

Why Jesus? *We Need a Redeemer!*
Luke 2:36-38

Introduction: Why Jesus?

Good morning! Welcome to EBC... Today is the fourth week of the season the church has historically referred to as Advent. “Advent” is a Latin term which means “coming” or “arrival of someone”. For this year, we are focusing on the question, “Why Jesus?” Each week as we pose this question, we will look for answers from Luke’s gospel. As those of you are regular attenders of EBC know, we are going through the book of Acts together as a congregation, so this short break for Advent we want to keep our Lukan theme going by exploring how Luke introduces us to the Lord Jesus and answers the question as to “why Jesus”?

Summary of the Series: Why Jesus? King, Savior, Reconciler, Redeemer

Our first week, we asked, “Why Jesus?” and discovered that we need a king. Stan showed us how the Lord Jesus was prophesied to be the coming King of Israel, who would transfer us out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of light. The second week, I showed from Luke 2 how Jesus, the King, is also the savior. And salvation in the New Testament is built around the notion of exile – separation from God’s presence. However, with Jesus and through His death and resurrection, our spiritual exile has come to an end, and through faith and allegiance to Jesus, we can be brought back into a saving union with Him. Last week, Pastor Michael showed us how Jesus is also a reconciler. Due to sin, our relationship with God has been ruptured and broken; but through this child, miraculously born to a young virgin named Mary, we can be reconciled to God! This reconciliation is for all people – both Jews and Gentiles.

Today, we are going to see the prophecy of Jesus by the prophetess Anna. This baby Jesus is destined to not only be a king, savior, reconciler, but also the Redeemer of Israel and the nations. Let’s turn to the text together...

Luke 2:36-38: The Redeemer and Consoler of Israel

Meeting Anna - Luke 2:36-37 - Luke begins by describing this woman named Anna, who had been widowed for several decades. Luke describes her lineage perhaps as a way of legitimizing her credentials and testimony as a prophet. Given the short time she was married, it’s probable that she didn’t have any children, hence she spends her days praying and fasting at the temple. Now, in ancient Israelite society, Anna is the epitome of devotion: having lost her own earthly husband, she completely devotes herself to the Lord. So, what makes her so significant that Luke decides to include her in his account? Let’s go on to the next verse...

Luke 2:38 - She happens to come up that very hour when Mary and Joseph are there dedicating Jesus; she hears Simeon’s prophecy, and then in her own spirit (as a fellow prophet) she too announces that this child will be the one to redeem Israel. What I want to do now is spend some time answering some questions that this text raises.

First, why were Simeon and Anna hanging around the temple? Second, what is the “redemption” that she and others were waiting for concerning Israel? Finally, how does Jesus fulfill these expectations?

Why is the Temple so significant for Simeon and Anna?

To answer this question, we need to go back to the heart of what God’s overall purposes for His people are; what His plans for us are. In my opinion, in what is arguably the most boring book of the Bible (I say this tongue and cheek of course), we have the summary text which reveals to us the heartbeat of God, and the very reason why He makes all these covenant promises to Israel (and through Israel, to the rest of the Gentile world, which of course is us):

Leviticus 26...³ *“If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them...”*⁹ *“I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you.”*¹⁰ *You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new.*¹¹ *I will make my dwelling among you, and my*

soul shall not abhor you. ¹² And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. ¹³ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.”

It's a return to Genesis 1-2, when God walked in the garden with His people. How would this be done? With the building of the Temple. Listen to Solomon, the great king who finished the temple and dedicated it to Lord... 1 Kings 8:27-30, Listen to God's reply: 1 Kings 9:3 - In short, the temple signified the location of God's saving presence dwelling among the people. It was God's residence, His earthly home, so to speak.

But there are some important things to note! First, the temple in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus was not the same temple built under Solomon. It was actually the second, constructed during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. So, what happened to the first one? Well, it was demolished by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The destruction of the temple was a sign of God's judgement on the people for their idolatry and rejection of Him. Furthermore, in Ezekiel 11, the prophet describes the Spirit of God as departing from the temple (again as a sign of judgement).

Now, after exiles were allowed to come back into the land in 538, a second temple was constructed. However, there is no record in the Old Testament or other Second Temple Literature of the temple being filled with the presence of God in the same manner as the first. Furthermore, the history of the temple stretching from the post-exilic period up until the time of Jesus was filled with ups and downs and controversy. Later additions were made under King Herod, so it became known as "Herod's Temple", which, as you can imagine, caused lot of issues in the minds of many pious Jews. Some Jewish groups considered the temple completely corrupt and broke away from mainstream worship. Others, like the Pharisees, considered the current regime corrupt but weren't ready to give up on the temple itself yet.

In all of this, the current state of the temple meant that there was still more to come; unfulfilled prophecies awaiting fulfillment, and a greater work of God to be expected. Which leads us to the second question...

What is the "redemption" Anna is waiting for?

So, what was Anna waiting for exactly? Well, according to the prophets, Anna would have been waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem – which mean, the return of Yahweh to dwell in the Temple, the defeat of evil (Israel's oppressors), and establishment of the Messiah's kingdom under God. Let me give you one example:

Isaiah 52:7-10, Ezekiel 37:24-28 - So, in short, redemption for Israel consisted of three key ingredients:

Yahweh dwelling in the Temple

Defeat of evil

Establishment of the Messiah's kingdom

How is Jesus going to fulfill these expectations?

For those of you who know the story, the answers to these questions will not come as a surprise, but throughout the gospel of Luke we discover that Jesus...

Through His miraculous birth, Jesus (as both human and divine) embodies the presence of God dwelling among us.

Through His death on the cross, Jesus defeats (true) evil: sin, death, and Satan.

Through His resurrection, Jesus inaugurates the redeeming rule of God over His creation.

12-17-23

Pastor Grant Clay

Now, of course, Anna probably didn't know all of this when she announced to the people that Israel's redeemer had arrived. Most likely, she had passed away by the time of Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection, the giving of the Spirit, and formation of the church.

But what she did know – and what the Spirit revealed to her – was that the child being dedicated by this humble couple from Nazareth would be the source of Israel's redemption, the one which the prophets foretold and whom the people anticipated.

Main Point: Why Jesus? The redemption of Israel will come through the costly sacrifice and shocking resurrection of God's own Son, the Lord Jesus.

So, what might Anna's prophecy about the redemption of Israel mean for us today, as we gather here today a week before Christmas?

Application:

Main Point: *Why Jesus? The redemption of Israel will come through the costly sacrifice and shocking resurrection of God's own Son, the Lord Jesus.*

Luke 2:36-38: The Redeemer and Consoler of Israel

Introducing Anna Luke 2:36-38

Anna's Prophecy Luke 2:38

Application: Lessons on Redemption from the example of Anna *God calls us to "wait" on Him with humility, dependence, and devotion God always fulfills His promises.*

God's will & plan is to "redeem" His people through Jesus Christ - how about you?

Questions for Small Groups:

- 1) Why does Anna pray at the temple? (see Leviticus 26:11-13; 1 Kings 8:27-30; 9:3)
- 2) What is Anna looking forward to? (see Isaiah 52:7-10; Ezekiel 37:24-28)
- 3) How does Jesus fulfill these expectations for redemption?
- 4) What are you "waiting" on the Lord for right now? How does Anna's example encourage you?