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Jesus Dedicated in the Temple
Luke 2: 22-38

Jesus dedicated in the Temple DIG: What does the Temple ceremony reveal about Jesus' parents? In Simeon's prophecies what was he predicting about the ministry of Yeshua? How did the sword of Simeon's prophecy threaten Mary's peace of mind? Of whom does Anna remind you? How does she complement Simeon's prophecy? What impact would these startling predictions by Shim'on and Anna have on all who were listening that day?

REFLECT: How has Christ brought light to your life? How is He still the cause of the falling and rising of people throughout the world? Did your parents dedicate you to the Lord? How so? If you were not dedicated, how do you feel about that? When has God brought a Simeon or an Anna to confirm something in your life?

Eight days after the birth of **Yeshua**, **Joseph and Mary** presented **their son** for the covenant of circumcision in Bethlehem, which identified **Him** as a genuine **son** of the covenant between **the LORD** and Abraham **(Genesis 17:1-14)**. At that time, **they** made **His** name official: **Jesus**, or **YHVH** saves. Then, in keeping with **the Torah of Moses**, **they** would make the five-mile journey to **the Temple** in **Jerusalem**. There, **Miryam** would offer a sacrifice for **her** own ceremonial cleansing after childbirth, then **she** would **present her firstborn to ADONAI** in recognition of **God's** ownership.[126] This simple ceremony consisted, first, in the presentation of **the child** to a priest in recognition of **the LORD's** ownership.

Then **Miryam** had **to offer a sacrifice as required by the Torah of ADONAI. She** would have entered **the Temple** through the Beautiful Gate to the Court of the Women. At last one of the officiating priests would come to **Mary** at the Nicanor

Gate, and take from **her** hands the offering that **she** brought. While a priest slaughtered the doves **she** was offering on **the bronze altar** (see my commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Fa – Build an Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze**), **Miryam** stood waiting while incense was burned on **the golden altar** inside the Holy Place (see my commentary on **Exodus Fp – The Altar of Incense in the Sanctuary: Christ, Our Advocate with the Father**). Since **Mary** was not presenting an offering that required **her** to lay **her** hands on it, **she** did not have to enter the Court of the Priests to place **her** hands on the slaughter by **the bronze altar**. There would be a crowd of worshipers behind **her** in the large square. As **she** stood at the top of the fifteen semicircular steps at the majestic Nicanor Gate, **she** could see into the Holy Place.[127]

The Court of the Women was not just limited to the women. Any Jew who was ceremonially clean could go into this area – men, women and children. **Indeed, this was probably the most common**

place for worship, the women occupying, according to Jewish tradition, only a raised gallery along three sides of the court. Yet, only the men were permitted to go through the majestic Nicanor Gate leading from the Court of the Women into the Court of Isra'el. The Court of the Women covered an area 70.87 by 70.87 meters, 5,023 square meters or 16,475 square feet. The great acts of worship took place there on the occasion of the feasts. This place functioned, to a certain extent, as **the Temple** synagogue in the open court. Therefore the women had free access.[128]

The first observance was the purification of the mother after childbirth. According to **the Torah**, a mother was to undergo a **purification** ritual forty days after giving birth to a boy and eighty days after giving birth to a girl. Since **Miryam** gave birth to a boy, this event took place when **Yeshua** was forty-one days old. The Torah considered her unclean, but being unclean does not mean that she was a sinner. It was not a sin to have a baby! The purpose of this observance was for **her** ceremonial cleansing and **purification** to restore communion with **God**. **When the time of her purification according to Leviticus had been completed, Joseph and Mary** traveled to **Jerusalem (Luke 2:22a)**.

She could not afford a lamb, so **she** offered **a pair of young pigeons, one for a burnt offering** (see the commentary on **Leviticus Ai – The Burnt Offering**) **and the other for a purification offering (Luke 2:24).** This reveals two important facts about **her**. First, **Mary** brought **a purification offering** (see the commentary on **Leviticus Al – The Purification Offering**). That ritual of atonement was followed simply so that **Mary** would be ritually clean and allowed access to **the Temple** and its **sacrifices**, but not to be forgiven. No forgiveness was necessary because there was not sin.

Second, it is also clear that **Joseph** and **Miriam** were not the poorest of the poor, but **they** were also not a rich family. In **Leviticus**, we learn that people who could not bring a bull or a lamb as a sacrifice would bring **a pair of young pigeons**. If **they** would have been even poorer, **they** could have brought a handful of grain anointed with oil. Today's Orthodox Jewish women cannot offer a sacrifice, since there is no **Temple**, but, they immerse themselves in a *mikveh* in partial observance of the **purification** rite.[129] **Mary** did not go to **the Temple** to be worshiped, but undergo ritual **purification**.

