

Dedication of the Firstborn

Exodus 13:13-15; Luke 2:22-32
SS Lesson for 12/20/2015

Devotional Scripture: Col 1:15-20

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews what God has done in showing us the significance of the **Dedication of the Firstborn**, the Lord Jesus Christ. The **study's aim** is to see that what God has foretold and brought about is far more important than all the secular and social traditions of the season. The **study's application** is to center our thinking and celebrations this season on the Lord Jesus and His work for us.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Luke 2:22

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

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The couple was required by the Law not only to have Jesus circumcised (Lev. 12:3), but also to present their **firstborn** to God (Ex. 13:2, 12) 33 days later and to bring an offering for Mary's **purification** after childbirth (Lev. 12:1-8). The offering which they presented for her purification showed that they were a poor couple. They could not afford a lamb, so they bought a pair of doves or pigeons, which were all they could afford. They traveled the short distance from Bethlehem **to Jerusalem** for the presentation and purification at the temple.

Simeon had been told **by the Holy Spirit that he would not die** till he had seen the Messiah. Simeon was **righteous** (*dikaios*) and **devout** (*eulabēs*, "reverent") before God. Unlike the religious leaders, **he was waiting for the consolation of Israel**, that is, the Messiah, the One who would bring comfort to the nation (cf. "the redemption of Jerusalem," v. 38). The notation that **the Holy Spirit was upon** Simeon reminds one of the Old Testament prophets on whom the Holy Spirit came. Since Anna was "a prophetess" (v. 36), Simeon was probably also in the godly prophetic tradition of Israel. The special revelation from the Holy Spirit about seeing the Messiah was apparently unique and perhaps came because of Simeon's intense desire for the Promised One. On seeing **the Child** and picking Him up, **Simeon... praised God**, the response of godly people toward the Messiah throughout the Gospel of Luke. He then uttered a psalm of praise extolling God for fulfilling His promise by bringing **salvation**. The Messiah is the Source of salvation, as His name Jesus indicates. In all three of the hymns of thanksgiving and praise recorded by Luke in his first two chapters (1:46-55, 68-79; 2:29-32) lie the deep significance of the births of John and Jesus for the salvation of Israel and the world. Simeon noted that the Messiah was to be for **the Gentiles** as well as for **Israel**. The idea of salvation for the Gentiles is set forth many times in the Gospel of Luke. The words of Simeon caused Mary and Joseph to marvel (*thaumazontes*; cf. v. 18). Though they had been told that their Son was the Messiah, perhaps they had not comprehended the scope of His ministry to the entire world—to the Gentiles as well as to the people of Israel. **Simeon revealed to Mary** that her Son would be opposed (**a sign... spoken against**) and that she would be hurt greatly. Her grief would be like **a sword** piercing her **soul**. The Son would **cause the falling and rising of many in Israel**. Throughout His ministry Jesus proclaimed that the only way to the kingdom, something the nation had long sought, was to follow Him. The ones who did so would receive salvation; they would "rise." But the ones who did not believe Him would not receive salvation; they would "fall." These consequences would reveal what they thought about Mary's Son. This godly woman from the prophetic tradition continued the work Simeon had started. Anna **was 84** years old and had devoted herself completely to the Lord's service in **the temple** since her husband had died years before. She announced **to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem** (cf. v. 25) that the Messiah had come. The word about Jesus was likely known throughout the entire city as people either believed or disbelieved the words of the old prophet and the widowed prophetess.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Many studies have been done on the topic of birth order and its influence both on parenting and on child development. The middle child in our family often played “the middle-child card” (and still does!) as a way of creating sympathy for himself. This is because the middle child in a family is believed to be the one who ends up being slighted or ignored. The oldest child may be treated with great fondness simply by being first. The youngest may be treated similarly because that child will be the last to leave the nest and thus may be spoiled more than the others. The middle child gets, well, “caught in the middle.” The position of the firstborn male was a mark of distinction in biblical times. Our lesson today surveys the Old Testament command of God regarding redemption of the firstborn, and our New Testament text shows it being applied to Jesus.

