

[Joseph and His Mother] / Gospel of Luke 2:31 – 3:8

~ Our Spiritual Safari has had four straight Christmas Eve's in Luke's leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God, and it's not even Christmas time. That's okay, though, because it's always a good time to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a wonderful and magnificent human story that Luke gives in this Gospel record; but it's more than human: it's divine! Just as Jesus is God-man, we have a God-book of a Gospel account written by the beloved physician. One of the supernatural wonders of the Bible is when we consider how both the Old Testament and New Testament presents the Lord Jesus Christ properly, correctly and completely.

Our last report concluded with Simeon breaking out in song. Because I felt like singing along, it was a great place to stop, because you do not want to hear me sing, friends. Well, Luke gives us all of the songs associated with Christmas that we do not find in any other Gospel. You will recall that Simeon had been hanging around the temple and he had been promised the salvation of God when he said, "...my eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all Thy people." That's the remarkable last two verses we left off with that were made by a man who was certainly limited in his outlook of life; limited geographically to that area, and, yet he sees the One Who is to be the Savior of all the world.

Another wonder of the Bible is that, although directed at a certain people - the nation Israel – particularly the New Testament, it ministers to the entire world. No other religion or philosophy on the face of the earth can point that straight of a way. All of the religions of the world are generally localized and apply only to a peculiar set of people. It's typically a race or a nationality that develop individual religious theories. This has been true of Hinduism, Shintoism, Mohammedism, Scientism, Buddhism and Sikhism, just to name a few! Christianity, however, is for all people; and there is no other Name under Heaven by which we must be saved. When we put this all in its correct context, we have a remarkable statement about God, friends!

The most unwelcome message today, as it was to Israel in Bible times, is the voice of the genuine prophet. The religious world will simply not

tolerate a man who contradicts its philosophies and theories of Scripture and of life, in general. If you are going to be popular today, you're going to need to sing in unison with your crowd. God have mercy on the church pulpit today that is a broken sounding board, reverberating an incoherent echo of whatever the congregation is saying or wants to hear you say at any particular moment. May God have mercy on that preacher. The world today simply does not want to hear the voice of God! When that prophetic voice brings words of judgment, it brings about hate and discord and makes otherwise reasonable people to lose their sensibilities – not to mention becoming frustrated and vindictive....

II

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

~ God has prepared a light to the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel. We know that light is the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice the Bible always refers to them as Joseph and the mother of Jesus, never His mother and his father? Well, that's no literary accident. Mary paid a tremendous, awful price for bringing our Savior into this world. To have to stand there at the foot of the cross and watch Him die in that manner is simply not understandable by me – or you. The way it all happened profoundly moved Mary. The cross of Christ has moved billions of people since that day, too. Artists have painted the pictures and songwriters have sung about it; preachers have talked about it and teachers have taught on it. The

sympathy angle that we usually see from the artisan is reckless and dangerous, however. Christ didn't die to elicit sympathy from anyone, and in this Gospel, Jesus is going to speak directly at us and tell you not to weep for Him! He will say that from the cross, too, by the way.

Jesus is going to tell us to weep for ourselves! If you ever even thought about shedding a tear for Jesus, you need to save that one for yourself! The thing Christ wants from you is your faith - and obedience! Mary looked upon Christ on the cross not with sympathy - but with a broken heart! The prophecy that states 'a sword will pierce through thy own soul' was fulfilled at that time. Well, the thoughts of many hearts have certainly been revealed. In order for Christ to become the Savior of the world it was necessary that Mary endure this terrible and horrible experience. Now, let's keep this real: her suffering had nothing to do with HER salvation, but it did have everything to do with bringing Him into the world, raising Him and watching Him fulfill His Own prophecies. Of course, Jesus was Mary's Son, and that human relationship was unique to them; no one else has ever had a similar relationship or experience....

36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

~ We have another soloist warming up for another Christmas song now; and those people that believe there are ten lost tribes of Israel simply do not know that after the captivity, if we study the Bible correctly, we can locate every single one of the so called ten lost tribes. Here, we have the tribe of Asher! Evidently, Anna didn't get lost in the Bible shuffle because we have a record of her giving thanks! ~

37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

~ Luke skips completely over the account of Mary, Jesus and Joseph going to Egypt; and that is done for a very definite reason. The record of the wise men doesn't fit in this historical record, because it does not fit the ideal of the Greek race. The wise men asked where He was that had been born King! They were looking for a King and Matthew presented Him as that King, you may recall. Luke is presenting the Perfect Man and that purpose is carried out all the way through this Gospel. Each writer has his own very definite purpose and specific audience - and if we will just leave them alone and let them tell us what they want to say, then we'll learn a whole lot more than we will by listening to the critics, I assure you of that....

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

~ This is the summary report by a pediatrician regarding the Lord Jesus Christ in His bodily, human form. Naturally, Luke would want to examine the subject, because he was not only the obstetrician, but he is the attending family doctor; all into one! Well, Christ grew; and that means physically, mentally and spiritually. If you and I are ever to grow in those areas of our lives and in the grace and knowledge of our Savior and Lord, the Spirit of God will have to be upon us, too! That's the report we get from Dr. Luke.

Next, we have an incident that is only recorded in this Gospel and nowhere else. It's naturally fitting that the family doctor could lift out isolated instances from the adolescent years of Jesus. There is no other record than this one – period – from the time when He was born until the time when He began His earthly ministry. They are referred to as the silent years of Jesus. I do not consider them that, personally. There is one book, in particular, entitled *The Silent Years* by Dr. J Vernon McGee that would be a remarkable discovery for those interested in this time of the life of the Lord Jesus. Here, we see now the family is going up to Jerusalem. They went every year but here is one incident that Luke felt compelled to tell us all

about. Hoffman has a famous picture of this account with Jesus amongst the learned doctors of the day....