The Roman Catholic Church, however, holds up **Mary** as an object of worship. **She**

is called: Mother of God, Queen of the Apostles, Queen of Heaven (see my commentary on **Jeremiah Cd – They Knead Dough and Make Cakes for the Queen of Heaven**), Queen of the Angels, The Door of Paradise, The Gate of Heaven, Our Life, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, and many other titles that ascribe to **her** supernatural powers. All of which are false. The average Roman Catholic acts on the belief that **Miryam** has the powers of deity.

The doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception" teaches that **Mary** herself was born without original **sin**. Pope Pius IX issued the original decree stating this doctrine on December 8, 1954. Side by side with the doctrine that **Miryam** was born without **sin**, there developed the doctrine that **she** did not commit **sin** at any time during **her** life. Then, as one link reached out for another, they gave **her** the attribute of impeccability, which means *that **she** could not **sin***, that **her** nature was such that it was impossible for **her** to **sin**! All of this was a natural outgrowth of their worship of **Mary**, a further step in **her** deification. Their Mariolatry demanded it! They sensed that if they were to give **her** the worship that is due of **the Lord**, **she** must be sinless. This doctrine did not become official until 1854, more then eighteen centuries after **Christ** was born of the virgin **Miryam**, and so it is one of the later doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.[130]

Isaiah had prophesied: **A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from His roots a Branch will bear fruit (Isaiah 11:1).** That meant that the **shoot,** or **the Messiah**, would appear only when the house of David had been reduced down to where it was, not in David's day, but, in his father **Jesse's** day. That is why **Isaiah** mentions **Jesse** rather than David. He pictures the great house of David as a mighty tree that had reduced to a mere **stump**. But, while it appeared to be nothing but a dead **stump**, suddenly **a shoot** will begin to grow and produce life. The point that **the Holy Spirit** made through **Isaiah** was that when the house of David had been reduced to poverty again, to what it had been in **Jesse's** day – then **the Meshiach** would appear. From **Joseph andMary's** economic status it was clear that **Jesus** came when the house of David had been reduced once again to poverty.[131]

Two offerings were made for **Miryam's purification**. As a perpetual reminder that all mankind is born in **sin** even as David confessed **(Psalm 51:5)**, a mother was deemed ceremonially defiled by the birth of **a child**, so first **a sin offering** was made. Secondly, **a burnt offering** was made for the restoration of communion with **the LORD**. Payment for the **two pigeons** was dropped in the third of the thirteen trumpet-shaped collection boxes in the Court of the Women. The sons of Annas, the

high priest, supplied the sacrifices after payment was made. Then the Sadducees arranged those women who had presented themselves in the designated place beside the Nicanor gate. There they would be nearest to the Court of Isra'el so when incense was burned on the golden altar in **the Holy** Place they could see the white cloud of smoke come up symbolizing their prayers. As **Mary** worshiped there at **the Temple in Jerusalem**, **her** grateful heart overflowed with praise to **God**. **She** was blessed beyond belief. After **the purification** ceremony was completed and all stain had been removed from **her**, then **she** could present **her** son to **ADONAI** for **redemption**.

The second observance that needed to be performed was presentation and redemption of the firstborn to the LORD (see my commentary on **Exodus Cd – The Principle of the First Born**)**. Mary** mingled prayer and thanksgiving while **she** stood there. Then the priest would come to **her**, and sprinkling **her** with the sacrificial blood, would declare **her** cleansed. **Her firstborn** would then be **redeemed** at the hand of the priest, with **five shekels** of silver **(Numbers 18:16)**.[132]

As it is written in the Torah of ADONAI, the first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to Him (Exodus 13:2). But, after giving their **firstborn** son to **the LORD**, the only way a Jewish family could get him back was through redemption (see my commentary on **Exodus Bz – Redemption**). The ceremony of redeeming **every firstborn male** would remind them of their **redemption** from the slavery **of Egypt** by the blood of the lamb on each family's door frame. So in obedience, **Yosef and Mary took** the newborn **Jesus** to the **Temple** and went looking for a priest for **His** formal presentation **(Luke 2:22b)**. Two short prayers accompanied this. The first was for the redemption that **God** commanded through **His** prophet **Moshe: You are to give over to ADONAI the firstborn male of every womb (Exodus 13:12; Luke 2:23)**, and the second prayer was for the payment of **the redemption price** of **five** sanctuary-**shekels.** After those two prayers, their **child** had truly been given **over to Ha'Shem** in recognition of **His** ownership, and then bought back again.

