

Let's resume our look at Luke chapter 2. We have seen the nature of the purification ritual and sacrifices that were offered on this occasion, the momentous nature of it—something that was certainly, by definition, a first for Mary—the redemption of the firstborn son, which is so full of meaning. I could wax eloquent on the Redeemer Himself being redeemed and on why God put so much detail and so much symbolic meaning into these Levitical offerings.

You have heard me say it a dozen times: there is more Christology to be learned in Leviticus and Deuteronomy and Exodus than you could possibly find even in the Epistles of Paul. Romans is some pretty heavy sledding in that regard, but Paul himself was drawing on truth that he learned from the Old Testament shadows, which were fulfilled and brought to life in the Lord Jesus. So we have come now to the two conversations that occur right after this.

One is Simeon. It's interesting: you have Simeon and you have Anna. Simeon is said to be just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit is upon him.

It doesn't say that he is a prophet. He is a just and devout man, and with nothing more than that, God's Holy Spirit is upon him. It doesn't say he is a prophet, but he prophesies.

He has a two-fold utterance here. One is a prayer. He blessed God and said, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace according to Your word."

Remember the shepherds celebrating that they had found everything according to God's word? Here is Simeon celebrating that on this day there is a fulfillment of God's word. "My eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles first, and the glory of Your people Israel." That is not an accident, that under the influence and ministry of the Holy Spirit, he mentions the peoples and the Gentiles first, because that is ultimately going to be the order in which the fullness of the kingdom comes in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit: the opportunity to put off the old man and put on the new man, and to prepare for service and function in the kingdoms which are to come.

So, not being a prophet, he prophesies. You see the departing figure of Simeon. "Now You are letting Your servant depart in peace." You get the idea that he very soon after this died. He was an elderly man, and God promised him life until he would see this sight which he has now seen. The impression that we are left with from Simeon is that this is one of his last things.

Joseph and his mother marveled at the things which were spoken of their son, the Lord Jesus. Once again, to the first point we made in the first session, even having spoken with angels, even having been communicated with directly by God, to have these things affirmed on this day in this place caused Joseph and Mary to marvel. It wasn't something they took in stride: "Well, of course. It's no more than I would expect. We are the parents of the Son of God."

It is a wonderful thing to never lose the genuine sense of awe and appreciation when the word of the Lord is revealed. Heaven help us if it ever becomes pedestrian, or something we take in stride, that we do not marvel at, that we are not impressed with, that doesn't bring us to a fresh and closer understanding of God and the Lord Jesus Christ through the witness of the Holy Spirit. What sad people we would be if the word of God can no longer enliven us, if it is no longer like a fire and a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces, that it doesn't move us, that it doesn't cleanse us, that it doesn't motivate and impel us toward the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit.

So they marveled. Simeon blessed them. There is a detail in verse 34. I wonder if you see it. Just take a minute to read it. Simeon has given this public prayer. Mary and Joseph hear the prayer, and they are marveling at it. What happens in verse 34? How many parents are standing there? How many does Simeon talk to in verse 34? One.

Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, specifically addressing Mary. I wonder why. "This is destined for the fall and rising," the ascending and descending. If this was in Aramaic, there would be cognates for *ole* and *yeled*. "Falling and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against." He is warning Mary that on this day of celebration, on this day of redemption, on this day of sanctification, on this day of purification, it is going to be a two-edged sword.

It is going to lift many people up. It is going to be a sign to the nations, to the Gentiles, to the peoples. But it is also going to be the downfall of many.

This is something, I think, in our recent look at progressive Christianity and those who want to deconstruct their faith—to two-dimensionalize the Lord Jesus and say it is only a message of love. There is no need for redemption. There is no need for justice to be satisfied. God can just forgive on a whim.