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

~ Jesus wasn't running around emitting some blinding light, as in the transfiguration; and He wasn't sporting a halo that made Him stand out in a crowd. Artists from the middle-age envisioned absurd conceptions of the Lord Jesus in His youth. As a baby, a boy, an adolescent and an adult – even on the cross – I think every single picture ever made or painted of Christ is as wrong and as far from the real physique and visage as one can possibly achieve. Jesus didn't look like any of those pictures, friends – you can just write that down! No, Jesus was a normal boy doing normal things. This was a normal family doing normal things as they went up to Jerusalem in companies....

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

~ Jesus was asking them questions they could not answer; and He was answering those questions for them. Jesus has the answers to your questions today, too friends. Only God can solve your problems. Have you ever stopped and taken the time to ask Jesus your questions? Has God asked you some questions of His Own that you cannot answer? I'm sure this crowd was a bit provoked, actually. His mother and Joseph were provoked because they ask Him why He had dealt with them this way. Read on to discover His answers to them. Jesus was about His Father's business; and that business was NOT carpentry. Jesus never even picked up a hammer in Jerusalem. The only thing Jesus ever built was in Nazareth. Of course, we're talking about His Heavenly Father! Sadly, they couldn't understand what He was saying to them. Let's notice this: they didn't understand Jesus. His mother, at this point, still did not fully recognize Who Jesus was or what her role in all of this was going to be, either....

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

~ Even the Lord Jesus was subject to His elders. The modern intelligentsia believes society should blindly defer to whatever new concept comes along. They argue that if we don't try new things, then how will we know if they work? Well, I haven't heard any of them say anything worth considering yet. Let's keep this real. They may be crammed full of book knowledge, but they have no experience with the realities and practicalities of life. I don't care what a man's IQ rating is – that is meaningless nonsense as a measure against experience. There are men with PhD degrees that have no sense whatsoever. Many of them can hardly brush their own teeth in the morning. Some D.D. degrees simply mean that man is dumb and

dumber. Man isn't trying anything new today because it's all been done before – and none of it works. What DOES work are the laws and precepts that we find here in the Word of God. Jesus Himself was subject to all of the commands. So, we can fill in a whole lot of those 'silent years' by saying Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in the favor of God – on all three levels of human development Jesus grew....

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

III

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

~ We're going to see that Luke is a stickler for accurate details. Six individuals are identified, bringing us to a definite and precise period of history. This can easily be dated from the secular historical viewpoint and there is a message and meaning in these names. Augustus was emperor when Jesus was born. Fifteen years later Tiberius will be on the throne. Tiberius was brilliant, but he was brutal; clever but cunning; inhumane and profane. He attempted world mastery and all of his puppets are listed. Annas and Caiaphas are listed last which tells us everything about the power structure of Rome over religion in that day! Annas was the real power behind the throne; however, Caiaphas was the front man and public face.

Under normal circumstances, the experience of John would have been for him to be serving in the temple in some capacity - but we find him out in the wilderness. The reason is because he despised what was going on in the temple. He renounced his priesthood and became a prophet! He reminded the people of someone that had been along before due to certain similarities in his methods. Most people thought he was Elijah and others thought he was the Messiah. He was so different that he also reminded

people of NO ONE - and that makes John the Baptist a paradoxical character, indeed. John was unusually unusual.

So, let's look back briefly. We saw the miraculous birth of John the Baptist which was attended by a visitation from the angel Gabrielle. His entire boyhood is entirely passed over and we pick right up here in chapter three with this ministry. We're looking at a prophet sent by God. He is preaching the baptism of repentance; and he is the last of the Old Testament prophets – the very – last. John the Baptist has walked right onto the pages of the New Testament from the Old Testament. We see a man who is a little shaggy; and he's sporting camel's hair – so – that can't be good. Dress, diet and everything about this man is different from any other man in the nation Israel. John received the same reception that all prophets receive – he was put to death....

2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

~ John's message was very strong. I wonder how many preachers have ever begun a service with verse seven. My estimation: not many - if any. I

must admit my own approach may or may not be the best approach, but it is the approach I use - and I am totally honest in everything I report to you, my beloved! I think we need that strong talk today at a new level. It is a strange and questionable way to begin a sermon with, “.... oh, generation of vipers, who hath warned thee....?” John’s message is a message of conviction and repentance. This is, actually, NOT the same message we give out today. Repentance is inextricably intertwined with faith today; and Paul said the Thessalonians turned to God FROM idols to serve the True and Living God. If you turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are going to HAVE to turn away from something. It simply couldn’t be otherwise. We have discussed repentance at length in this safari and I think this world seriously needs to repent. Many people think that the world must repent before it can accept the gift of eternal life; to which I reply: if you truly accept the gift of eternal life you’re going to turn away from the things of the world! ~

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves; we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

~ We don’t preach the Gospel quite that way – we preach grace - but – if you say that you have turned to Christ and you haven’t turned away from your sins, then you simply have not turned to Christ! If you aren’t interested in hearing what God might say next through a man who actually believes God, my friends, it is time to just stop reading the so-called Spiritual Safari; but I hope you keep reading! I also hope you will understand where I am coming from; I’m not trying to be ugly – I’m trying to be reasonable. The heart of our nation and the entire world has moved frighteningly afar off from God. The wise person will love this rebuke and the fool will despise it. John the Baptist is the one crying in the wilderness that Isaiah told us all about. Let’s just leave it at this: irrespective of whether you are wise or a fool....the prophecies have been and will be fulfilled exactly as the Word of God gives them ~

II