God's *desires have not changed* ***(Hebrews 13:8).*** *The* ***firstborn of every womb among the Israelites*** *still belongs to* ***ADONAI****. There is no* ***Temple*** *in Jerusalem, and* ***five shekels*** *are not paid, but, the principle remains the same.* ***Today,*** *Jews still set apart their* ***firstborn*** *males to* ***YHVH****. Money is still given on a sliding scale. The rich pay more and the poor pay less. But, they continue to redeem their* ***firstborn*** *sons. As believers, it is important to remember that* ***the LORD Almighty***

*has purchased us, not with **five shekels**, but with the precious blood of **His Son**.*

As **Mary** descended the fifteen semicircular steps from the Gate of Nicanor, a sudden heavenly **light** of joy filled the heart of **Shim'on, a righteous and devout** man who had grown old waiting **for the God to comfort Isra'el (Luke 2:25a). He** was a member of the believing remnant, the righteous of the TaNaKh, at that time. The **comfort** that **Luke** alludes to here is the main subject of **Chapters 40** to **66** in **Isaiah** (see my commentary on **Isaiah Hc – Comfort, Comfort My People Says Your God**). That **comfort** could only come through **Messiah**.

Simeon was a careful student of the Scriptures and **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh had revealed** to him **that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah of ADONAI** with **his** own **eyes (Luke 2:25b-26 CJB)**. **Prompted by the Holy Spirit** that day**, he went into the Temple courts. The LORD** gave **Shim'on the eyes** to see, or the ability to recognize **the Messiah** with a mere glance.[133] **And when the parent brought in the child Yeshua to do for Him what the Torah required (Luke 2:27 CJB), Simeon**, recognized that forty-one-day-old boy as the **comfort of Isra'el**. **His eyes had seen the Messiah**.

Immediately, **Simeon took** the baby **Jesus in his arms and praised God (Luke 2:28):** Like **Zechariah and Elizabeth** before **him**, **Shim'on** was moved by **the Spirit** to declare: **Now, ADONAI, as You have promised** in **Isaiah, You may now dismiss Your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen Your salvation (Luke 2:29-30; Isaiah 40:5). Simeon** was not speaking English but, in Hebrew. The Hebrew word for salvation is *Yeshuah*; the Hebrew word for **Jesus** is almost the same, *Yeshua*. Both come from the same Hebrew root *yasha*, which means *to save*.

The only difference is the final letter “h” which is silent. Therefore, in Hebrew the word **salvation** and the word **Jesus** sound the same. In a real way, what **he** said was not only **my eyes have seen Your salvation**, but **my eyes have seen Your Yeshua.**[134]

Then **Shim’on** prophesied about two groups who would benefit from **Messiah’s** coming, **which He** had **prepared in the sight of all nations (Luke 2:31; Isaiah 52:10). Simeon** saw the same two groups that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, had seen. The first group is **the Gentiles,** for **the Anointed One will be a light for revelation to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6** and **51:4).** Zechariah declared that it was **the Goyim** who were **living in darkness and in the shadow of death**. **Isaiah** had already prophesied that **the Messiah** would be **a light to the Gentiles** (see my commentary on **Isaiah Hp – Here Is My Servant, Whom I Uphold**). **And the** second group to benefit from **His** coming would be **the Jewish people** themselves, **the glory of Your people Isra’el (Luke 2:32).** This is the fourth of four songs recorded in **Luke,** first by **Mary** in **1:46-66**, second by **Zech 1:68-79,** then third by a choir of angels in **2:14**, and finally here by **Simeon** in **Lk 2:29-32**.

The child’s father and mother (the most natural way of describing **Joseph’s and Mary’s** relationship to **Jesus**) **marveled at what was said about Him (Luke 2:33).** It was as if **their** silent thoughts had been an unspoken question, to which **Shim‘on** gave the answer. Mystic as it seemed, both **Yosef and Mary** knew that **his** words were prophetic.[135] **Simeon’s** song was an illusion to **Isaiah 42:6** and **49:6**, meaning that **the Suffering Servant** would be **a light for revelation to the Gentiles**. Aside from the Great Commission, however, we generally don’t see a ministry **to the Goyim** in the gospels. This prophecy would be fulfilled in the book of **Acts** (see **Acts 10:23b-48** and **13:47-49**).

