

Luke 2B

- Last time in Luke, we saw Jesus as an infant presented before the Lord in the temple
 - A man named Simeon had been waiting all his life to see the Messiah and now he has had his wish granted
 - He has held the child and thanked God,
 - And as we pick up in the lesson today, we hear him pronounce a prophetic blessing on the family

[Luke 2:34](#) And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—
[Luke 2:35](#) and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

[Luke 2:36](#) ¶ And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with *her* husband seven years after her marriage,

[Luke 2:37](#) and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.

[Luke 2:38](#) At that very moment she came up and *began* giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

[Luke 2:39](#) ¶ When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.

- Simeon gives Jesus’ parents added insight concerning their son and his mission on Earth
- He gives three interesting details concerning Christ’s purpose in coming
 - First, Jesus has been appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel he says
 - Jesus will both Israel’s Rock of salvation and the stumbling block spoken of by the prophets
 - On its face this statement is easy to understand
 - We know that the world can be divided into 2 kinds of people

- Which group you belong to depends entirely on what you believe about Jesus
 - If you believe he is a myth, or a fraud or merely a good teacher – or if you don't think about Him at all, you are in one group
 - And if you believe He is the Son of God, the only way to the Father and the only name appointed in Heaven and on Earth by which men may be saved – then you are in the other group
- But there is actually another aspect to this statement equally significant
 - The nation of Israel is itself going to experience both sides of this child – both the fall against the stumbling block and the rise of the Rock of salvation
 - Isaiah 28:16 says:

[Is. 28:16](#) Therefore thus says the Lord GOD,
 “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,
 A costly cornerstone *for* the foundation, firmly placed.
 He who believes *in it* will not be disturbed.

- But Isaiah also said of the Messiah:

[Is. 8:13](#) “It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy.
 And He shall be your fear,
 And He shall be your dread.

[Is. 8:14](#) “Then He shall become a sanctuary;
 But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,
And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

[Is. 8:15](#) “Many will stumble over them,
 Then they will fall and be broken;
 They will even be snared and caught.”

- So, how is it that both aspects of the Messiah are true for Israel?
 - In their first encounter with their Messiah, the nation of Israel did stumble over Christ as they were unable to accept Him for who is was
 - The nation rejected their Messiah, turning Him over to be crucified, declaring Him to be a liar and not the true Christ

- In practical terms, this was a result of the Jewish nation misunderstanding why their Messiah came and what He intended to accomplish
- But in spiritual terms, the issue is much more profound

[1Pet. 2:7](#) This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,
 “THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
 THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*,”

[1Pet. 2:8](#) and,

“A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”;

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.

- Peter quotes the Psalms and then adds that the Nation of Israel’s stumbling occurred because they were disobedient to the word – the scriptures in other words
- And then he adds something very important – and to this doom they were also appointed
- They would reject the Messiah and He would become a stumbling block not out of chance – but out of necessity – because they were appointed to that purpose

○ Paul gives another piece to this puzzle in Romans 11

- In explaining how the Jewish nation was appointed to reject their Messiah Paul says:

[Rom. 11:7](#) ¶ What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

[Rom. 11:8](#) just as it is written,

“GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR,
 EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT,
 DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.”

[Rom. 11:9](#) And David says,

“LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP,
 AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM.

[Rom. 11:10](#) “LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT,
 AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER.”

- God is the one who ensured they would reject their Messiah, by blinding them spiritually, essentially allowing their sin nature to condemn themselves without reprieve from the Holy Spirit

- Finally, Paul explains why this happened:

[Rom. 11:11](#) ¶ I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- God is fulfilling His promise to Abraham that through Him all nations would be blessed
- The rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish nation gave opportunity for the rest of the world to know of Christ and be saved
 - Had Israel accepted their Messiah, there would not have been opportunity for the Gentile world to know Him, as He would have been given the throne of David and ruled the world in the Messianic kingdom – the Millennium kingdom
- But there is a time when the Jewish nation will accept their Messiah and he will no longer be a stumbling block for His people
 - At the end of the Tribulation, the nation of Israel will receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and they will call on their Messiah

[Zech. 12:9](#) “And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

[Zech. 12:10](#) ¶ “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

- Zech goes on to say that in that day the Lord will return and will set up His kingdom on earth to rule from Jerusalem
- Returning to our passage in Luke, the prophecy of Simeon has two other details
 - He says this child will be a sign to be opposed
 - And that he has become
 - The World now is opposed to Christ and the church, every bit as much today as it was when Christ was crucified

[John 7:7](#) “The world cannot **hate** you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.

