

# OpenTheo

## Luke 2



### Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg provides an overview of Luke chapter 2, which details the birth of Jesus and his early life. Luke connects the events of Jesus' life to secular history and includes details such as the prophecy of his birth in Bethlehem and his presentation at the temple. Simeon's prophecy about Jesus' future and the visit by the wise men are also discussed. Overall, Gregg emphasizes the human nature of Jesus and the importance of understanding the cultural context of the time period.

## Transcript

So, we now turn to Luke chapter 2. The first chapter has been quite full and it's a long, very long chapter, chapter 1. We've had two visits of an angel to two different people announcing two different births and then we've read about one of those births, the birth of John the Baptist, but the birth of Jesus remains to be taken and that is what chapter 2 of Luke is about. And this will take us all the way, actually not just up to the birth of Jesus, but into his 12th year, although very little is going to be said about him in between the birth and the 12th year. In chapter 2 of Luke, we read, and it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. And 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 clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. Now, as Luke likes to do, he connects events in the story of Jesus with events in secular history.

He will tell us, for example, in chapter 3 that Jesus and John's ministry began in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar. However, before that, of course, Jesus was born and a different

man was Caesar. Caesar Augustus was the Caesar and he points that out.

It came to pass a decree went out from Caesar Augustus in those days that all the world should be registered. This was a census apparently for, in all likelihood, for taxation purposes. And we're told it happened when Quirinius was the governor of Syria.

Now, critics of the Bible have made a point of saying that Quirinius was not the governor of Syria at this time. He had been at a much earlier time, but he was not at this time. And therefore Luke was wrong, they say.

However, Luke has not been found to be wrong with any of his other references to the rules of anybody. He seemed to know what he was talking about and he makes many such references. This would be pretty much the one that is still very much open to challenge.

But there is some evidence that Quirinius was governor of Syria at two different times. He had two different terms. And we don't have much explicit from the secular historians about it.

If Luke says that Quirinius was the governor of Syria at this time, I'm going to go with Luke on that. After all, if we had simply one Roman historian who said it, we'd believe with him. Why not believe Luke? Luke is a historian as credible as the Roman historians.

It's an interesting thing that critics of the Bible don't give Luke as much credit as they give the secular historians. We believe many things about Roman history on the voice of a single historian, whether it be Tacitus or Suetonius or some other. I mean, different historians give different details about things and omit different details.

But if one historian says something is true, we generally take it as true. Well, Luke is a historian and he says it is true. So why would we be prejudiced against his testimony on this? After all, he's a Christian and Christians have convictions against lying.

I don't know how many Roman people who weren't Christians, pagans, had those convictions, but we certainly shouldn't assume that a Christian is less likely to tell the truth than a non-Christian. And therefore, this prejudice against the biblical authors, which is not extended to pagan authors, is merely gratuitous. And as a person who's just a fair-minded person, I'd say, well, Luke's testimony is as good as any other historian's testimony, especially when his testimony is better than that of other historians in many respects.

So why should we assume he's wrong here? The reason this is mentioned, this census, is because it had an impact on the birth of Jesus. His mother was pregnant and apparently very near the time of delivery. Joseph is introduced to us here as of the house of Judah, which we've been told that about him, of the house of David.

We were told that about him in the brief mention of him in chapter one, but he has not really been a character in the picture until now. Chapter one was all about Mary and Elizabeth and the angel, and Joseph, although he was mentioned as the one that Mary was betrothed to in chapter one, didn't play any role in those stories. But now we see he's quite accepting of the fact that his betrothed wife is now pregnant and he's going with her to Bethlehem, his town.

Now she was of that tribe too. She was also from David, but probably it was only the husband's genealogy that determined which town people should go to. Now Bethlehem is called the city of David because that's where David was born.

And so Jesus was born in the same town as his ancestor David was. And David in many respects is treated as a type of Christ and in this respect also. There is a prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is actually quoted in Matthew, because the wise men in Matthew come and ask Herod, you know, where's the king of the Jews born? And Herod consults the rabbis and they quote Micah chapter five and verse two, which says that Israel's king would come out of Bethlehem as David had.

And so it says they went to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David and he went to be registered with his family there. Now while they were there, and we don't know how long they were there, but it came time for Mary to have the baby. So she did have the baby.

The birth is passed over without much description. It just says she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. Now, when we think of a manger, which is a trough that animals eat from, farm animals eat from, we assume he was in a barn.

Sometimes. I mean, that might be our first impression. Traditions going back to, I think, as far as Justin Martyr say that Jesus was born in a cave, but commentators have often said that people used caves as shelter for their animals.

So, so Jesus could have been born in a cave that served as a animal shelter. And so there was a manger, a manger as a feeding trough for animals. And so most commentators are going to say that Jesus was born in a cave.

It says there was no room in the inn. And there is another possibility, maybe even a greater possibility that Jesus was born in a house because the Israelites had guest rooms, usually upstairs for guests that they would call inns. And many people would take in guests.

This doesn't, we shouldn't think of a commercial lodging place like a hotel or something like this. An inn is simply the guest room in somebody's house. And it may be, they could have even been at a relative's house as far as we know, but there was already someone

in the guest room.

