

INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] One of the great joys of being a child is experiencing Christmas. One of its great disappointments is realizing that Christmas is over. We visited my parents for Christmas and got to celebrate a second Christmas. And they started to believe that Christmas and opening presents happened all the time. But as Christians we do our best to remember that Christmas is a day where we remember the wonder of the incarnation and birth of Jesus. But the story of Jesus does not end at His birth, it only begins. And the divinity of Jesus is too significant to only see one time a year. And Luke wants us to see this because he does something strange. He does what no other gospel does. He tells us a little about the childhood of Jesus.
2. [Need] The point of these stories of two different instances in the temple is the same. It is the same reason that we study and wonder at the birth of Jesus. It is the miracle that Jesus is both truly God and truly man. The miracle of Jesus being God is worth studying 52 Sundays a year. Because nothing we do today makes sense if Jesus is not God.
3. [Subject] Today we will look at these two stories of Jesus in the temple and see what they teach us about the divinity of Jesus.
4. [Text] Luke 2:22-52
5. [Preview] We will see Jesus in the temple as a newborn, Jesus in the temple when He is twelve, and then our application.

Point number 1 is **Jesus is recognized as God from birth (v. 22-38).**
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Divine is another word for God.

So this means that from the very beginning of Jesus' birth, people recognized that He was God wrapped in flesh.

Verse 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 turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

What is going on here?

Mary and Joseph are going to Jerusalem.

And they are going there out of obedience to the law of Moses.

The offering they give is a poor offering.

Leviticus 12:6-8 tells us that after a woman gives birth she needs to make a sacrifice.

They are supposed to sacrifice a year old lamb.

But if they cannot afford it, then they can sacrifice a pair of birds instead.

So this is a public declaration of their poverty.

As the first born son Jesus will need to be redeemed as well.

Because all firstborns are the Lord's.

Not because being born first is an achievement.

But because each firstborn child foreshadowed the birth of Jesus.

And Jesus will redeem everyone as the ultimate sacrifice.

"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."

A man named Simeon is waiting in Jerusalem.

It doesn't tell us if he is a priest.

But he is a particularly holy man.

And he is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Which we need to remember is unusual.

This is before Pentecost.

Not every believer and follower of God has the Holy Spirit.

Only a few do.

So the fact that Simeon does should make us pay attention to him.

Verse 27 **"And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when they parents brought in 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 the Holy Spirit has revealed to Simeon that He will get to see the Messiah before he dies.

The Holy Spirit leads Simeon to the temple.

And there he sees God wrapped in flesh, Jesus.

He sees what he has been longing for.

He sees what Israel has been longing for since King David's death.

And he gives another blessing.

A prophesy and a psalm.

Verse 29 **"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation 31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,"**

He has probably told people about the promise God made to him.

All of his life he has waited for this day.

And finally in his old age it comes.

We can assume that he is old because he seems glad to finally be able to die in peace.

He may have been holding on.

Watching as his body breaks down and ages slowly.

Just waiting to see God's promise come true so that he can die.

And now it does.

And he declares that he has seen his salvation.

He is one more person in a long line declaring that Jesus is God.

Jesus is what God has prepared since the beginning of the world.

Verse 32 **"a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory to your people Israel."**

Simeon prophesies that Jesus comes to save not Israel, but all the world. This is shocking that Simeon would say this already.

But God wants us to know from the beginning that Jesus came to save even Gentiles.

That wasn't something that happens later after Pentecost, Acts, and Paul. Saving the world has always been God's plan.

Verse 33 **"and his father and his mother marveled 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."**

There is a lot to unpack in these verse.

First notice that Jesus' parents realize the significance of Simeon's words. They marvel again that person after person has said Jesus is God and the Messiah.

But Simeon says something somber.

He says that not everyone will receive Jesus.

Some will oppose him.

Some will rise in salvation because they accept Jesus as God,

And others will fall into judgment because they reject him.

Not everyone accepts that Jesus is God.

There are even many who call themselves Christians who deny His divinity.

Jesus has always been divisive.

I think the mention of a sword piercing the heart is a reference to the cross. To the fact that their son, the God-man, the Messiah and Savior will die. This will devastate not just Mary as a mother, but much of His followers.

And Jesus will reveal everyone's thoughts.
Throughout His ministry He knows what people are thinking.

And I think this sword piercing also has to do with Jesus being God. He will force people to have to decide if they believe Him. Will they accept him as God, or will they reject and kill Him?

Verse 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 we 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."**

What a woman Anna is.
She is probably over 100 years old.
She has been a widow for 84 years.
And she has spend most of her life in the temple worshipping and praying.
That is a good life.
What a godly woman she must have been.
And she is a prophetess.
Filled with the Spirit like Simeon.

There are some people that are filled with so much wisdom.
Who are so godly.
That you want to hear anything they have to say.
Anna is one of those women.
I would have listened to anything she had to say.