The studies of this quarter examine the concept of tradition from three angles: traditions for honoring God (unit 1), for observing special occasions, and for celebrating holy times. Traditions can provide opportunities to reinforce important foundational truths that a country, a community, a church, a family, or an individual must keep at the forefront of their identity. The practice of sanctifying by redemption every Israelite firstborn male was so important that it was the second observance commanded of Israel following the exodus from Egypt. (The first was the Passover) Exodus 13, from which the first portion of our lesson text is drawn, addresses this. The important role of the firstborn male is further seen in his receiving certain privileges, including leadership responsibilities and a greater share of the family inheritance once the father had passed away (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Being a firstborn male Israelite had great significance because of the unique history of the nation. Regarding the infant Jesus, the Gospel of Luke notes as being carried out the redemption that Exodus describes.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Dedication Established (Exodus 13:13-15)

13 But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

14 So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.'

The command (13)

Command of being redeemed with a price (1 Cor 6:19-20)

19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Command of being redeemed by blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:18-19)

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Command of the pure being offered to God and the Lamb (Rev 14:4)

4 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.

Command of the firstborn among humankind (Rom 8:28-30)

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Command of offering the firstborn who belong to parents (Num 18:15)

15 The first offspring of every womb, both man and animal, that is offered to the Lord is yours. But you must redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals.

The reason (14-15)

Reason of training (Deut 6:20-25)

20 In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" 21 tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 Before our eyes the Lord sent miraculous signs and wonders — great and terrible — upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. 23 But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. 24 The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. 25 And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."

Reason of being a sign (Josh 4:6)

6 to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, "What do these stones mean?"

Reason of witnessing (Ps 145:4)

4 One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.

Reason of telling of God's faithfulness (Isa 38:19)

19 The living, the living — they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness.

Dedication Practiced (Luke 2:22-32)

22 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

23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who 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."

25 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.

26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 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,

28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:
29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word;
30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation
31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

Practice that is motivated by obedience (22-24)

Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Obedience learned (Heb 5:8)

8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered

Obedience in love (2 John 1:6)

6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

Obedience that is better than sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22)

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Obedience through putting God's words into practice (Matt 7:24-25)

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Practice that is to be anticipated (25-26)

Anticipated because God is faithful (1 Thess 5:24)

24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

Anticipated because God cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)

7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Anticipated because it develops perseverance (James 1:3-4)

3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Anticipated because even small faith accomplishes much (Matt 17:20)

20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Anticipated because of the promise of deliverance (Matt 21:21-22)

21 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. 22 If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

Anticipated because everything is possible for those who have faith (Mark 9:23)

23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

Practice that results in fulfillment (27-32)

Fulfillment through God's love being made complete in us (1 John 2:5)

5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:

Fulfillment through our love for God and others (1 John 4:12)

12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Fulfillment because God will always complete the work in us (Phil 1:6)

6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Fulfillment through perseverance (James 1:3-4)

3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The second chapter of Luke contains the only biblical account of the birth of Jesus. Matthew's gospel supplies the only other biblical account of a childhood incident in the life of the Messiah. He records the arrival of the magi, the paranoia of Herod which caused him to kill the infants in Bethlehem in an effort to murder Messiah, and the flight of the holy family to Egypt, to preserve the child's life. Bible scholars are not certain as to how the two biblical accounts, those of the magi in Matthew and of Simeon and Anna in Luke, are to be chronologically sequenced. It would appear that immediately after the birth of Jesus, the shepherds visited, that Jesus was soon thereafter circumcised, and then later presented at the temple, where Simeon and Anna appear. The family must have found more permanent lodging (cf. "house" in Matt. 2:11) in Bethlehem, where the magi arrived some time later on, perhaps as much as two years later (cf. Matt. 2:7, 16). The family then escaped to Egypt, and upon their return, they moved to Nazareth, rather than Bethlehem to fulfill the Scriptures (Matt. 2:19-23). Luke does not record some of these intervening events, but simply tells us that Jesus' family returned to Nazareth (Luke 2:39), which is where most of the Messiah's growing-up years would have been spent, prior to His visit to Jerusalem at age 12 (Luke 2:41ff.).