- The cross itself has become a sign that men will oppose and work to defeat in many places around the world
- Finally, Simeon says that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed by this child
 - One day after the Messiah has ruled in His kingdom on Earth, a throne will appear and books will be opened
 - And all those who have not placed their trust in Jesus will appear before that throne for judgment
 - And the thoughts of every heart will be revealed
- Simeon inserted one detail for Mary in passing – that she would be pierced even to her soul
 - No doubt Mary didn't understand Simeon's comment at the time,
 - But he was telling Mary of her own anguish in watching her son put to death
 - That as Christ is being crucified and his side is pierced by a Roman soldier's sword, his mother would look on and feel the sword within herself –
 - As if it had been directed against her – as if she had taken the blade herself –
 - Thus fulfilling Simeon's prophecy
- Like Simeon, there was a widow who essentially lived in the temple
 - She had been married a short while before becoming a widow, and she lived the rest of her life in the temple
 - Her circumstances weren't altogether unusual, as widows had few options for where to turn for support
 - She must have taken up residence in the House of the Lord depending on begging for subsistence
 - And the Lord had sustained her for many years

- She is also called a prophetess, a woman given special insight by God
- By Luke's account, it appears she has been given the knowledge that this child is the Messiah and now she spends her days telling everyone that he has come
- But notice she is only speaking the truth to those looking for the redemption of Israel
 - In other words, her ministry is directed toward finding those who are willing to listen
 - To the remnant of Israel, to Jews who knew that a Messiah was required for the redemption of Israel, and they longed for his coming
- So Mary and Joseph's trip to the temple includes two strange characters who testified to the nature of their child and did so publicly for all who had ears to hear
 - Both these people are great examples of how the godly respond to their Messiah, praising Him, blessing His name and testifying about Him to all who would listen
- And they return to Nazareth

[Luke 2:40](#) The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

[Luke 2:41](#) ¶ Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

[Luke 2:42](#) And when He became twelve, they went up *there* according to the custom of the Feast;

[Luke 2:43](#) and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it,

[Luke 2:44](#) but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they *began* looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

[Luke 2:45](#) When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him.

[Luke 2:46](#) Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

[Luke 2:47](#) And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

[Luke 2:48](#) When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You."

[Luke 2:49](#) And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s *house*?”

[Luke 2:50](#) But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.

[Luke 2:51](#) And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all *these* things in her heart.

[Luke 2:52](#) ¶ And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

- Luke gives us the only record of Christ as a young boy in this passage
 - We need to remember who Luke was writing this gospel account for – the Greek trained Christians like Theophilus
 - And the Greeks would have been most interested in how God interacted with men and his parents
 - Gods often came down to live among men in Greek mythology but they always remained separate and distinct
 - Jesus actually was a man who was also God – something different from the typical Greek experience
 - Luke makes extra effort to show how a man who is also God can live under parental authority while still answering to His Father in heaven – an interesting dilemma
- He begins by observing that Jesus was growing strong as a boy and increasing in wisdom
 - At first thought you might wonder why Jesus needed to grow strong in wisdom – wasn’t he already able to know everything as God
 - The answer is yes and no
 - Though Jesus is God and therefore has all knowledge, he voluntarily gave up His exalted position at the right hand of the Father and took the form of man
 - He is now limited by his humanity
 - He depends on the growth of the body to allow for growth of knowledge
 - He depends on the Father to give Him direction through the Holy Spirit, as when he was in the desert undergoing temptation (Luke 4)

- It's yet another stark reminder of how much Jesus was willing to do for our sake
- Then Luke turns to an account of Mary and Joseph visiting the temple with Jesus
- Jewish males were expected to make the trip to Jerusalem three times a year for the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles
 - If you couldn't afford to attend all three, you attended at least Passover and wives would typically accompany their husbands
 - A Jewish son would also attend occasionally especially as he reached the age of maturity, 13
- This trip included a new twist – Mary and Joseph lose the Savior of the World
 - You know I was pretty worried the day I lost my wallet, but can you imagine?
- Some people ask how this could even happen, but it's actually quite believable
 - First remember the times would have been very different than now
 - Can't leave your kid alone
 - In that day, children had little to fear from strangers
 - Secondly, in the culture of the day, men traveled with men and women with women, leaving the children to roam back forth or to join up with other children from relatives families
 - It was possible for a child to go unseen for the better part of a day
 - Only when they arrive at a stopping point would they have discovered that Jesus was not with the group at all
- Now that it is evening, they can't travel back to Jerusalem until morning, so they sleep that night before returning
 - Can you imagine how little sleep they probably got
 - Or maybe I should say can you imagine how little sleep Mary allowed Joseph to get?
 - And I'm sure the walk back the next day was pleasant as well