This, I would submit, is perhaps the nature, in some sense, of the original objection in heaven, when Lucifer and ultimately a third of the angels rebelled against God. And that rebellion is not forgiven. And the argument can be made, “Why don't You just forgive us? You are God. You are all-powerful. Why can't You just forgive?”

And people in the modern day, now in the church by the tens of thousands, are saying, “This idea that sacrifice is required, a price needs to be paid, justice needs to be satisfied, is nonsense. That is a human invention. God is love. Look at all the times Jesus announces and pronounces forgiveness. There is no blood sacrifice in view, so it is not required. And any Scripture that says anything about redemption or propitiation or reconciliation is not really Scripture. That is just not God. If you want to see God, look at Jesus.”

Well, okay, let's look at Jesus. He entered this world with a three-fold manifestation of obedience to the law of Moses that we have just seen. According to the law. According to the law of the Lord. According to the law of the Lord. Jesus was made under the law, Paul says. He was made under the law. He came under the law. You can't throw the law out and hope to understand what is going on now, and certainly not what is going to happen in the future.

So he says to Mary, “This child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against.” He just said in verse 32, after mentioning the peoples and the Gentiles, the glory of Israel. But it is going to also be the fall of many in Israel. “Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also,” singular, speaking only to Mary.

I think Simeon understands, and this might have been a subtle message to Joseph, that it is not going to be a sword through his soul, and he doesn't so much need the warning about this sign being spoken against, because he is not going to be around long either. And you wonder if Simeon sensed that God was going to take Joseph out of the picture relatively early. He certainly disappears from the Gospel record right after Jesus comes to the temple at the age of 12.

So he's got—the baby is a month and a half old or so right here—and so in a dozen years, in 12 years, sometime shortly after that, Joseph seems to depart before Jesus starts His public earthly ministry. So this warning which Mary is given pertains to her. She is going to outlive her son in the traditional human sense. She will witness His crucifixion and will live on into the book of Acts, where she will join in worship after the resurrection and ascension with Jesus' brothers. So this is especially pertinent for her. “The sword will pierce through your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

And this, I think, is an underappreciated prophetic statement from God via the Holy Spirit through Simeon: the purpose of Jesus coming. The reason some rise and some fall is because the thoughts and intents of the heart are revealed. In the same way that the written word of God pierces to the dividing asunder and reveals those inmost motivations, those inmost priorities and goals and values, so does the living Word.

And He will say later on, “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” It's going to divide households because the thoughts are going to be revealed. Our thoughts matter. Thinking matters. Working through issues, challenges, situations, opportunities, setbacks matters. And the issue of the Lord Jesus Christ: how real is He to us? To what extent do we identify as His followers, as His body? To what extent do we pursue His emphasis on living by means of the Spirit, abiding in the vine, bearing much fruit, being prepared to be pruned?

I always wonder, if plants were as sensitive as some people believe them to be, if they had little voice boxes, when you go out there and prune something, would it go, “Ouch, ouch, ouch”? Well, we do have voice boxes, and when God prunes us, often we do experience some pain. But we recognize, in the same way that many of the repairs to our body require something by way of a painful process and a painful recuperation, a painful physical therapy, it's worth it because of where we arrive through that process. We arrive in a better place. We are healed. We are restored. We are renewed. We are enhanced. We have more strength. We have better opportunities to do and to be because we have been through this process.

Jesus learned obedience through the things that He suffered. If the Lord Jesus learns and grows in His humanity through hardship, we shouldn't expect that we can do it in any easier way. "That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Well, this brings us to verse 36. "Now there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of great age, had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. And this woman was a widow of about 84 years, who did not depart from the temple but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." God is in italics. She is serving. She is doing all kinds of service.