The Ceremonies

It may be well to distinguish the three ceremonies which are referred to in our text because we tend to jumble all of these into one event, rather than seeing them separately, both in time and in ritual. The **first ceremony** is that of **circumcision**, referred to in verse 21. This event probably took place where the family lived, and not at the temple. It occurred on the 8th day, as prescribed God directed Abraham (Gen. 17:9-14) and as prescribed by the law of Moses (Lev. 12:3). Associated with the circumcision was the giving of the name of the child (cf. Luke 1:59-63; 2:21).

The **presentation** of the first-born son is the **second ceremony** which our text reports. This, too, was a requirement of the Law, which Luke cites:

“EVERY first-born MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD” (Luke 2:23; from Exodus 13:2, 12; cf. Num. 18:15-17).

From the context of the passage in Exodus we know that during the final plague which God brought upon Egypt, all the first-born of Egypt were slain, both man and beast, while the first-born of the Israelites (that is, those who applied the blood of the Passover Lamb to their door posts and lintel) lived. The redemption of the first-born was required because the first-born were spared by God and thus belonged to Him. When an Israelite family redeemed their first-born, they were acknowledging that this child belonged to God.

The redemption price for a first-born male Israelite a month or more old was set at five (sanctuary) shekels in Numbers 18:16. Apparently presentation of the first-born never occurred earlier than 31 days after birth. Thus, the presentation of the child and the purification of the mother (the third ceremony), could be done on the same visit to the temple.

The **third ceremony** was the **purification of Mary**, required by the Law after the birth of a child. In Leviticus chapter 12 we are told that a woman is ceremonially unclean after the birth of a child. For a boy child the woman is unclean for seven days (12:2), and unable to enter the sanctuary for another 33 days (12:4). For a girl child the time doubles. She is unclean for 14 days and unable to enter the sanctuary for 66 days (12:5). This means that Jesus would have been approximately six weeks old at the time of his presentation. The sacrifice of the two turtledoves indicates that Mary and Joseph were poor people, as this was a provision for the poor (Lev. 12:6-8).

It is the second ceremony, the presentation of Jesus at the temple, which is most prominent in Luke’s account (Luke 2:27). It is on this occasion that Simeon and Anna appear, to attest and announce that the baby Jesus is God’s Messiah, the Savior of the world.

The Circumcision of the Christ-Child (2:21)

The circumcision of the Christ-child is not prominent in the passage, but it is noteworthy. First, this record attests to the fact that the parents of our Lord “performed everything according to the Law of the Lord” (Luke 2:39). Second, the circumcision of Christ parallels that of John, described earlier (Luke 1:59ff.). Finally, it was at the circumcision of Christ that His name was formally given. The name, Jesus, which had been specified before His birth, both to Joseph and to Mary:

“And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus” (Luke 1:31).

The Hebrew form of the name Jesus is “Jeshua” (cf. Joshua), derived by the combination of two root words, meaning “the Lord” and “to save.” Thus, the Jesus meant “the Lord is salvation.” I believe that the name Jesus, which Luke tells us was formally given the Savior at the time of His circumcision, was one of the indications to Simeon that this child, Jesus (the Lord’s salvation), was the promised Messiah. Thus Simeon says,

“For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation” [i.e. Jesus, the Lord’s salvation] (Luke 2:30).

The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple (2:22-38)

It is in conjunction with the presentation of Jesus at the temple that both Simeon and Anna appear, and speak words of divine inspiration, identifying the Christ-child as God’s Messiah. Let us consider these two noble saints in order to discover what it is about them which Luke finds worthy of a place of honor in this rare incident in his account of Christ’s childhood.