There was no room for them in the inn, which would be the guest room in the house. And so they had to lodge downstairs in the area where the animals were. Now, almost all people had a few animals, maybe a cow for milk or a sheep.

We find this very commonly in the stories in the Old Testament that people had animals that were, they weren't necessarily ranchers, but they had a few animals and they would bring the animals into the house at night. And there was a lower section of the floor, a little bit like what we have here, probably a little lower, but we have two levels here. We have a split level and the lower level, which was at the entry to the house, was where the animals were brought in at night and they'd have feeding troughs there and so forth for them.

Then, you know, at the higher level, which might be only a foot higher, was the living quarters for the family. And then upstairs would be the inn where they'd accommodate guests and so forth. So that Jesus was put into a manger could mean he was in the lower region of the house where the animals were brought in and where they were fed.

And to say there was no room for him in the inn would simply mean the guest room of the house was already occupied. Perhaps the city was swelling with guests who had to come there to register to be taxed. And so someone else had been welcomed into the guest room before them.

So they had to be, you know, in the manger there, the area where the animals were brought into the house out of the weather at night. So it doesn't matter a great deal. I mean, no theological issues are at stake here, but it does change the way we picture things.

So were they out in a barn away from people or were they just in the living quarters really of some people, maybe even relatives of theirs that they were staying with, but they had to lay Jesus in the manger since they didn't have private quarters, those already being occupied. The whole picture from, you know, the Christmas plays about the innkeeper, you know, he's got a full house, he's got a hotel six or something like that, but all the rooms are full and there's this innkeeper, but then there's always the innkeeper's wife. She's always really kind hearted and she's, the innkeeper is really cruel and heartless toward this pregnant couple.

But the innkeeper's wife, she's got pity on him. So she says, oh, we can find a place somewhere out in the barn for them or something. That's all fiction.

I mean, there's no innkeeper in this story. There's no innkeeper's wife in this story. There's not even a barn in the story.

There's just an inn, which in Israel would usually refer to a guest room in someone's

house. Verse eight, now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around about 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 shall be for all people. For there is born to you in 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 clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men. Or some translators think this should be better rendered on earth, peace toward men of goodwill, which is a possible rendering.

So it's not so much that there's just goodwill toward all men, but men of goodwill, good hearted men, you know, the elect, the only people who can be good hearted, peace toward them and not toward others. However, the angel has already said the good news is for all people. This is good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

Giving the impression that the gospel is good news for everybody. And so God's goodwill toward men, his desire that men come into peace that is in reconciliation with him is what is the core of the gospel. And so it does say in verse 11 that Jesus is born a savior who is Christ the Lord.

Now the reason I point that out is that all those titles, savior, Christ or Messiah and Lord are his from birth. He did not acquire these statuses, you know, at some point in his life at his baptism or something like that. I say that because there are some people who have always suggested that Jesus was not the Messiah or the Christ until his baptism.

In fact, New Age people say the Christ essence came upon him at his baptism and he's not really unique because everyone can have this Christ consciousness. They're all Christ. But they're using the word Christ differently than of course the Bible is.

The word Christ is simply in Greek Christos, it's the Greek word for Messiah. Mashiach in Hebrew means the anointed one. Christos in Greek means the anointed one.

So Christ is simply the New Testament word for Messiah, which would be the Old Testament word for it. And Jesus is the Messiah and was from his birth. This day is born a savior who is Christ who is the Lord.

Now this also makes it very clear there's no distinction between savior and Lord. Jesus holds all these offices and he does so from birth. Therefore, you could never accept Jesus as savior but not as Lord because there is no Jesus who is a savior and not a Lord.

Only an imaginary Jesus would be a savior but not a Lord. Accepting Jesus as people sometimes use that term would have to mean accepting the real Jesus who is savior and Lord and Messiah and therefore there's no opportunity to accept a savior without accepting a Lord. If you haven't accepted a Lord, you haven't accepted Jesus.

Therefore, you haven't gotten a savior either. So his status as the Lord, the King, the Messiah, anointed one really speaks of his kingship. He's a King, a Lord, Savior, he's all those things and those are all the things that Israel was looking for and the shepherds, lowly persons that they were, are among the first to find out.

Very possibly they are the first to find out and in order to make sure they would find out, they have angels sent to them to announce it to them. Now why would the angels announce it to shepherds in Bethlehem and not to other classes of people? I don't really know. One thing we do know is the Jews really frowned on shepherds in general.

They were dirty and smelly people and they were kind of outcasts from society. So this might be one of those many cases where even at his birth, Jesus is reaching out through his angelic messengers to the outcasts. Jesus often associated with those that were outcasts and that may be why shepherds are chosen or it may simply be because David had been a shepherd in Bethlehem himself and Jesus was the new David, the new shepherd king.

So persons of that profession were of the same profession David had been in. They were sort of his partners a thousand years removed in the same business in the same town. But that still doesn't explain everything.

Those are connections that can be made but it's not clear exactly why God chose that these shepherds should know. But one thing is very possible. It's because these particular shepherds, maybe not all shepherds, but these particular shepherds must have been pious.

They must have been men who had faith in God, people who were part of the faithful remnant of Israel because God doesn't cast his pearls before swine or give what is holy to dogs and many of the people in Israel were what Paul would later call dogs. In Philippians he says, beware of dogs. He means the circumcision party.