She is probably serving to help and to guide people such as Mary who are making their first trip there for a sacrifice of purification, for dedication. It is always nice to be led through a process or to be given counsel and comfort by somebody who knows. If she has been down there for all of those years, she says, "Let's skip that priest and go to this one. He is going to do a better job. You are going to benefit more from this once-in-a-lifetime experience if we go down here. Here is the third trumpet. Here is where your offering for the poor goes. Let's stand over here, and you will watch, and you will be able to see how they tactfully and gracefully take money from that third trumpet and distribute it evenly so people do not know who the poor were who could only put in a little bit." It is evened out. Wonderful expression of non-embarrassment for people who come and approach God regardless of their means.

She would be a guide and serve. Every day she served with fastings and prayers. People would come, and she could pray for them. She could pray with them. She skipped meals while she was down there to focus on representing God and encouraging people. I have to think she would remind them of the significance of these sacrifices. She is a woman. She is not a teacher in Israel, but the Pharisees and the scribes were falling down on the job.

Here is an old woman who does more for the people who come down and worship at the temple than all of the Sanhedrin and all of the priests and elders and Pharisees and Sadducees and scribes and all of the self-proclaimed experts. Here is a lady who, by dwelling in the house of the Lord, knows and shares her love for God, her hope for the coming redemption of Israel, and by her presence, by her prayers, by her selfless ministry, is as great a symbolic expression of what God is really looking for as any of the ritual sacrifices that people might observe.

But isn't it interesting? Simeon is not a prophet and he prophesies. Anna is a prophetess, but she does not prophesy here.

There are so many things to cover here. I despair of covering them all, but let's start with her name. There was one Anna. Anna is the New Testament version. It's like when you read Zechariah, and that's just Zechariah from the Old Testament. Anna is Hannah. You put an H in the front of it and you have Samuel's mother, and this is no accident.

We saw how the Redeemer has to, first of all, be redeemed by His parents. Here you have the Hannah story inevitably brought to our minds by this lady's name. So turn with me back to 1 Samuel 1. We're just going to take a quick trip. We've looked at this in detail more than once, but it's such a wonderful part of the Christmas story, we don't want to miss it.

There was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim. This is basically Ramah. This is Samuel's hometown, but the full name is Ramathaim Zophim, in the mountains of Ephraim. This is a Levitical city in the region of Ephraim. Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph—you can find his genealogy in Chronicles—he's a Levite. He's not from the tribe of Ephraim; he's from the region of Ephraim. He is a Levite.

He had two wives. The name of one was Hannah. Hannah comes from Hanah, C-H-A-N-A, or Hanan. You can put an N on it to make it a noun. It means grace. Her name is Grace. The name of one was Hanah, Grace. The name of the other, Peninnah. Peninnah means prominent. It means prominent. It can be a prominence like a tower in the wall of a city. It can be a prominence like the corner of an edifice or the corner of a structure. It's something that stands out.

The first lady's name is Grace. The second one's name is prominence or standout. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. This man went up from his city yearly to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in

Shiloh. He's a Levite, and this is where the remnants of the tabernacle are to be found in Israel, is at Shiloh. This is where Eli and Hophni and Phinehas are operating.

Whenever the time came, verse 4, for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and daughters, but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the Lord had closed her womb. Notice, the Lord had closed her womb, and this is causing her suffering. Her rival provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb.

So it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, that she provoked her. Therefore she wept and did not eat. This is a condition from the Lord. This is a lack. It's a lack of opportunity. It's a lack of relationship. The inability to give her husband children, the inability to enjoy and train up those children herself, is devastating.

And not only that, if she didn't feel bad enough on her own account, she's persecuted by the younger wife, who has produced both sons and daughters for Elkanah. And this situation persists for years. Elkanah, her husband, in verse 8, said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. This eating and drinking, by the way, is one of the fulfillments of requirements in the law that say that sacrifices were often fellowship meals. You would bring the animal, sacrifice it, and then portions of it would be eaten. These are sacrificial portions, sacrificial meals, that they are talking about here in verse 9. Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh.

