

Calvary Chapel  of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY
TEACHER'S PACKET

CHRISTMAS STUDY

All grades

The Birth of the Savior

The Birth of the Savior

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To tell the Christmas story, and to give the students an understanding of why Christ came into the world.

Key Verses

Luke 2:1-32—Main Teaching Passage

Genesis 3:15

John 3:16

Memory Verse - 1 John 3:5

You know that He appeared to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin.

Hook

Ask the class, "What is sin? Where did sin come from? What does sin do to us?" Ask the students to respond and record their answers on the board.

Tell the students that sin is anything we think, say or do that displeases God.

Ask the students to give some examples of sins.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

Every story in the Old Testament has been leading us directly to the glorious chapter that is Luke 2. Mary finds out that she is going to have a baby, God's Son. After travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem, Jesus is born.

Our focus for this study should be on the revelation given to the shepherds by the angelic host in verses 8-14, and also by Simeon in verses 29-32. This event marks the birth of the Savior (v. 11, 30), who is the long-awaited Messiah/Christ (vs. 11). He will bring peace on Earth to all men (vs. 14), He will be a light to the Gentiles (vs. 32), and He will be the glory of Israel (vs. 32).

The importance of the birth of Christ lies in the fulfillment of many promises throughout the Old Testament. Specifically, it fulfills God's promise to send a Redeemer who would crush the serpent's head and restore the relationship between God and man, as stated all the way back in Genesis 3 after Adam and Eve had fallen into sin. The birth of Jesus heralds that salvation has come, and has become available to all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK

All of the problems that we face in the world today began all the way back in the Garden of Eden. Everything used to be perfect and good. Adam and Eve walked and talked with God in the Garden, but when Adam and Eve ate the fruit that God had told them was forbidden, sin entered into the world, and with it, death. Everything was ruined. Sin separated Adam and Eve from God, ruining their relationship with Him and each other, and ever since, all have sinned, and all have been separated from God. But as soon as Adam sinned, God began revealing His plan to rescue people from sin, so that anyone who wanted would have a way to be close to Him again, because that's exactly what God has always wanted.

Even as God was casting Adam and Eve out of the Garden, He made them a promise to send someone who would make things right (Genesis 3:15). This Person would crush sin under His foot, but would be bruised and hurt in the process. When sin was crushed and destroyed, then, and only then, could God walk with man again as He did in the garden. From that point on, the world had been waiting for the promised One. He was given some names or titles. He was called, "Messiah," or, "Christ." In English, we would simply call Him, "the Savior."

LOOK (Continued)

When Mary gave birth to Jesus, the plan that had been in the works for thousands of years came to fruition. Consider what the angels said when Jesus was born: “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” They said that we don’t have to be afraid any more! The Savior, the Christ, had been born into the world. The one that the world had been waiting for was finally here.

Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple to be dedicated to God. As they did, the Holy Spirit fell upon a man named Simeon. Simeon prophesied over Jesus, again confirming that this was the Savior. Simeon said, “My eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” The Holy Spirit was telling us through Simeon that Jesus was coming into the world to save ALL mankind: not just Israel, but all of the non-Jewish people as well.

If all of the world’s problems can be traced back to the Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, then all of the solutions to those problems can be found in the person of Jesus Christ. Of course, we don’t just celebrate Jesus’ birth on Christmas day; we celebrate everything that Jesus did. As promised, Jesus crushed sin under His foot. He did something that would allow all of us to be freed from sin forever: He died. Remember that promise that God made? The one who would save us would be bruised, or hurt in the process. Jesus saved us from sin by dying on a cross, but that wouldn’t be the end for Jesus. His death was only temporary, like a bruise that hurts for a while and then goes away. Jesus conquered death. He was raised up on the third day, showing us that in Him we can be forgiven and have a pure, eternal, and perfect relationship with God.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

Finish the class by presenting the Gospel. Allow the students to ask any questions they might have about Jesus or their need for a Savior, and then present an opportunity for them to respond and make Him their Lord and Savior. Record the names of any students who surrender their lives to Christ.