These were not dogs. These were not swine. These were no doubt though lowly in status in society, some of those who were like Jesus' own parents, poor but pious people.

And I'd also point out this, that we usually think of the angels singing and it's been pointed out to me by some in the past few years and it's really surprising really that we never read of angels singing. Not in Revelation, not here. They say things.

We're not told that they said them accompanied to music or in a tune. Now I have a hard time dislodging from my mind the picture of angels singing these things. I mean I have

to say I still picture it as them singing and in Revelation when there's all this praise going on from the 24 elders and the innumerable angels and so forth, it really only says they said these things.

It doesn't say they sang them, which is interesting. But I just point that out here just as a technical point. This is one of those places we usually picture the angels singing but it doesn't say they sang.

It says they were praising God and saying these words and certainly you could do that with or without music. So it says in verse 15, 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 still lying in a manger.

So it must have been probably the same night he was born or very soon afterwards because they hadn't even relocated his bed to another place. Now when they had seen him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this child. That is they broadcast around them what the angels had said and therefore Jesus was declared to be Lord and Christ and Savior to apparently all the people in the region by these shepherds.

Whether it was believed or not completely, I don't know. But it does say, well, all who heard marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. That doesn't mean they believed them but they thought it was rather astonishing news.

But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Now that tells us something about Mary's character because most, I'll tell you, most mothers, if their baby is born and a bunch of people show up at the door and say, you know, we're here because some angels appeared to us and told us all about your son and he's like the Messiah and he's the Lord and God sent a multitude of angels to declare it to us, mom's going to be kind of proud of her baby, you know, when she hears that kind of news. For her to just keep it in her heart and think about it rather than to go out and blab about it would be a pretty self-controlled mom, especially a Jewish mom.

And so, you know, that she kept it in her heart instead of going out and boasting to everybody is really, tells us how reticent she was, how probably of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price, Peter said, she apparently had. And so then the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as was told them. Now, you might say, well, if the whole town of Bethlehem had been informed that the Messiah was born and he was identified for them, how could he grow up without people knowing him all the time to be the Messiah? And the answer, no doubt, is that in between this time and his adult life, he disappeared for a while.

We don't read it in Luke, but in Matthew, we find that Herod tried to kill him and his family had to flee to Egypt. Now, there are a few who believe that this flight to Egypt and return to Egypt occurred in the first 40 days of Jesus' life because at 40 days old, a Jewish boy had to go to the temple and be dedicated with certain accompanying sacrifices, especially the firstborn son. And we read about that dedication of Jesus in the temple in the following section here.

First of all, on the eighth day, Jesus is circumcised as we see in verse 21. When the eight days were completed for his circumcision of the child, his name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. So likewise as John was seen to be named at the time of his circumcision, so Jesus is named at the time of his circumcision.

Now Jesus was coming to bring a new covenant, a new covenant that would actually do away with the ritual of circumcision. Circumcision is a very painful thing to go through. I don't remember it because I was a baby when it happened to me.

I was an adult when my sons were circumcised and I could tell they were not enjoying it. In fact, when my first son was circumcised, I wanted to be the hero and stand with him and comfort him, but his screaming and his crying and so forth was so hard for me to take. By the time it came time for my second son to be circumcised, I let my wife take him into the doctor.

I waited out in the car. My wife didn't have any, you know, sensitivity about that because she probably couldn't imagine it. I could.

And it's a very awful thing for a child to go through. In fact, there's many people very much against circumcision. There's a whole movement wanting to abolish circumcision in modern times.

They consider it brutality to a child and it certainly is a painful thing. But we have to remember that though it's painful, it's a painful thing that people don't remember after it's done very long. I mean, it's actually the eighth day of the child's life is the time when it would be the least painful because, as you may have heard somewhere, vitamin K in the blood is at its highest level in child's life on the eighth day.

It's lower on the seventh and lower on the ninth, but on the eighth day it peaks. And vitamin K is an element in the blood that actually promotes healing and some say diminishes pain of injuries. So it may not hurt the baby as much on that day as other days, but still, I mean, hurting a baby at all seems cruel and unusual punishment, but it was something God commanded.

And frankly, I have no objection to the fact that I was circumcised as a baby. I don't remember it at all. I probably didn't remember it a week later, but I don't even



remember a week later.

I don't remember what I knew a week later because I don't remember any of that time, the first few weeks of birth. So pain, you know, even if it's excruciating, if it doesn't do permanent harm and you're healed from it, it's really something that in the long run leaves you with a condition that may be necessary or desirable, though you had to go through pain to get there. Like the story I've told many times about having to break my son's arm because he had broken it and it took too long to get the cast out.

They had to re-break the arm. Well, that's painful, but it had to be done. Otherwise, he would have had a crooked arm the rest of his life.

So, I mean, sometimes excruciating pain is necessary to reach a certain result. Now, of course, the baby's health is not enhanced necessarily by circumcision, although some claim it is, and maybe it is. But what is enhanced is that the baby stays in a covenant relationship under the old covenant with God as a result of being circumcised, and being uncircumcised would be to be cut off from God.