Once again, the sacrifice is over. The celebration is over. The sacrifice, sacrificial meal, partaking of the sacrifice, is over. This is in the quiet aftermath. People have gone to take a nap, to converse, to engage in activities. They are in Shiloh, so they might do some sightseeing. They might want to look around, walk around behind the remnants of the tabernacle, and so on.

Hannah is there. Eli is sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the Lord, the tent of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the Lord, and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant, and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

It happened that she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli watched her mouth. Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. I've talked about this before. It's an interesting thing that people always prayed out loud in Old Testament days. No such thing as silent prayer. And the fact that she is not speaking loud enough for her voice to be heard, and Eli only sees her lips moving, but there's no sound, he thinks she's had too much wine. Remember, this is after the banquet meal, and he thinks she has overindulged, and she's tipsy.

Eli says, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you." But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Do not consider your maidservant a wicked woman, for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have spoken until now."

Eli answered and said, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have asked of Him." And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went away and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

Look at verse 20. In the process of time, Hannah conceived and bore a son, called his name Samuel, because I had asked for him from the Lord. Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow, but Hannah did not go up. She said, "Not until the child is weaned. Then I will take him, that he may appear before the Lord and remain there forever."

Hannah said, "Do what seems best to you. Wait until you have weaned him. Only let the Lord establish His word." Once again, the Lord establish His word. The woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him. When she had weaned him, she took him up with her with three bulls and a flour skin of wine, brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. The child was young. They slaughtered the bull, brought the child to Eli.

“O my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood by you here, praying to the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition, which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he shall be lent to the Lord.” So they worshipped the Lord there.

If you think about this symmetry, the first Hannah dedicates her child to the Lord. She has him for a time, and then she gives him to the Lord. The second Hannah sees this child, which is redeemed on this day and given back to His mother. And so, in each case, you have a woman and a child, and the idea of dedication and the idea of redemption, and in each case, the lady's name is Grace.

Then when you look at chapter 2, this Hannah prayed and said, “My heart rejoices in the Lord. My horn is exalted in the Lord. I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation.” There's a conceptual play here on Peninnah's name, because she was the one that was exalted, and exalted in her own mind because she had children. But Hannah says, “My horn is exalted in the Lord.” And this is her celebration, where she can smile at her enemies.

“No one is holy like the Lord. There is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly, Peninnah. Let no arrogance come from your mouth, for the Lord is the God of knowledge, and by His actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and those who stumbled are girded with strength.” The mighty are brought low; those who stumbled are raised, rising and falling. “Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread; the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, and she who has many children has become feeble.”

You can read the rest of this. It's a wonderful song. We've seen the connections between this and Mary's song that she is going to sing a little bit later in the Gospel story. I just want to focus here on verse 5. “Even the barren has borne seven, and she who has many children has become feeble.” The rising and falling.

But Hannah looks at Samuel, and to her he is as good as seven sons. How many sons did Job have? Seven. It is a number of fulfillment. It is a number of satisfaction. It is the number of completeness in heaven and on earth. You had four and three. Four is universality on earth; three is the perfection of God in heaven. You put those together and you get seven. He is the barren, i.e., Hannah, has borne seven.

If you turn back to Luke here, there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel. The beginning of that Phanu, P-H-A-N, this actually has a cognate in many languages which means face. So this is the face of God. Phanuel's name means face of God. It is a form and a variation of Peniel. Remember Jacob naming the place Peniel? “I have seen the face of God.”

Um, of the tribe of Asher. The tribe of Asher. Asher, Jacob had seven sons. The eighth is Asher. When Leah gave birth to Asher, she said, “This makes me happy.” Asher literally means happy.

If you remember our study in the past few sessions where we were looking at Psalm 137:9, where it says, “You are asking us for a joyful song. I will tell you who is going to be happy. It is the ones who do to you what you have done to us.” They are going to be happy, talking about the Medes and the Persians who are going to overthrow Babylon and literally do to the city of Babylon what the Babylonians did to the city of Jerusalem. They are going to treat their young ones and their children and their wives and mothers and sisters the very same way the Babylonians treated Jerusalem. Their iniquity is going to be visited on their own heads.