Parent Question: How did Jesus’ birth make things right between God and man?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Luke 2:1-32 by David Guzik

Luke 2 - Jesus' Birth

A. The world Jesus was born into.

1. (1) A decree from Rome reaches the whole Mediterranean world.

And it came to pass in those days *that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.*

a. **It came to pass in those days:** Luke clearly tells us that he recorded *actual history* and *real events*. This is not “once upon a time.” These are not fanciful stories of Zeus and Apollo on Mount Olympus. This is *real*.

b. **A decree went out from Caesar Augustus:** The story of Jesus' birth began during the reign of one of the most remarkable men of ancient history.

i. He was born with the name Octavian, named after his father. His grandmother was the sister of Julius Caesar, and being a talented young man, Octavian came to the attention of his great uncle. Julius Caesar eventually adopted Octavian as his son, and he was made his official heir in 45 B.C. Within a year Caesar was murdered, and Octavian joined with two others – Mark Antony and Lepidus – in splitting the domination of Rome three ways. For decades, the whole Mediterranean world was filled with wars and violence; now, under the Triumvirate, it became far worse. There were years of bloody, brutal fighting for power and money in Rome and the provinces.

ii. Octavian and Antony soon pushed Lepidus out of the picture. Even though his sister married Antony, for thirteen years Octavian and Antony existed together as rivals, until 31 B.C. For a year, their huge armies assembled and positioned themselves. Antony, with the help of Cleopatra, brought 500 warships, 100,000 foot soldiers, and 12,000 cavalry. Octavian answered with 400 warships, 80,000 infantry and 12,000 horsemen. Octavian had the better strategy and the more mobile ships, and he defeated the combined forces of Antony and Queen Cleopatra of Egypt at the battle of Actium. Now Octavian was the sole ruler of the Roman world, and took the title **Caesar Augustus**.

c. **That all the world:** For decades, the **world** Augustus lived in and Jesus would be born into, the world of the Mediterranean basin, was wrecked by war, destruction, brutality, and immorality.

i. “The lusty peninsula was worn out with twenty years of civil war. Its farms had been neglected, its towns had been sacked or besieged, much of its wealth had been stolen or destroyed. Administration and protection had broken down; robbers made every street unsafe at night; highwaymen roamed the roads, kidnapped travelers, and sold them into slavery. Trade diminished, investment stood still, interest rates soared, property values fell. Morals, which had been loosened by riches and luxury, had not been improved by destitution and chaos, for few conditions are more demoralizing than poverty that comes after wealth. Rome was full of men who had lost their economic footing and then their moral stability: soldiers who had tasted adventure and had learned to kill; citizens who had seen their savings consumed in the taxes and inflation of war and waited vacuously for some returning tide to life them back to affluence; women dizzy with freedom, multiplying divorces, abortions, and adulteries.” (Durant)

d. **A decree went out from Caesar Augustus:** It seemed that the authority of this man changed the chaos of that time in a dramatic way. He brought three things that turned the tide miraculously. First, he brought peace because he had

defeated all his rivals. Second, he brought political and administrative skill, perhaps even brilliance. Third, he brought vast sums of money from Egypt to pay the soldiers and to help the Roman economy.

i. “Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus. After a long period of wars which had racked the Mediterranean and its shores, political unity had been achieved and the Roman Empire had become roughly coterminous with the Mediterranean Basin. Here and there it was soon to spread beyond it. Augustus was the first Emperor. Building on the foundations laid by his uncle, Julius Caesar, he brought peace and under the guise of the chief citizen of a restored republic ruled the realm which for several generations Rome had been building. The internal peace and order which Augustus achieved endured, with occasional interruptions, for about two centuries. Never before had all the shores of the Mediterranean been under one rule and never had they enjoyed such prosperity. The *pax Romana* made for the spread of ideas and religions over the area where it prevailed.” (Latourette)