That's what God told Abraham. So, it's better for a baby to be in the covenant than not. And so, even though it's painful, lots of things that are worthwhile are painful to get to, but fortunately, God mercifully had it done to a baby so that the baby wouldn't remember the pain.

Abraham, on the other hand, and his son Ishmael had to be circumcised when Abraham was an old man and Ishmael was like 12 or 13. And so, that would be something to remember. We had an African student once in our school from Kenya, and he said that in his tribe, circumcision of a young man was a rite of passage.

And he had to be publicly circumcised. I don't know at what age, 12 or something like that. They didn't actually know what age he was.

But in any case, he remembered it, you know, I don't remember it for me. And Jesus, I'm sure, didn't remember it either. But he did have to go through those painful things that all Israelites had to go through.

He was born under the law, it says in Galatians 4, and he had to keep the law. But because he did, we don't. We have been circumcised, Colossians 2 says, with the circumcision of Christ.

Now, this either means the spiritual circumcision that Christ performs on us, or his own circumcision is counted as ours, because we are in him, just like his death is counted as ours, and his resurrection is counted as ours. So, his circumcision also may be counted as ours. So, we don't have to be circumcised, because we got his, because he went through it.

It says that in Colossians 2, 11. It's a little ambiguous, but it says, in him, you also were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Now, I have to say, admittedly, I think this sounds more like a circumcision that Christ performs on us.

But he could be saying, we don't have to be circumcised now, because we were circumcised by Christ's circumcision. And we'll just have to leave that an unanswered question. But Christ's circumcision is mentioned here, and I don't believe it's mentioned in Matthew at all, or in other places in the Bible.

So, Jesus was circumcised. And verse 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. These days would be, what, 31 days or 32 days after the circumcision.

So, on the 40th day of his life, he had to be brought to the according to the law, 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. That means every firstborn child had to be presented to God because of the system set up at the Exodus where on Passover, the firstborn children were spared by the mercy of God.

Therefore, they were supposed to commemorate that they belonged to God by being dedicated by this ceremony in the temple. This was taught in Exodus 13, yeah, Exodus 13, verses 2 and 12 and 15. It says, And to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

Now, that's Leviticus 12.2. The sacrifice was offered with the presentation of every male child, not just the firstborn. The firstborn was also dedicated to the Lord in a special sense, but every male child on the 40th day of his life had to be presented in the temple and a certain sacrifice offered. But Leviticus says it should be a lamb, but it says if the family is too poor to sacrifice a lamb, they can either choose two turtle doves or two pigeons, which would be very cheap.

Virtually anyone could buy two pigeons, though a lamb would be considerably more spendy. It says that Mary and Joseph offered the poor person's option, which suggests that they were poorer than average. They were apparently very poor because most Jews were fairly poor and could still offer a lamb, but they must have been exceptionally poor because they had to go for the alternative offer to the very poor, a pair of two turtle doves or two young pigeons.

Verse 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.

So he was kind of like a prophet, but there weren't any prophets, but really that God sent

to Israel between Malachi and John the Baptist of the sort that they were. But I believe that throughout the intertestamental period, God still spoke to some individuals. He didn't make them spokesmen to Israel like a prophet, but he spoke to them.

And this man was a spiritual man. And whether this means that God had selected him to put the spirit on him or whether he had cultivated through his own piety, a unique kind of relationship with God that most Jews didn't have. And with the result that he was filled with the Holy Spirit or the spirit came upon him.

And in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit did come upon prophets, but again, not as a permanent thing. He seemingly came and went. And so with this man, Simeon, I'm sure, says, 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, apparently led by the Holy Spirit. Notice how much there's emphasis on the Holy Spirit in Luke's gospel here. He came by the spirit into the temple.

And when the parents brought 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. And Joseph and his mother, that is Jesus' mother, marveled at those things which were spoken of him.

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, behold, this child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign which will be spoken against. Yes, a sword will pierce your soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. So apparently Mary and Joseph went into the temple just to do the same thing every parent did with a 40-day-old child and were no doubt expecting to remain fairly anonymous.

But here's this man who's in touch with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit reveals to him, actually leads him to go into the temple and points out that Jesus is the Messiah. And this, of course, was another encouragement, as we see to Joseph and Mary, that this was true, although they didn't really probably have any serious doubts, but that some total stranger who is no doubt reputed throughout Jerusalem as the man that God had told, you know, the Messiah is going to come before this man dies. So they're keeping their eyes on him, no doubt.

And here he comes in, he says, this is the one, you know, obviously the Holy Spirit showed him that Jesus is the one and he prophesied this and thank God that God's promise to him had been fulfilled, that he did get to see the Messiah before he died. And it's interesting that, unlike Zacharias, who prophesied some similar kinds of things, Simeon actually went so far as to say, in verse 32, that Jesus would be a light to bring

revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel. Now, this is, of course, a theme that comes up from time to time in the Old Testament, but was not very well grasped by the Jews of Jesus' day.

They still thought themselves to be very special and the Gentiles not special to God. But remember how Zacharias had prophesied that the day spring from on high had visited, which means the day was breaking, the new day was dawning. This is what Isaiah said, I alluded to this in our last lecture, but Isaiah 60 had made this prophecy.