The Psalm of Simeon (2:22-35)

Simeon is a man that is something like the old testament character, Melchizedek, in that he suddenly appears out of nowhere. We are told very little about this man Simeon. We do not know from what tribe he is a descendent, although it would appear that he was an Israelite. We know nothing about his family, whether he was married or had any children. We are told nothing about his occupation, but it does not appear that he was a priest, for he was directed of the Holy Spirit to go to the temple.

The only things we are told about Simeon are those things which matter most to God—things which pertain to his faith and his character, things which tell about his relationship with God. We are told that Simeon was **righteous** and **devout** (v. 25), which speak of his personal walk with God and his integrity among men. He was further a man of faith and hope, for he “**looked for the consolation of Israel**,” an expression which summarizes the faith of the Old Testament saint in the promises of God concerning the restoration of Israel through the coming of her Messiah.

Finally, Simeon was a man who was filled by the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Christ (v. 26), God’s Anointed One, Israel’s Messiah. It was also the Holy Spirit that directed Simeon to the temple on the particular day that Jesus’ parents brought Him to be presented to the Lord. Finally, in some unspecified way, it was the Spirit of God who revealed to Simeon that this child was indeed the Messiah. No doubt the name Jesus was one evidence, but there must have been further confirmation, for there were no doubt many sons given this special name.

The precise means by which Simeon was enabled to recognize this six-week old child as distinct from all others is not told us, for Luke is not so much interested that we know how He was recognized, but that He was identified by a godly man, a man filled with the Spirit of God, as the Lord’s Christ.

Recognizing Jesus to be the Messiah, this elderly man took the child in his arms and blessed God. After a lifetime of seeking Messiah, one can hardly imagine the joy that was Simeon’s at this moment in time. Think of it, a man who knew that God held him in the palm of His hand, now holds God in his arms! The all-powerful God is a tiny baby, seemingly without any power at all. Simeon’s words of praise express the deep joy that was his at this moment, a joy which so utterly filled and completed his life he was ready to die:

“Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart In peace, according to Thy word; For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation” (Luke 2:29-30a).

The salvation which Simeon saw, was not seen by him alone, however, and so he hastens to add that it is a salvation that will be seen and shared by many:

“For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which Thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Thy people Israel” (Luke 2:30-32).

The things to which Simeon was a witness were not hidden from other men. Others may not have recognized them as the work of God, but all Jerusalem, we are told by Matthew, knew of the Messiah which the magi sought, but rather than to rejoice the people were “troubled” (Matt. 2:3). So far as we are told, no one from Jerusalem made the relatively easy trip to Bethlehem to see the holy child that was born, which was testified to by the star in the east.

While Simeon was a devout Jew, he did not view the Messiah’s coming as only for the benefit of Israel. The Messiah, as Israel’s King, who would “sit on the throne of His father David,” was Israel’s glory, but Messiah was also a “light of revelation to the Gentiles.” That is, Messiah came as God’s salvation to all men, not just to the Jews. This truth was taught in the Old Testament, and Simeon’s words seem to reveal his knowledge of such Old Testament prophecies of a salvation for Gentiles as well as for Israel. For example, consider these texts, with which Simeon was likely familiar, and to which he may have been alluding in his praise:

The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God (Ps. 98:2-3).

“I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon, And those who dwell in darkness from the prison. I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give my glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.” Isa. 42:6-8 (cf. 49:6)

The LORD has bared His holy arm In the sight of all the nations; That all the ends of the earth may see The salvation of our God (Isa. 52:10).

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isa. 60:1-3).

Imagine the impact which the actions and affirmations of Simeon must have had on Joseph and Mary. Luke simply summarizes this with the words,

“And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him” (Luke 2:33).