ii. But as great a man as **Caesar Augustus** was, he was only a man. And the man who brought the answers also took a dear price. He demanded absolute power over the Roman Empire. For hundreds and hundreds of years, Rome prided itself on being a *republic* – a nation governed by laws, not by any man. The idea that no man was above the law, and the Roman Senate and the army and various political leaders lived together in a sometimes difficult arrangement. Now, Octavius would change all that. In 27 B.C. he arranged for the Roman Senate to give him the title *Augustus*, which means “exalted” and “sacred.” Now Rome wasn’t a *republic*, governed by laws; it was an *empire* governed by an *emperor*. The first Emperor of Rome was this same **Caesar Augustus**.

iii. Durant on the title **Augustus**: “Hitherto the word had been applied only to holy objects and places, and to certain creative or augmenting divinities; applied to Octavian it clothed him with a halo of sanctity, and the protection of religion and the gods.”

iv. One of his early titles was *imperator*, the commander in chief of all the armed forces of the state. But he came to make the title mean *emperor*.

v. This says something important about the world Jesus was born into. It was a world hungry for a savior, and a world that was living in the reign of a *political savior* – **Caesar Augustus** – but that wasn’t enough.

vi. “In the century before Christ was born the evidences of disintegration were so palpable in wars, in the passing of the old order, and in moral corruption, that the thoughtful feared early collapse. From this disaster the Mediterranean Basin was saved by Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar...[but] we must note that the principate devised by Augustus did not cure but only temporarily halted the course of the disease from which Graeco-Roman culture was suffering.” (Latourette)

vii. “Augustus and his successors had not solved the basic problems of the Mediterranean world. They had obscured them. For what appeared to be a failure in government they had substituted more government, and government was not the answer.” (Latourette)

2. (2) The governor of the Roman administrative region near Galilee.

This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.

a. **This census**: The registration and **census** described wasn’t for simple record-keeping or statistics. It was to efficiently and effectively tax everyone in the Roman Empire.

i. According to Leon Morris, Justin Martyr, writing in the middle of the second century, said that in his own day (more than a hundred years after the time of Jesus) you could look up the record of the same **census** Luke mentioned.

b. **First took place**: The idea in the original language is that this was “the first enrollment.” Using a census for taxation was common in ancient Rome, so Luke called this one “the first enrollment” to distinguish it from the well-known enrollment in A.D. 6 that he later mentioned in Acts 5:37.

c. **While Quirinius was governing Syria**: This is another historical anchor, securing Luke’s account with the reign of known, verifiable historical people.

3. (3) The world responds to the command of Caesar Augustus.

So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

a. **So all went to be registered:** It is an impressive thought; one man, in the ivory palaces of Rome, gave a command – and the whole world responded. It may well be that up to that point there had never been a man with power over more lives than Caesar Augustus.

i. Overall, Caesar Augustus was a good ruler. He expanded the territory of the Roman Empire and he did much for his people. The greatest sorrows of his life came from his home, because he had an out-of-control daughter, no son, and all of his nephews, grandsons, and his favorite stepson died young. But like most every man of such ambition and authority, he thought a lot of himself. It is easy to imagine how invincible he felt when he made a *decree... that all the world should be registered* for taxation. It's pretty heady to think, "I make the command and the whole Roman world has to obey it."

ii. But Augustus wasn't really powerful at all. In John 19:10-11, Jesus confronted another Roman who believed he was powerful. *Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above."* The same principle applied towards Caesar Augustus; whatever power he had was *given* power, given from God.

iii. As he sat in his palace and made his decree, he thought it was the supreme exercise of his will, the ultimate flexing of his muscle. But he was just a tool in God's hand. God had promised that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), and that promise would be fulfilled. So how does one get a young couple from Nazareth down to Bethlehem when they might not be inclined to travel? Simple. Just work through the *political* "savior of the world," and use him as a pawn in your plan.