At the beginning of Isaiah 60, it says, Now, it says the Gentiles shall come to your light when this glory rises upon you. And so, Simeon says a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles. Gentiles are going to come to the light.

And he says, and the glory of your people Israel. Notice that light and glory in these passages are used interchangeably. And so, this is simply saying that Jesus is fulfilling these Isaiaic prophecies.

But many Jews who looked for the Messiah didn't think of him in terms of one who'd give light to the Gentiles, not because the Old Testament didn't say it, but as with most generations, there's some things in the Bible that get under attention, you know, less attention than others, maybe because they're not popular. And so, this man knew and was focused on the fact that Jesus would eventually reach the Gentiles as well as Jews. The Pharisees of Jesus' day didn't really have that as part of their thinking.

So, Joseph is marveling again, and then Simeon actually speaks to Mary and tells her that she will experience great pain. A sword will pierce through her soul. Most people think this is probably fulfilled when Mary at the foot of the cross actually got to see Jesus pierced with a spear and water and blood running out of him, but she no doubt felt that as if it was her own heart being pierced and maybe what he's referring to.

But he said this child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign which will be spoken against. So, even though this is the Messiah, Israel will not all have the same response to him. Simeon knows this by revelation.

He probably didn't live to see Jesus' adult ministry because he was probably too old, but he knew, and he warned Mary, you know, you got the Messiah, you think all Israel is going to rejoice about this? They've been looking for the Messiah. You think they're just going to carry your son on, you know, on their shoulders to the throne room and drive out the Romans? It's not going to be that simple. Some are going to rise and some are going to sink.

Some are going to speak against him, and you'll have occasion to be pierced very deeply in your own heart and your own soul also. Now, the wording of this statement in verse 34, to my mind, is reminiscent of Daniel 12. The word rising, again, behold the child is

destined for the fall and rising.

The word rising there is the word anastasis in the Greek. It's the word for resurrection. Now, he's not talking, I think, about physical resurrection.

I don't think he's talking about a literal resurrection anymore. He's I think metaphors. For some people will be saved, come to life through Christ, and others will fall deeper into their rebellion and perhaps fall under the Roman sword in 70 AD, but there's going to be a division in Israel because of your son.

Some are going to experience falling and opposing him. Others are going to rise and benefit from him. Remember, Jesus said in John 5 in verse 24, here's my words and believes in him that sent me, has passed from death unto life.

They've experienced a spiritual rising from the dead. They've passed from death unto life, he said in John 5, 24. And so, that is probably what Simeon is referring to, those who will experience a rising while others will experience a sinking or a falling.

And the reason I said it reminds me Daniel 12 is because it says in verse 2, Daniel 12, many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. Another image reminiscent of resurrection. Some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

So, here's a rising of many. It says many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. And Simeon said many will rise and many will fall.

While the wording isn't exact, the reason I see a connection here is because while it is much more common for Daniel 12 to be applied by commentators and preachers to the resurrection of the last day, I don't think it fits naturally there because the resurrection of the last day will include all, not many. Jesus said all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of life, some to the resurrection of condemnation in John 5, 28 and 29. The final resurrection will include all who are in the graves, but Daniel only speaks of many of those who sleep in the dust.

Now, sleeping in the dust can easily be a metaphor for being spiritually sleeping. Ezekiel saw dry bones, dead, reassembled, come back to life. It was a picture of resurrection, but he said it was really Israel in Babylon said our bones are dried, our hope is gone, and he's going to restore the nation.

So, this resurrection imagery in Ezekiel 37 is really about the restoration of the nation. So, resurrection imagery is sometimes used symbolically, and the thing here is that I am convinced by factors I do not have time to go into right now that Daniel 12.1 is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD when it says at that time Michael shall stand up the great prince who stands to watch over the sons of your people and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that time. Now, that's sort of what Jesus said about the trouble that would come on that generation.

He said there'll be great tribulation such as not been since the world began neither shall be afterward, and yet he went on to say this will happen in this generation. I believe he was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, and so here also I think it is, especially when you follow chapter 11 up to the point that it has come. I think Daniel 12 is not talking about the end of the world, but about the end of Israel, the end of Jerusalem, and therefore many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Although it sounds like it's talking about a resurrection from the dead, it may be talking rather about the spiritual divergence of people who've been slumbering before John, the Baptist, preached, but who came to life. Some of them came to Christ and everlasting life. Some came to, they woke up to the destruction that was coming upon them, and it's possible that Simeon's words, speaking of many, you know, rising and falling, resurrecting and falling, could be somehow alluding to the same thing that Daniel's talking about.

Now, in verse 36 it says, Now there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher, and she was of great age. She had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, and this woman was a widow of about 84 years. Now, this either means she was 84 years old, or that she had been a widow for 84 years.

The language could go either way. So, if she had lived seven years with her husband, let's say she was widowed at age 20, if she'd been a widow for 84 years, she was like 104 years old, which is not impossible. But many think, I think commentators would usually go with, she is probably saying that she was a woman of 84 years, meaning she was 84 years old.

In any case, that's quite old for the time, especially. People in that first century weren't living 900 years like they were before the flood. They died usually at similar ages to modern people.