It was as if the whole history of **the Messiah** upon the earth was passing in rapid succession right before **Simeon’s eyes**. After pronouncing a blessing on **Joseph and Miryam**, **he** turned directly to **Mary** and prophesied something that **she** probably didn’t fully understand until many years later. **He** said, listen carefully: **This child is destined to cause the rising and falling of many in Isra’el (Luke 2:34a)**. How accurate that prophecy would be fulfilled years later. **The LORD** and **His** ministry would become **a stone that causes mankind to stumble, and a rock that makes them fall (Isaiah 8:14b).** The First Coming of **Jesus** will cause a division among **the Jews** of the world. There will be those who rise because of **Him**, or those who believe, and those who will fall because of their

lack of faith. **Shim‘on** prophesied that **Yeshua** would **be a sign that will be spoken against** and for the nation of **Isra’el** that has been true to this very day **(Luke 2:34b; Isaiah 8:14)**. Once again, this concept is started in **Luke** and completed in **Acts**. There is a constant division in **Isra’el (Acts 14:1-2** and **28:23-24)**.

Jesus never gave **His mother** a single moment’s worry over rebellion, bad choices, or running away from **God**. But that didn’t spare **her** from worrying or losing sleep over **Him**. In **the Temple**, when **He** was only forty-one-days old, the elderly **Simeon** set an ominous tone of things to come when **he** prophesied to **Miryam, “And in addition, a sword will pierce your own soul” (Luke 2:35b CJB).** These words usually bring to mind the heartbreak **she** saw at the rejection of **her** son by **the Jewish** leadership. But, the time when the **sword** would **pierce** its deepest into **her soul** would be when **she** saw **Him** crucified. But, **his** words also captured the bumpy road that led from the stable to the cross. Those rare accounts of conversations between **Yeshua** and **His mother** (presumably because **Mary** told **her** story to the other gospel writers) are weighed down with love, but, riddled with pain. **Jesus’** remarks always caught **His mother** off guard and left **her** pondering **His** words, trying to figure out what **He** meant, and to sort through the implications. Exchanges between **Yeshua** and **His** mother are memorable and record the steps of **Mary’s** journey from a **mother** to a disciple.[136]

Then **Simeon** also prophesied **that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed (Luke 2:35a).** Indeed, **the thoughts of many hearts** were and are **revealed** through the person of **Jesus** of Nazareth. As **He Himself** said: **Do not suppose I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man’s enemies will be members of his own household (Matthew 10:34).** **He** makes you choose sides. You can’t sit on the fence with **Him**. As a result, in that way **Shim‘on** said that **the thoughts of many hearts** would **be revealed.**

Coming up to them at that very moment **was a prophetess** named **Anna,** who spoke the Word of **the LORD.** For a Jewish woman the visit to the Court of the Women was a high point. **She** could not approach any further, unless **she** presented an offering that required **her** to lay **her** hands on it and go to the slaughter at **the bronze altar**. **She** may have taught the TaNaKh to other women, or **she** may have simply had a private ministry there in **the Temple** complex offering words of encouragement and instruction from the Hebrew Scriptures to other women who came to worship. Nothing suggests that **she** was a source of revelation, or that any special revelation ever came to **her** directly. Even **her** realization that **Jesus** was **the Messiah** seemed to have come from the revelation given to **Simeon** and subsequently overheard by **her**. Nevertheless, **she** is called **a prophetess** because it was **her** habit to declare the truth of **God's** Word to others. That gift for proclaiming the truth of **God** ultimately played a major role in the ministry **she** is still remembered for.[137] Art by Sarah Beth Baca: see more information on Links and Resources.

Only five women were ever referred to as **a prophetess**. First, there was **Miryam**, the sister of Moses **(Exodus 15:20)**. **She** led the women of **Isra'el** in a psalm of praise to **God** about the drowning of Pharaoh and his army (see my commentary on **Exodus Cl – The Song of Miryam**). The simple one-stanza psalm **Miryam** sang was the substance of **her** only recorded prophecy **(Exodus 15:21)**.

The second **prophetess** in the TaNaKh was **Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth (Judges 4:4)**. Of all the judges who led the Jewish people before the monarchy of

Isra'el was established, **she** was the only woman. In fact, **she** is the only woman in the entire Bible who ever held that kind of leadership and was blessed for it. **ADONAI** seemed to raise **her** up as a rebuke to the men of **her** generation who were paralyzed by fear. **She** didn't usurp their power, but ruled in a maternal role, while men like Barak were being raised up to step into their proper roles of leadership. **She** received instructions from **the LORD (Judges 4:6)**, so it seems that **she** received revelation from **God**, at least that one time.