iv. We also see that Augustus, for all his accomplishments, couldn't really be the answer. God allowed Caesar Augustus to rise to unheard of human power for many reasons; in some ways, he was like a Roman John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus. At the end of the story, what is important is Jesus. Who does the world know more today – Jesus or Caesar Augustus? Who has a more lasting legacy?

b. **Everyone to his own city:** There is no record in secular history that Augustus decreed this census and commanded it be performed in this manner, but it was consistent with what we do know of him from history. Augustus was known to be very sensitive to the nationalistic feelings of his subjects, and so he commanded them to return to their cities of family origin for the census.

i. Barclay and others cite a government edict from a Roman census commanded in Egypt in the same era, that each person had to go to their own city for the census enrollment.

ii. In this way, Augustus softened the blow for many. They had to travel, they had to pay taxes – but they would also gather together with family, and see relatives that they perhaps had not seen for a long time.

B. The birth of Jesus.

1. (4-7) Joseph and Mary come to Bethlehem; Jesus is born.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

a. **Joseph also went up from Galilee:** The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem (just outside of Jerusalem) is about 80 miles. This was not a short distance in those days. It was a significant undertaking, costing time and money.

b. **With Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child:** We often think that Mary was close to delivery when they made this journey, but this may not have been the case at all. Joseph may have been anxious to get her out of Nazareth to avoid the pressure of scandal. Luke tells us that it was while they were in Bethlehem, **that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.**

i. According to the Roman law, Mary didn't have to go with Joseph for the tax census; but it made sense for her to go with Joseph, especially because she was in the latter stages of a controversial pregnancy - surely the subject of much gossip in Nazareth.

ii. "It is possible that he used the emperor's order as a means of removing Mary from possible gossip and emotional stress in her own village. He had already accepted her as his wife (Matthew 1:24), but apparently continued in betrothal (Luke 2:5), pledged to be married, till after the birth." (Liefeld)

c. **And she brought forth her firstborn Son:** One of the striking things about Luke's narrative is how simple it is in contrast to how great the events are. In our modern age, small events are often inflated with over-description and presented as more important than they actually are. Yet under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luke presented this most amazing event in an understated manner.

d. **She brought forth:** This phrase is filled with wonder. We are not told that anyone assisted Mary in the birth, though someone may have. One way or another, this young woman was completely separated from all her family and supporting friends, who lived back in Nazareth.

i. "The narrative runs as if Mary did these things herself, whence the patristic inference of a painless birth." (Bruce)
"That Mary wrapped the child herself points to a lonely birth." (Morris)

ii. When did this happen? The date of December 25 is improbable but not impossible; this date was first popularized in the church the fourth century.

iii. Where did this happen? In A.D. 150, Justin Martyr said that the place Jesus was born was a cave in Bethlehem. Later (330) under Constantine the Great a church was built over the cave, which many believe is still the most probable place where Jesus was born.

e. **Her firstborn son:** This invites the logical conclusion that Mary had other children as well, despite the Roman Catholic dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

f. **Wrapped Him in swaddling cloths:** These are snugly wrapped strips of cloth. More remarkable than the **swaddling cloths** is the fact that He was laid in a **manger** - a feeding trough for animals.

i. Trapp points out that the word translated *swaddling cloths* comes from the ancient Greek word meaning "to tear," meaning they were torn strips of cloth wrapped around Jesus.

g. **There was no room for them in the inn:** This happened in a public place, with other travelers and residents. "Men were trafficking, and little children playing, and woman gossiping beside the well - and lo! The kingdom of heaven was among them." (Morrison)

i. "That there was no room in the inn was symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus. The only place where there was room for him was on a cross." (Barclay)

2. (8) Shepherds watch over their flocks.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

a. **Now there were in the same country shepherds:** Bethlehem's shepherds were known to care for the temple flock. These men may have also protected and cared for the lambs used in temple sacrifice.

b. **Living out in the fields:** Many have said that a late December date is impossible, because shepherds would not have been out at night at that time of year. Nevertheless, warm winters are not unknown in Judea, which has a climate remarkably similar to Southern California.