So, she was very old, and it says, Now, she couldn't have fasted all the time, day and night, or she'd starve to death, but she apparently regularly fasted and regularly prayed and was there all times of the day in the temple. Definitely part of the faithful remnant of Israel, like Simeon was. Like Mary and Joseph were.

And she came in at that instant, apparently at the instance that Simeon was making this prediction, and she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. That would be, of course, the faithful remnant who were looking for redemption. She knew them.

She knew all of them. She was probably a relatively small remnant, and she was a prophetess, so they probably highly respected her, and she overheard Simeon making these prophecies. We don't know if she got a prophecy, too.

She was a prophetess, but we don't read of her getting a revelation. She came in while Simeon was speaking, and when she heard what he was saying, she may have, on the basis of Simeon's testimony, she may have recognized Jesus for who he was. But she didn't keep it to herself.

She went and told a lot of other people. So, when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own city, Nazareth, and the child grew and became strong in spirit and filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. Now, that's a summary of the next, oh, probably 12 years in all likelihood, because we have a story about him when he's 12 years old that follows this.

There's a bit of chronology to consider, although I don't know if we can make absolute determinations about it in verse 39. When they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, apparently meaning these ceremonies done at the temple when he was 40 days old. After that, it says they returned to Galilee to their own city, Nazareth.

So, you get the imagery of them coming down for the birth of the baby, staying in the area till the 40th day of his life, then going back to Nazareth. But this raises questions about Matthew's chronology, because Matthew says that when Jesus was a baby, the wise men came looking for him, and they found him. But when they did not report back to Herod, Herod got mad and sent soldiers to kill all the babies two years old and younger in Bethlehem.

But not before an angel warned Joseph, and Joseph took Jesus down to Egypt to safety. And while they were in Egypt, the length of time is not told us, Herod died. And when Herod died, an angel told Joseph it's safe to go back.

So, they went back initially to Judea. But they didn't settle there. Instead, because Archelaus was there, a ruler they didn't trust, and because an angel warned him about it, they went back up to Galilee.

Which means that Matthew has, between the birth of Jesus and the family moving back to Galilee, sounds like a lot more than 40 days. This tells us after they fulfilled these legal requirements, which was on the 40th day of Jesus' life, they went back to Nazareth. But Matthew has, after the birth of Jesus, the visit of the wise men, the flight to Egypt, the death of Herod, the return from Egypt, the consideration of possibly settling in Judea, but an angel warning them to go back to Nazareth, that to Egypt and back and the wise men and all that.

Did that happen in those 40 days? Most people think not. But there is a possibility, and there are a few that I've encountered who feel that all of that in Matthew took place between the circumcision of Jesus and the 40th day, you know, 30-something days later. Now, it may only take, I don't know, a week to travel to Egypt by foot from there.

I don't really know how long it would take. But if they made the trip, round trip, in 30 days or so, they would have been not settling in Egypt for very long at all. They would have just gotten down there and news would get to them that Herod had died and then come back again.

That is a possibility. That is one chronological harmony that has been attempted, and it can be done. Technically, it could be done.

Barely, you know. But that would mean that the wise men coming and the flight to Egypt and all that that Matthew records happened before these last things that we just discussed about Simeon and Anna and the temple and so forth, before Jesus was 40 days old. The family had left after his circumcision and come back before his 40th day, which is pretty fast movement and a lot to happen in that time.

But there were a lot of things happening in rapid succession here, and it's possible all that did happen in that time. A more common chronology is to suggest that this summary statement, when they had done all that was required by the law, they returned to Nazareth, doesn't mean they returned immediately afterward, but when they did return to Nazareth, it was after they had done all the things the law required. But they had in fact stayed even longer in Bethlehem or in the region, and that it was after these 40 days that the wise men came and left, and Jesus and his family had to flee to Egypt and come back and then go to Galilee.

If so, then Luke is really compressing things. He jumps immediately from the 40th day of Jesus' life to after all these other events when they go back to Nazareth. But that's not unheard of either.

The narratives in the Bible sometimes do that. They compress it and they don't say everything that happened in between. In fact, we're going to see that very clearly in Luke 4, because after the temptation of Jesus, which is in the first 13 verses of Luke 4, verse 14 says, then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.

But we know from the Gospel of John that Jesus didn't return to Galilee right after the temptation. Instead, he went back to where John was baptizing according to John chapter 1, and he went to Cana in Galilee briefly for a wedding, but he came back down to Jerusalem to meet with Nicodemus, and then he actually began his Galilean ministry some months after his baptism and after his temptation, which John's Gospel records several events between the temptation of Jesus and his Galilean ministry. But Luke just passes right over it without mention after the temptation is, then Jesus went to Galilee.

And so it's not unheard of for a lot of events to be left out of the narrative and for the narrative to be compressed. So I guess if what this is all about, what I'm saying is, where do we fit in Matthew's narrative about the wise men and the flight to Egypt? Some say we can fit it in before these ceremonies in Jerusalem, though that requires a lot of fast



movement, but it can be done. Others feel that there's some events between this 40th day and the return to Galilee, which Luke is just passing over without mentioning, and that's possible.