Amazed. Little wonder. Surely there must have been times when the parents of Jesus wanted to say to those who saw Him and remarked, “Cute child,” “Listen, this is no ordinary child, this is the Savior of the World!” But it is quite another thing when a man who was probably a total stranger walks up and proclaims you child, a child who looks like any other six-week old boy, to be the Messiah of God.

Perhaps in response to the amazed look on the faces of Mary and Joseph, Simeon went on to bless them, and to direct a very specific prophecy to Mary:

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—and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:34-35).

Did the fact that Simeon spoke only to Mary, while he blessed both Mary and Joseph indicate a veiled prophecy of Joseph’s death? At least we see a striking accuracy in the words of Simeon.

Up to this point in time, all of the inspired utterances pertaining to the Lord Jesus have been very positive, speaking with reference to His ruling on David’s throne, setting right the things which are wrong, and bringing peace and salvation to men. But now Simeon unveils the other side of the story, which is also a part of the Old Testament prophecies, such as those of Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53, prophecies of the rejection, crucifixion and death of Messiah, prophecies of His substitutionary atonement. Thus Simeon’s prophecy views the coming of Christ as revealing the hearts of men, and of dividing men, so that on account of Him some will rise and some will fall. More pointedly, Simeon’s words prepare Mary for the grief she must suffer, as the rejection of Her Son by men will cause her to witness His death on the cross. Truly this will be a sword that will pierce her soul.

(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-simeon-and-announcement-anna-luke-221-40>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The joy of the Christmas season may cause us to overlook how Jesus, God’s firstborn, was treated. The term firstborn in Colossians 1:15 doesn’t mean “born first,” but highlights Jesus’ preeminence as the Son of God and the special privileges that belong to him as a result (compare Exodus 4:22). Yet unlike the firstborn in Israel at the time of the tenth plague, Jesus was not spared from death. He became the substitute for sinful

humanity at the cross. He is the Passover lamb who was sacrificed and whose blood now makes it possible for God's judgment and wrath to pass over us (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus is still the true gift of Christmas, the one that keeps on giving—giving eternal life to those who trust in him. The cross, the place where God did not spare his own firstborn from death, results in our redemption, that we may be called "children of God" (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1, 2).

The Old Testament discusses the sanctifying, redeeming, or setting apart of the firstborn (Exodus 13:2, 12, 13), but what about the New Testament? Quite simply, we are no longer under the ordinances of the law (Colossians 2:13, 14), so this practice is not required of Christian families. Even so, some churches celebrate annually (or more often, depending on the size of the church) a "Baby Day" on which parents of newborns are encouraged to bring their infants. Such celebrations may include a special service of prayer as parents dedicate their children to the Lord. The congregation, for its part, may take a vow through responsive reading to pray for the children in that regard. But wait—is it possible for one human being to dedicate another to the Lord's service? Not really! The child will make his or her own decision in that regard later on. Unique dedication decisions by parents in the Old Testament era should be seen as just that (1 Samuel 1:11; etc.). What is possible, however, is that parents can dedicate themselves to rearing children in the Lord. In that light, a Baby Day service can accomplish much in impressing on parents the fact that parenthood is a genuine ministry. Fathers and mothers must see their families as "congregations" to whom they must minister so that the children can come to know and love the Lord. No individual like Simeon will show up to make any stunning announcements during Baby Day services. But who knows how God will use the children of parents so dedicated?

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. God wants us to teach our children about His saving grace (Exod. 13:13; cf. Matt. 2:13)
2. God wants us to teach our children how we escaped from the bondage of sin (Exod. 13:14-15; cf. vs. 8)
3. Christians should dedicate their children, as well as themselves, to God (Luke 2:22; cf. Rom. 12:1)
Understanding God's commandments to Israel will help us worship Him (Luke 2:23-24)
4. God will bring comfort to all who trust in Him when Jesus returns (Luke 2:25-26; cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18)
5. Christmas is a reminder that we who trust in Jesus can share the light of His glory (Luke 2:27-32; cf. 2 Cor. 4:6)