3. (9-14) The angelic announcement.

And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

a. **An angel of the Lord stood before them:** Interrupting this quiet, dark night was the shining presence of an angel and **the glory of the Lord**. This first angel brought **good tidings** (literally it means that they preached the gospel) to these shepherds, who were regarded as social outcasts.

i. “As a class shepherds had a bad reputation...More regrettable was their habit of confusing ‘mine’ with ‘thine’ as they moved about the country. They were considered unreliable and were not allowed to give testimony in the law courts.” (Morris)

ii. “The first preacher of the gospel was an angel. God hath now taken this honour from the angels, and put it upon the ministers, who in Scripture are called angels, Revelation 2:1.” (Trapp)

b. **For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior:** They announced the birth of a **Savior**, which was (and is) exactly the need of mankind. We don’t need another advisor, a reformer, or a committee, but a **Savior**.

c. **Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God:** After the single angel’s announcement, a whole group of angels appeared. This was a **heavenly host** (a band of soldiers) that proclaimed peace. The world needed then and needs now **peace**.

i. Even the pagans of the first century world sensed this need for peace and a savior. Epictetus, a first century pagan writer, expressed this: “While the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief, and envy; he cannot give peace of heart, for which man yearn for more than even outward peace.”

ii. The contrast between the angelic glory and the humble Jesus must have seemed extreme. God loves to put His glory in unlikely packages so His glory is more clearly displayed (2 Corinthians 4:7).

iii. “Let God have all the glory, so we may have the peace.” (Trapp)

4. (15-16) The shepherds come and see the child Jesus.

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

a. **Let us now go:** This shows a genuine urgency. They didn’t hesitate at all.

b. **And see this thing that has come to pass:** The angel told them to look for *a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger* (Luke 2:12). It wasn’t an unusual *sign* to see a baby *wrapped in swaddling cloths*, but it was strange to see a baby *lying in a manger* - a feeding trough. If the angel had not told them to look for such a specific sign, they would never have believed it.

c. **And found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger:** This was a strange sight, and the specific sign they were told to look for. They no longer heard or saw angels, but they had the abiding encounter with Jesus. Angels may go, but Jesus remains.

i. “This was a revolting sight, and was sufficient of itself to produce an aversion to Christ. For what could be more improbable than to believe that he was the King of the whole people, who was deemed unworthy to be ranked with the lowest of the multitude?” (Calvin)

ii. “It is a lovely thought that the shepherds who looked after the Temple lambs were the first to see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (Barclay)

5. (17-20) The shepherds spread the news of Jesus' birth.

Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

a. **They made widely know the saying which was told them concerning this Child:** The combination of the angelic announcement and the sign of a child in a feeding trough inspired the shepherds to tell as many as they could of what they heard and experienced.

b. **All those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds:** The shepherd's good news amazed all who heard it. Even if they didn't really understand it, they recognized that something significant had happened.

i. "God, to show that he respected not persons, revealed this grand mystery to the shepherds and the wise men; the one poor, the other rich; the one learned, the other unlearned; the one Jews, the other Gentiles; the one near, the other far off." (Trapp)

c. **Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart:** Mary's reaction was different than either the shepherds or those who heard them. She calmly took it all in and meditated over it **in her heart**, seeking to understand the deep meaning of it all.

i. "The wonder of the many was a transient emotion (aorist), this recollecting and brooding of Mary was an abiding habit (imperfect)." (Bruce)

ii. Mary had good reason to meditate. What brought her to Bethlehem? A Roman emperor's great decree and perhaps gossiping tongues in Nazareth. God works through all kinds of people and all kinds of events to accomplish His plan.

d. **The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told them:** The shepherds had such happiness and praise to God because *the word was fulfilled just as it was told them*.

i. "Their zeal in *glorifying and praising God* is an implied reproof of our indolence, or rather of our ingratitude. If the cradle of Christ had such an effect upon them, as to make them rise from the stable and the manger to heaven, how much more powerful ought the death and resurrection of Christ to be in raising us to God?" (Calvin)

C. Jesus' presentation in the temple.

1. (21-24) The circumcision and presentation of Jesus.