So the wise men's visit and so forth and the flight to Egypt and coming back could all have happened in this case between the first half of 39 and the last half of 39, all those events of Matthew 2 occurred. Could be. We don't have to solve it, but knowing that it can be solved and it can actually be solved more than one way is just something to keep in your mind.

So we have this summary statement about Jesus growing up in his childhood in verse 40, and one particular incident in his childhood is given in Luke, which isn't the case in any other gospel. Luke's the only person who gives us anything of Christ's life between his birth, essentially, and his adult ministry, and it's this one incident when he was 12 years old. In verse 41, it says his parents went to Jerusalem every year for the Feast of Passover, and when he was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the Feast.

When they had finished the days, as they returned, the boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and his mother did not know it. But supposing him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey and sought him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking him.

Now, so it was that after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the people, and all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. So when they saw him, they were amazed, and his mother said to him, Son, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought you anxiously. And he said to them, Why is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? By the way, that last line, I must be about my father's business, can also be translated, I must be in my father's house.

And some translations rendered that way. It's interesting, the same words can be rendered that way. But they did not understand his statement, which he spoke to them.

Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them. But his mother kept all these things in her heart, and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and favor with God and men. Now, I can only make a few comments about this.

I'm sure this story is very familiar. It says that his family went every year to Jerusalem for the Passover, but it sounds like when he was 12, it might have been the first time he accompanied them. It says because when he was 12, they went, and Jesus went with him.

He might have gone all the other years too, but a Jewish boy did not have to go to

Jerusalem for the festivals until he was 12. All men and boys over 12 had to make these trips three times a year, were expected to, for the festivals. It may be since Jesus is now 12, it's the first time he's been made to make that trip.

It's about a week's journey on foot from where they lived in Nazareth to Jerusalem, and it's not an easy trip. It's very possible that he had been left home on the other occasions or not. It's also possible this was the occasion of his bar mitzvah.

Now, these days, Jewish boys are bar mitzvahed at age 13, but it may be that they were doing it at age 12. I don't even know if the bar mitzvah ceremony was in existence then, but today Jews consider a boy a man at age 13, but it seems like in the Bible it may have been age 12. In any case, Jesus may have made his first trip as an adult to the temple at this time.

He didn't live very near there, and he was apparently quite taken with it. He understood to be his father's house. He was about his father's business.

Now, what was that business? He was talking to and teaching and asking questions among the leaders. Now, how he came to be misplaced by his parents has puzzled people. Why would parents leave their 12-year-old son unattended and assume he was with them when they'd travel a whole day back toward home? Well, you have to realize Jesus, I'm sure, was very precocious.

The story indicates that he was wise and no doubt mature above his years. It's very possible that they left him to his own reconnaissance a great deal. They probably treated him very much like a young adult rather than a little boy.

Also, we know that the family groups from towns, since all the towns had large numbers of people going to Jerusalem for the feast, family groups would travel together. And it says they discovered as they'd come a day's journey toward home that he wasn't in the company. They apparently thought that he was probably playing with the cousins or others in the traveling group, in the caravan.

And it wasn't until nighttime when they, like responsible parents, started looking for their son. Well, you've got to get him together with the family, but he wasn't there. So they hurried back to Jerusalem.

And it says they found him on the third day. I think probably the third day from the beginning of this story rather than after looking for him for three whole days in Jerusalem. I doubt, frankly, Jerusalem isn't that big.

You wouldn't, it wouldn't take three days to scour every corner of Jerusalem probably. At least the Jerusalem I saw when I went there is pretty small. And so I think it means that the first day is they're traveling away from Jerusalem without him.

The second day would be the day they had to travel a day's journey back. So they'd already been two days away from him. And then the next day, the third day, they found him in the temple.

Now what's interesting about this is how it describes his interview with the teachers in the temple. It's very interesting because it says he was sitting in the midst of the teachers, in verse 46, both listening to them and asking them questions. It doesn't say anything about him answering the questions.

He'd listen to them and ask questions about what they're saying. But it says all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers. So apparently he'd listen, he'd ask them something, then he'd give his answer.

And they were astonished at the wisdom of his answers. Now my guess is he was asking them hard questions like he did when he was an adult. Like, well, what do you say about the Messiah? Whose son is he? Well, he's David's son.

Well then why did David call him Lord? I mean, he'd asked them a question and their answer was inadequate. So he'd give an answer that was even better than theirs. I mean, this kind of thing was probably what was going on.

And that for probably three days. And they were astonished. I don't know where he slept at night.

Maybe he didn't sleep. But he was in the temple when they found him and he said, where do you expect to find me? What do you think I'd be? I'm at home in my dad's house, you know. I'm at the work bench at my father's business.

I'm about my father's business. Now it might sound like he was being impertinent. And maybe he even was a little bit.

But maybe it's because Mary was being a little impertinent. She was kind of scolding him. And really it's the parent's responsibility to know whether their kids are safe when they go on a journey.

You know, they traveled without checking. They trusted him and they felt like maybe he had shown himself not trustworthy by not leaving with the family. We don't know how all that transpired, but they were a little upset and scared.

Of course, parents get scared when they can't find their kids. A little exasperated. But Jesus said, well, why did you have to look for me? I'm where I gotta be.