Third, there was a **prophetess** named Huldah **(Second Kings 22:14-20)**. **She** received a word from **ADONAI** for Hilkiah the priest and others. Nothing else is known about **her**. **She** is mentioned only in **Judges** and a parallel passage in **Second Chronicles 34:22-28.**

Only two other women are called a **prophetess** in the TaNaKh. A false **prophetess** named **Noadish (Nehemiah 6:14)**, and **Isaiah's** wife **(Isaiah 8:3)**, who was called a **prophetess** only because **her** husband was a prophet. None of these women had an ongoing prophetic ministry like Elijah, **Isaiah**, or any of the other prophets. There is nothing anywhere in the Bible to indicate that any of these women ever held a prophetic office.[138]

Anna was the daughter of Penuel of whom nothing else is known. **And she was of the tribe of Asher.** This is one of the supposed so-called "lost" tribes of **Isra'el**. But, obviously **she** wasn't lost, **she** was right there in **Isra'el**. The truth is they were never lost. No doubt, a small portion of the northern ten tribes likely drifted off to lands unknown, but the Bible does account for the vast majority, who went through a sifting process whereby the faithful were absorbed back into Judah. After the northern Kingdom of **Isra'el** broke away from the southern Kingdom of Judah, the books of **Kings** and **Chronicles** repeatedly tell of many from the northern ten tribes defecting to the south well before the Assyrian assault on Samaria in 722 BC. Many were still loyal to **Jerusalem** as the center of worship and pilgrimage, rather than the rival temple set up on Mount Gerizim. Others believed the true successor to King David was in Judah, while **Israel's** kings were falling into apostasy. These defections increased whenever civil war erupted between the divided kingdoms. For instance, **2 Chronicles 15:9** says that **large number had come over to him** [Judah's King Asa] **from Isra'el when they saw that God was with him** (**2 Chron 11:13-17** and **19:4**). Also, when the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity they did not only come from the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, they came from all twelve **tribes**. **Asher** was supposedly one of those ten "lost" **tribes**, and yet **Anna** was a representative living right in **Zion**.

By the time of **Jesus'** birth **Anna was very old.** The Greek text is unclear about **her** exact age. It literally reads: *this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years.* It could mean that **she** was a widow for **eighty-four** years, but more likely, the Bible is saying that **she** was an **eighty-four**-year-old widow. **She** had evidently **lived with her husband** for only **seven years** until **she** became widowed **(Luke 2:36-37a).** Like **Simeon**, **she** also recognized the **Messiah** when **she** saw **Mary's** baby Boy. Normally, **she never left the Temple** compound, but stayed worshiping **night and day, fasting and praying (Luke 2:37b).** What would **she** be **praying** for? No doubt the very same thing that **Shim'on** had been praying for, **the redemption of Isra'el and Yerushalayim** through the coming of **the Messiah**. But, **coming up to them at that very moment, she** realized that what **she** had been praying and fasting for was right there in front of **her** wrapped up in **Simeon's** arms.

Immediately, **she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:38** and **Isaiah 52:9).** The imperfect verb tense signifies continuous action. It literally meant that **she** continually **spoke about Him to all**. **She** had good news and **she** could not keep it to **herself**. This became **her** one message the rest of **her** life.[139] **She** could finally leave **the Temple** compound. After that, **she** went out and told the believing remnant, or those who were looking forward to it and believed in it, that **the** coming **redemption of Isra'el and Jerusalem** was at hand**. The Messiah** had been born and **she** had seen **Him**.[140]

The only people in **Isra'el** who did recognize **Jesus** at **His** birth were humble, common people. The magi (see **Av – The Visit of the Magi**), of course were foreigners and Gentiles, and they were rich, powerful and influential men in their own culture. But the only Israelites who understood that **Yeshua** was **the Messiah** at **His** birth were **Yosef** and **Miryam**, the shepherds, and **Simeon** and **Anna**. To the world, all of them were basically nobodies. All of them recognized **Him**, however, because they were told who **He** was by angels, or by some special revelation. Inspired by **the Holy Spirit**, **Luke** records all of their accounts in succession, as if he is calling multiple witnesses, one at a time, to prove his case.[141]

The people we encounter in this file are models of Jewish faithfulness. They were the believing remnant of **Isra'el** awaiting their **Messiah**. **Zechariah** and **Elizabeth** were of the tribe of Levi, righteous and devout, anxiously awaiting Israel's **salvation**. **Simeon** purposed **that he would not die until he had seen the**

Messiah of ADONAI with **his** own **eyes**. **Anna** was a model of Jewish piety, a widow devoting **herself** entirely to worship, fasting and prayer. **Luke's** purpose is to introduce us to the faithful remnant of **the people of God**, waiting expectantly for the fulfillment of the promises **ADONAI** has made to them.[142]