2022

Luke 2:22-40 – Are you ready for the challenges of this coming year?

Question 1: Are there any particular challenges coming up this year?

Mary and Joseph – ready to worship

²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) ²⁴ 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”.

- Very special family moment
- Important Old Covenant ritual
- Important New Testament significance
- The offering of the poor, and yet acceptable to God
- There is no lamb, yet there is the perfect lamb...

Question 2: What special family moments have you experienced over this past year, and what has been the spiritual perspective on them?

Question 3: Why do we find it so hard to give to God?

Question 4: What makes an offering to God acceptable to him?

Simeon – ready to die

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

²⁹ “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³ And his father and his mother marvelled at what was said about him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

- His defining spiritual characteristic: patience
- His reward: unique foreknowledge
- He takes hold of salvation
- He is full prepared

Question 5: How do we develop and practise spiritual patience?

Question 6: Has God every guided you either with spiritual foreknowledge or spiritual insight into a situation?

Question 7: In a positive way, how can we prepare to die?

Anna – ready to live

³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷ and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favour of God was upon him.

- She has every reason for spiritual bitterness, but...
- Her response to suffering is devotion
- She begins to thank God and share the good news...

As this is deeply personal, in a group discussion, this might be best answered in the silence of your heart, but have you every fallen prey to spiritual bitterness or see someone you care about do this? If so, what steps can be put in place to recover spiritually?

Question 8: How does devotion overcome bitterness?

Question 9: How important is thanksgiving, and how does it relate to the sharing of the good news?

A Prayer

Loving Heavenly Father, thank you for Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna, but above all for Jesus Christ, their Lord and mine. Thank you also, that the Holy Spirit was present in power in that temple in that moment 2,000 years ago. Thank you that you are Lord of Eternity, and in the power of the Spirit, you are present here now. Help me seize this moment of opportunity and face the challenges of this coming year with thanksgiving and the message of Christ in my heart and in my life, for the sake of your Son my Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.