I'm about my father's business. I'm in my father's house. But they didn't understand the statement which he spoke, which is interesting because it sounds like a fairly straightforward statement.

However, notice that Mary said, your father and I have been seeking for you. Now, Joseph was not Jesus' father, but we can see that as a stepfather, Joseph had come to be regarded or related to as a father. And it must have been very natural through Jesus.

I have to always refer to Joseph as his father and for Mary to refer to Joseph that way. And so she says, your father and I have been, we're sick. We've been looking for you.

He says, well, I've been at my father's house the whole time, but a different father. I've been in God's house. I've been doing God's business.

He's my father. This statement where Jesus refers to God as his father may not have been understood by them because it was not at all customary for Jews to call God father. It became the most common thing for Jesus in his ministry.

In fact, it's one of the unique features of Jesus' ministry. Rabbis didn't call God father. Jesus did all the time.

Jesus spoke as if he was the father's son. Rabbis didn't talk that way. That'd be impertinent.

And therefore, when Jesus, probably for the first time in his life, on this occasion referred to God as his father, Mary and Joseph, of course, knew he was the son of God, but probably that terminology had never been used probably in the family. When father was spoken of in the family, it was Joseph that was talked about. And now he says, I've been at my father's house all this time.

I've been in my father's business. And they didn't quite understand what he said. Now, these, remember, they were fairly probably uneducated peasants.

Joseph was a craftsman. He'd learned to do a craft at his father's knee, no doubt, but he hadn't been bookish. These were not intellectuals who were raising Jesus.

And so when he made a statement that seems like they should have been able to put that together easy enough, it says they didn't understand what he spoke. But notice this. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them.

Interesting, he was obviously smarter than they were. He's even smarter than the educated teachers. Even the masters of Israel were marveling at his wisdom and his parents didn't even understand a simple statement he made.

Here he is a prodigy, certainly, submitting to these parents who are far from prodigies. They're far from geniuses, but he submits to them anyway. Why? Because that's what children are supposed to do.

That's how a child submits to God, by obeying his parents, because God said to. And of course, the idea of submission to other people is very unpopular in our modern

egalitarian society. The idea that parents can really order their kids around or that wives should submit to their husbands is very unpopular.

And it's almost like people feel like, well, if a wife has to submit to her husband, is that acting like he's better than her? No. Jesus submitted to his parents and they weren't better than him. He submitted because that's what God says to do.

You submit to the persons God tells you to submit to and that's your act of obedience to God. It's not an assessment of your own capabilities or the respective capabilities of the person you're submitting to. This is just a matter of God has set up a certain order.

So Jesus submitted that order. He submitted to his father by submitting to his parents here. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.

And I might just point out that where it says he increased in wisdom, stature means height. So he grew up from being a little boy to being a man, but he also increased in wisdom, which is interesting because you might think, well, he is, these teachers were marveling at him because of course he's God. He's smarter than everybody.

He's got infinite knowledge. No wonder he could dazzle the teachers. But he didn't have infinite knowledge.

That increased as he grew older. He increased in wisdom. He wasn't omniscient.

He wasn't omnipresent. He wasn't invisible. God is all those things, but Jesus wasn't.

And while we acknowledge that Jesus was God, we acknowledge that he was God in the flesh. And in the flesh means in a human form. And that means that he came to earth in a human womb and as a baby, and he didn't know stuff.

God was in there, but the mind of Jesus had to learn just like other babies. He had to learn how to speak. He wasn't born, you know, giving the Sermon on the Mount.

I mean, the first day of his life, when the shepherds came, they didn't hear the Sermon on the Mount from him. He couldn't talk. He didn't even know who his parents were.

He didn't know who the shepherds were. He didn't know more than a baby knows. He was definitely precocious for a child, and by age 12, he was much smarter than the average.

But that's not necessarily supernatural. There are 12-year-olds that are smarter than college professors. Sometimes that's not very hard.

Sometimes there might be five-year-olds that are smarter than college professors. I'm not sure, but not the college professors in this room, but then some college professors I've known. But the thing is that the wisdom that Jesus exhibited was not supernatural

omniscience, because after this, he still increased in wisdom through the rest of his life.

So he had to learn, and he was a man. He was God in a human nature, in a human body, and the human part had to grow up and learn just like any other human being. And that's the only summary statement of Jesus' childhood we have in the Bible.

And the rest, of course, takes place after he's an adult. So from age 12 to age 30, really, because we're told in chapter 3, verse 23, that he was about 30, we have no information about his life. And many have speculated about it, but that's just what they've done, is speculated.

And almost all the speculations are fabulous and unlikely to be true. Jesus traveling to Nepal and India and Egypt and learning the magic from the wise men and so forth. This is what New Agers say Jesus did during those 18 years.

The Bible indicates he was a carpenter, and probably those 18 years were occupied with being a carpenter. And so he just grew up in his hometown. We have no reason to believe he traveled internationally and learned from the wise men elsewhere.

If he did, he certainly didn't agree with them, because his teachings didn't agree with the teachers of the Egyptians or the Indian or Chinese or anything like that. So I think that New Age line that Jesus traveled and learned from the sages and so forth during those 18 years, it's just wishful thinking on the part of New Age people. It doesn't agree with what the Bible actually does indicate.