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD"), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

a. **And when eight days were completed:** This was done so Jesus might fulfill every aspect of the law (as commanded in Leviticus 12:2-3). It also shows that Joseph and Mary were truly devout, obedient parents. They obeyed God's command in Leviticus 12, so Jesus obeyed it also.

b. **Circumcision...the days of her purification:** The circumcision and purification ceremonies were necessary as a reminder that we are all born in sin (Psalm 51:5). Jesus *could* have been excused because He was not born in sin. Yet, we see Him even as a baby, identifying with sinners, as He also later did at His baptism and on the cross.

i. The correct reading of Luke 2:22 is "now when the days of *their* purification...were completed." Jesus was identified with sinners even as a baby.

ii. "Let us now speak first of the purification. Luke makes it apply both to Mary and to Christ: for the pronoun *of them*, can have no reference whatever to Joseph." (Calvin)

iii. "For He who knew no sin, and who never was to know sin, was already in His circumcision made sin for us. He was not so much as eight days in this world till he began to be numbered with the transgressors. Mary's firstborn son was a lamb without blemish and without spot, but before He was a week old, He began to bear the sins of many...And as He began in the temple that day, so He continued every day to lead a life of pain, and shame, and bloodshedding, for us for our children, till He finished on the cross the sin-atonement work His Father had given Him to do. And ever after that first day of His wounding of our transgressions, that Holy Thing bore in His body the marks of our redemption." (Whyte)

c. **A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons:** Leviticus 12 commands that at the birth of a son a *lamb* be offered as part of the purification and dedication ceremony. Yet it allowed for two birds to be offered if the family could not afford to present a lamb.

i. "The offering of the two pigeons instead of the lamb and the pigeon was technically called *The Offering of the Poor*...we see that it was into an ordinary home that Jesus was born." (Barclay)

ii. This suggests that this all happened before the wise men came from the east (Matthew 2:1-12). Mary and Joseph would not have returned to Jerusalem after being warned by the angel (Matthew 2:13), and they would not have offered only two birds after receiving the rich gifts from the wise men (Matthew 2:11).

2. (25-32) A promise fulfilled to Simeon.

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 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. So he came by 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, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

a. **Waiting for the Consolation of Israel:** Simeon may have known that there were rumors regarding the coming of the Messiah. The news of John the Baptist's birth and its meaning was widely publicized (Luke 1:65), and the shepherds who heard the angelic announcement may have kept temple flocks, and they may have reported what happened among the people of the temple.

b. **So he came by the Spirit into the temple:** Yet it was not rumors, but the **Spirit** who led him into the temple on that day. Simeon was a man who knew how to be led by the Holy Spirit, both in hearing God's promise to him and being prompted to go to the temple at the right time.

c. **He took Him up in his arms:** Simeon's prophecy was filled with love for his Savior; and he hardly knew Jesus. We who know so much more about Him should love Him even more.

d. **According to Your word:** Simeon now had the peace of seeing God's promise fulfilled in his life.

e. **You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation:** It was as if Simeon were commanded by God to keep a lonely watch through the night until he saw the sun come up. This now was, for him, God's sunrise, and because Jesus had come, Simeon could be relieved of his watch.

f. **A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles:** The amazing thing about Simeon's prophecy is that it shows that this **light** is for the Gentiles also. The salvation of Jesus began with Israel, but was always to be extended beyond Israel.

i. John Trapp quoted a poet's expression of Simeon's heart:

"I fear no sin, I dread no death;
I have lived long enough, I have my life;

I have longed enough, I have my love;

I have seen long enough, I have my light;

I have served enough, I have my saint;

I have sorrowed enough, I have my joy;

Sweet babe, let this psalm serve as a lullaby to thee, and for a funeral for me. Oh, sleep in my arms, and let me sleep in they peace."