- Exactly how many roses do you buy to make up for losing the Messiah
- Now they arrive in Jerusalem the end of the second day and probably can't do much searching that evening due to darkness and the city shutting down
 - So the next morning (the third day) they begin looking for him, and sooner or later they have the idea to search at the temple
 - There they find him
- It's a curious scene, no doubt
 - The word used to describe his place in the crowd (midst – mesos) means middle
 - Christ is in the middle of the temple teachers – indicating that the focus was on Him and not them
 - The temple teachers would have been the older, more knowledgeable Pharisees
 - Men like Gamaliel, who trained Paul
 - Yet they are sitting around Christ, telling us that he was doing more teaching than learning
 - When Luke says he was listening and asking questions, it's more likely that he was asking them test questions like he does later to Pharisees
 - He was probably showing them the truth of scriptures they had never seen before though they knew them by heart
 - And of course they are amazed at his ability to answer their questions and show them insight
 - This same experience is ours as well
 - The scriptures are the living word, which means that the meaning is given only through the Holy Spirit to those alive in Christ
 - We can all read the words, but we depend on the Holy Spirit to make the meaning clear and relevant
 - Just as Christ was doing for the teachers in the temple

- And then Mary and Joseph find their son and confront him
 - This scene poses some interesting questions
 - Mary and Joseph immediately confront their son as they find him in the temple
 - Mary addresses him and though she was probably astonished at the scene of her 12 year old boy teaching Israel's best and brightest, she is still too upset at him to note the significance of the moment
 - She chides him by asking why did he treat them this way? We've been looking everywhere for you
- All parents can identify with this moment
 - You have the unique mixture of anger, relief and joy brought together in a moment like this
 - You want to hug them and then hit them
- But what about Mary's accusation?
 - Did Jesus sin by his actions here?
 - Should he have at least told them he wanted to stay behind in the temple
 - And consider his response – that they should have known where he was, in his father's house
 - Jesus is about to become a man according to Jewish law, a point in time when he can stand on his own according to Jewish law
 - And Jesus seems to be making the statement here that he is ready to leave his earthly parent's control and return to his heavenly father, something that Mary and Joseph should have known themselves
 - But it is also seems that Jesus' comments indicate that the responsibility lay with the parents to know where there child was and not to blame him
 - They would have been in the temple together before leaving the city
 - In other words, Jesus didn't leave them, they left him

- Pip in the church
 - So Jesus makes his comment to them both to remind them of who his true father is and that they should have known where he was because they left him, he never left them
- How true that is for all of us
 - So often a Christian will drift away from their close walk with the Lord
 - They get out of the habit of studying the word, attending Bible studies or their devotional time
 - They make attendance in worship an irregular affair
 - They only pray at meals if at all
 - Finally, the choices they make, the company they keep, and the priorities they set reflect little or none of their Christian values and teaching, and then sin rules
- Who knows why Mary and Joseph overlooked Jesus as they left the temple, but I wonder if the temple visit had become somewhat routine
 - The ceremony was over and all they could think of was getting home
 - They nearly run their camel into another family's caravan in the parking lot
 - Perhaps they just weren't paying close attention to Jesus
 - But next thing they know, they're halfway home before they realize that they left Jesus back at the worship center in Jerusalem
- Boy, is that a message for today's Christian
 - Leaving Jesus behind at church is the rule for today
 - The typical Christian today is feeling pretty good about themselves if they spend their required 60 minutes in a church on Sunday, and then the rest of the week not another minute is given to a devoted pursuit of the Lord
 - Not in study of the His Word
 - Not in extended personal prayer
 - Not in service to the body of Christ

- Not even in fellowship with other believers
- Jesus tells Mary and Joseph that they should have known where he was – right where they left him – teaching those who were mindful of him
 - Likewise, Jesus is right where you left him
 - Not in this building, but in His Word, and as our intercessor in prayer
 - And as the Body of Christ gathered in any place in His name
- And He is telling us as well, that if you seek Him you know where to find Him
 - But if you wait to seek him only when you think you need him, you may have walked so far away, that it takes precious time to make the trip back
 - Don't stray far
 - If you aren't engaged in personal Bible study...
 - If you aren't in the habit of extended personal prayer, then
 - If you don't make gathering with the Body of Christ – anywhere – a top priority, then re-evaluate your priorities
 - Because our hearts will stray so easily and without regular, focused attention on Jesus we will be left to ourselves, to our sinful nature and desires, our fears and our doubts.
- Jesus is in His father's house – and he is waiting for you to return and sit at his feet and listen to his teaching