The first word there in Psalm 137:9 that is translated “blessed,” mistakenly in some translations, is this word, “happy.” Happy. Now, there is—I can only find two places in the entire law of Moses where this word is used—Asher. People want to say, “Well, God says in the Psalms that you are blessed if you do these horrible things.” No, it is talking about happiness.

Happy only occurs in Deuteronomy 33:29. “Blessed are you, Israel, who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty, and your enemies shall submit to you, and you shall tread down their high places.” Deuteronomy 33:29. That is the only place where this form of the word is used. Asher.

A variation of it is used in Genesis chapter 30, verse 13, at the birth of Asher. Leah says, “The daughters will call me happy,” in Genesis 30:13. The word for blessed, you all probably know this, is Barak. Barak is the valley of blessing. There have been hospitals and ministries and churches that have taken this name because it means blessed. But Barak, B-A-R-A-K, that is the word for blessed.

If you want to look at that word in the law of Moses, you will find over 330 uses of Barak in the law. Actually, that is in the entire Old Testament. But they begin in Genesis chapter 1. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." Genesis 1:22, that is Barak. God makes the man and the woman and He blessed them. Genesis 1:28. God blessed the seventh day. Genesis 2:3. God made them male and female and blessed them. Genesis 5:2. Genesis 9:1, God blessed Noah and his sons.

When you get to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, all of the blessings that are pronounced are Barak. Asher does not occur there a single time. So, do not be misled when someone tries to conflate and confuse what the Old Testament says. There is a difference in blessing from God, Barak, and happiness, which is generally based on a pleasant circumstance or what someone considers to be pleasant or happy. Everybody says, "Happy birthday." They don't necessarily mean, in that instance, especially in the mouth of a non-believer, "Be blessed by God on your birthday." It just means, "Have a good time." That's what Asher means.

So, Anna, Grace, the daughter of Phanuel, the face of God, from the tribe of Happiness. She was of great age and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and she was a widow of about 84 years. We've seen this before. There's a little bit of confusion. Was her total age 84, or had she been married for seven years and then been a widow for 84, so that she's now about 105? It's unclear.

I kept thinking, why is this unclear? Then it occurred to me: because it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter why the number is there. It matters that the number is there. What do we see in the song of Anna? How good is Samuel as a son? How many sons is he worth? Seven. Seven sons. Good try, though. Seven sons. How long was Anna married before her husband died? Seven years. If you divide 84 by 7, what do you get? 12. It's 12 times 7.

So, you take that 84. Seven of those 84 are a double. Whether she was a widow of 84 years, I think personally that it says she was of great age. I think she was probably 105. I think she had been a—I think she was married for seven years and had been a widow for 84 years. That gives you 13 sevens total for Anna.

How many tribes are there in Israel? How many tribes? 13. One is special. The other 12 are not priests. One is a double tribe. There's many ways you can look at the 12 tribes of Israel. You can include Levi and then see Ephraim and Manasseh as half-tribes. But there are 13 total.

But as the woman who statedly says she is looking for redemption in Jerusalem, looking for redemption, here she is on the day when the Redeemer is redeemed. She is a woman of great age. Simeon is a man of great age. In the same way that the nation begins with Abraham and Sarah, who are a man and a woman of great age. But they are married. They conceive together and have a son.

This baby, this child, is different. You have not only Joseph and Mary, who Jesus is not a product of their physical union, but you have Simeon and Anna at the opposite end of Abraham and Sarah. And Anna herself, when you think about her name and her namesake and the animosity between two wives, and you have the same animosity between Sarah and Hagar. Sarah was perpetrating it against Hagar, and Hagar was perpetrating it against Sarah. And you remember that Sarah was grieved because Hagar had a son and Sarah was too old to conceive. And there is a strong suggestion that we are to look back at Samuel and the beginning of the prophetic ministry.