And she emerges.
The very moment that Jesus is happens to be in town.

That Jesus happens to be at the temple.
And she praises and tells everyone that their redemption is here.

The text seems to imply that this is not her normal habit.
She only emerges to speak on special occasions.
Or maybe she never does it.
But now she comes to bear witness to Jesus.

Two witnesses.
Both filled with the Spirit tells us that Jesus is God.
That He is the promised redeemer.

It is significant that there are two witnesses.
Because you are not supposed to take just one persons word for it.
But two witnesses are more reliable.

People try to imply that the divinity of Jesus was a later invention.
But from the beginning people believed that Jesus was God.
And it was made clear in miracle after miracle and witness after witness.

[transition] The point of these witnesses it to make it abundantly clear that
Jesus is God. From before His conception to after His birth, people
believed that this was so.

Point number 2: **Jesus recognizes His own Divinity from the beginning (v. 39-52). Jesus recognizes His own Divinity from the beginning (v. 39-52).**

Verse 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 favor of God was upon him."**

We know very little about the time between Christ's birth and His baptism.

Few of the gospels give us anything about His childhood.
The only exception would be when the wise men come to see Jesus.
We see the Jesus grows much like any other human would.
But God's favor is on Jesus in a special way.
Because He is God.
And He knows He is God.

And here in Luke we get to see Jesus at twelve years old.

Verse 41 **"Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom."**

Now not everyone has to come to Jerusalem for Passover.
But the fact that Jesus' family does each year is mentioned to show us that this is a holy Family.
They go above and beyond each year.

But on their way back something different happens.

Verse 43 **"And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. his parents did not know it, 44 but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem."**

I don't think we should be too hard on Mary and Joseph.
After all the text has just tried to show us that they are holy people.
And I won't make any raise their hands to see if they have ever accidentally left their children somewhere.

But Jesus gets left behind.
Because they are traveling in a large group.

And they think Jesus must be with some of his cousins or other relatives.

And when night comes and Jesus isn't there, they go to look for him.

Verse 46 **"after three days they found him in the temple sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and answers. 48 And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."**

Can you imagine their distress?

Three days they have searched all over this massive city for their son.

Three nights they have not known where he was.

They must have worried he was dead.

There is probably some subtle foreshadowing here with the three days.

Three days Jesus is missing,

Three days those who love Him believe He might be gone forever.

But He is totally fine and safe.

He emerges having been busy doing God's Work.

Sounds a little bit like Jesus' three days in the grave.

Everyone is greatly distressed and worried He is dead.

But He is just busy setting the captives free.

But Mary and Joseph do not know where He is for three days.

They probably retrace all of their steps.

Ask everyone that they know.

Check in with their relatives in the city to see if anyone has seen him.

And yet nothing.

I have only ever thought my kids were missing for a few moments and it was horrifying.

This is every parents worst nightmare.

So you can understand why in verse 48 they say **"Son, why have you treated us so?"**

That is much nicer than what I would have said.

But Jesus' response is almost bewildering.

Verse 49 **"And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house."**

There is so much packed in Christ's response.

His parents are angry.

Mary specifically mentions that Jesus' father has been worried for him.

And Jesus' response is essentially, "My Father isn't worried. I've been in His house."

Jesus' statement is one that acknowledges His own divinity.

Jesus already knows He is God.

He understands it on a deep level.

Jesus humbled Himself in order to become a human being.

In order to put up with being a child.

With being 12 and having to go through puberty.

But God did not get amnesia and forget who He is.

He always knew.

Verse 50 **"And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them."**

Already they don't fully understand Jesus.

But Jesus does.

He knows who His true Father is.

It is not something that Mary has to teach Him.

It is not something His disciples invent later on.

Jesus knows.

And He knows because He is both truly God and truly man.

Verse 51 **"and he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart."**

Our humble Savior was submissive to His earthly parents.
The God who fashioned them in the womb did His chores.
What a profound thought.
What amazing humility and kindness our God has.
That He would be willing to submit and listen to imperfect parents.
People whose lives He breathed into their lungs.
People whose every thought and desire He knew.
And He did this out of love for them and for us.
So that He could redeem us and save us.

This removes all our excuses for not wanting to submit to people above us because they are sinners doesn't it?

Verse 52 **"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."**

This statement is repeated twice in this passage.
We see it here in verse 52.
And we see it again in verse 40 **"and the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him."**

It is repeated because it is significant.
And the verses seem straight forward,
But we have to be wary here.
Because they are theologically rich and can be misunderstood.

They tell us plainly that Jesus grew much like any other human does.
He started as a newborn.
And newborns can't do very much.
In fact children can't do very much on their own.

They need help feeding themselves.
They need help getting dressed.
They need help going to the bathroom.
They need help going to sleep.
They need help with everything.

And the wonder of parenting is that every step of growth is incredible to see.

Each new word is a victory.
And each small moment of independence is beautiful.
But they all take time.

We have spent this weekend trying to teach potty train Grant.
And it isn't easy and it's messy.

What this verse tells us,
Is that Jesus had to go through all of that too.
He did not skip any parts of being human.
He was not born and then started His ministry.

Jesus did not skip being a newborn.
Jesus did not skip being a toddler.
Jesus did not even skip puberty, even though all of us would have.

Instead He slowly grew.
Each year He got a little taller.
Each year His muscles got stronger.
Each year His brain developed.

Now this is where we have to be careful.
Because the beauty and wonder of the incarnation is that Jesus is both truly divine and truly human.
Somehow He is both together.
He is not God pretending to be a human.

He didn't pretend to not talk, or not be able to walk.
He experienced all that we have.
He willingly accepted the limitations of our human bodies and the slow way they grow.
But He experienced it as God.

And we have to be careful when we discuss this mystery of Jesus.
We do not want to overemphasize His divinity so much that we make it seem like He is not human.
And we cannot overemphasize His humanity so much that He is no longer God.

Because Jesus is both.
And He must be both in order to be our Savior.
The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are meaningless if He is not both truly God and truly man.

So these verses cannot mean that Jesus grew and became God.
He did not start as a human and then slowly become God.
From His conception He was truly God and truly man.

But it can be confusing to put it together.
You may notice that I try to say Jesus is "truly God and truly man" instead of "fully God and fully man."
And I am doing that intentionally.
I think it is a more helpful way for us to wrap our minds around this mystery.
Because Jesus truly is God.
And Jesus truly is human.
And when I hear "fully" I think of percentages and then get confused by math.
So I say truly because it's more helpful.

And this might seem like a weird theological rabbit trail.

But the divinity and humanity of Jesus is at the center of our faith.
If Jesus is not truly divine and truly human, then we are wasting our time.
This is something that we have to get right.

But at the end of the day the incarnation is not a math problem to solve.
It is a mystery to ponder.

It is a beautiful painting you should gaze and wonder at even if you don't understand everything about it.

Because Jesus is God.

[transition] And the question for us is whether or not we will believe what Jesus believed about Himself.

Point number 3: **Do you recognize Jesus's divinity? Do you recognize Jesus's divinity?**

This is the question that you must grapple with.
It is the most important question this passage asks.
It is the most important question in the universe.
It is the only question that matters.

Simeon told Mary that many would reject Jesus.
They would not reject Him because they didn't like His teachings.
The message of the Kingdom of God was not that people needed to be kind and love each other.
People did not hate Jesus because He worked miracles and they were jealous.

People rejected Jesus because He claimed to be God.
And that is a claim you have to deal with.
You cannot halfway accept Jesus.
You must decide if He was God or not.

Because if He is God, then we must obey Him.
If He is God, then we owe Him everything.

But if He is not, then He is a liar or a lunatic as C. S. Lewis famously said.
But we have to deal with His claims.
Not the claims of Jesus' disciples generations later.
But the claims of Jesus Himself from the beginning.

Do you believe that Jesus is God?
Do you believe the testimony of the witnesses Simeon and Anna?
Do you believe the testimony of Luke?
Do you believe the testimony angel Gabriel?
Do you believe the testimony of the entire heavenly host?
Do you believe the testimony of the shepherds?
Do you believe the testimony of star and the three wise men?
Do you believe the testimony of Jesus' own mouth?
Do you believe the testimony of all the Scriptures?
Do you believe the testimony of the apostles and disciples of Jesus?
Do you believe?

There is a multitude of witnesses through all the ages who stand in the heavens testifying that Jesus is God.
Do you hear their voices?
Will you believe?

Because Jesus came down as God to save you.
But you must receive Him as God.
It is the entire foundation of our faith.
It is why we name ourselves Christians.

Because we believe that Jesus is God.

If you are not a Christian this morning, I invite you to accept the testimony.
Believe that Jesus is God.

Come and experience salvation.
It is available to any who would come.
Jesus came to redeem broken people.
Those who are sinners and lost.
Those who think they are too far gone.
Those who barely understand the Bible when they read it.
You don't have to get everything right, just believe that Jesus is God.

And if you do not believe He is God, don't waste your time calling yourself a Christian.

If you are a Christian, you too must recognize Jesus divinity.
And do not stop by saying, "Yes I believe Jesus is God."
Recognize His divinity with not just your words but with your deeds.
Live as if you believe He was God.

Read His words as if they are the spoken words of God.
Obey them as if the God of the universe has commanded you too.
Don't treat Jesus like you treat your favorite sport team,
Treat Him as if He was God.

Far too many Christians are happy to recognize Jesus as God with their mouths, but fail to recognize Him as God with their actions.

May that not be so with us.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Jesus is recognized as Divine from birth. Jesus recognizes Himself as Divine from birth. Do you recognize the divinity of Jesus?
2. [Challenge] Make your decision. And then live like you believe it.