Anna is a prophetess. By the way, she is the only woman in the entire New Testament who is called a prophetess and we're given her name. Can you think of any other woman or women in the New Testament who were said to be prophetesses? You have Huldah in the days of Josiah in the Old Testament. She was a prophetess, and she confirms the authenticity of the scroll of the book that they find when they are rebuilding the temple.

Turn real quickly, as we close, over to Acts chapter 21. This is part of the we section. Luke is with Paul here in chapter 21. It came to pass, we departed from them and set sail, running a straight course. We came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, from there to Patara, finding a ship sailing to Phoenicia. We sighted Cyprus, went to Syria.

Finding disciples, landed at Tyre, stayed there seven days. Finding disciples in Tyre, verse 4, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. We have covered this before. They told Paul through the Spirit, don't go.

When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way. They all accompanied us, wives and children, out of the city, down on the shore, and prayed, took our leave, resumed their voyage from Tyre, Ptolemais, stayed, came to Caesarea, verse 8. We who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven.

Remember, back in the early days they needed deacons. Stephen was one, Philip was one, Nicanor and some other guys were deacons. Philip is the second to be named right after Stephen, one of the seven. Stayed with him. This man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

As we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he came to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit: so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."

When we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." So, when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

In the mouth of two or three witnesses, a thing is established. Paul has been told twice not to go. But I recently heard a great exaltation of Huldah, and that God wants women to be prophets and leaders and so on. I just want you to notice that Anna the prophetess did not prophesy on the day that she saw the Lord Jesus. These four daughters of Philip do not prophesy to Paul. Agabus comes all the way from Judea to Caesarea to put this belt around his hands and his feet and give the first message. Didn't make an impression, Paul, so let me act it out for you. It's from the Lord. God works all things together for good, but God told Paul, "Don't go," and he went anyway. He would not be persuaded.

But interestingly, there's only a few places where prophetesses are mentioned, and Huldah does not prophesy. She just says, "That is the real word of God." Anna the prophetess does not prophesy on this day, and in Paul's experience the daughters of Philip, although they are all prophetesses, do not prophesy to Paul. So if someone starts launching these slings and arrows of argumentation, you can observe a lot by watching.

But in closing, the beautiful symmetry of God's plan and purpose is obliterated, is lost, vanishes, if you don't know your Old Testament, if you don't see the connections, if you don't see the completions and the fulfillments, the full-color fleshing out in the New Testament, in the Gospels especially, of what was promised and shadowed and prophesied in the Old.

And there is fruitful meditation to be had looking at Abraham and Sarah, looking at Hannah, and looking at Anna and Simeon on this special day, the inauguration day. Forty days after His birth, Jesus is at the temple. He will spend 40 days in the wilderness being tested. His age will be 40 when He takes the throne of His father David in the Millennial Kingdom. Thirty-three years He lived when He came the first time. When the clock of Israel starts for the seven-year Tribulation, Jesus will get seven years older in that sense, and so He will be 40 when He begins to rule in the Millennial Kingdom.

We wouldn't appreciate these numbers if we didn't have the Old Testament. We wouldn't appreciate the beauty and the symmetry and the careful crafting of God's plan and God's communication and God's comfort and encouragement to us in and through redemption without these wonderful stories, these wonderful narratives.

So, as we head into the Christmas season, some fresh things to think about and fresh things to appreciate about our heavenly Father and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the comfort and encouragement we have from all of Your Scriptures. We recognize the Lord Jesus did not come to set aside Your prophetic word, Your Old Covenant word, but to fulfill it, to reveal its meaning and its purpose, and give it fresh and living power in our lives.

We pray that as we enter into the hecticcy of this coming season, that You will be with us. Help us to be ever mindful of who we are and why we're here, all because of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. We pray it in His name. Amen.