

Sunday 2nd February 2020

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple
(Candlemas)

Gold or White



Collect

Almighty and ever-living God, clothed in majesty, whose beloved Son was this day presented in the Temple, in substance of our flesh: grant that we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts, by your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Hebrews 2:14-18 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Founder of Salvation

2¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.¹⁸ For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

COMMENT: Because we (the children = mankind) have a mortal nature, the Saviour deigned to share our fragility go through the trails of life and the agony of death, and through that, destroy the devil who leads man into death (Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12). Before Christ came, mankind was in bondage of the fear of death. By his death, our Lord made death the gateway to eternal life with God and all the redeemed. The writer informs us that our Lord came to redeem mankind and not angels. In verse 16, the word *δηπου* 'depon' (surely) is only found here in the whole of the New Testament. It means our Lord definitely took human and not angelic nature. Our Lord needed to be like us "in every respect" except sin (Heb 4:15), that is. He should have the same human nature, be subject to the same trials and sufferings, etc. The expression, "in every respect" must not be understood to embrace anything incompatible with our Lord's divinity, grace, or mission. Through his incarnation he was to occupy a position in the New Covenant similar to that of the High Priest of the Old Covenant; He was to be, therefore, "merciful" (i.e., full of sympathy and understanding for our needs and miseries) and "faithful" (i.e., trustworthy in the fulfilment of all His duties and functions) "in the service of God", the most important of which was to "be a propitiation, etc." (i.e., to offer an atoning

sacrifice to God for sin), as the Jewish High Priest's chief function was to offer an atoning sacrifice on the great Day of Atonement "for the sins of the people" (Leviticus 4:15 ff., 26:1 ff.). As the great Jewish sacrifice was a propitiation for the sins of the Jewish people, so the sacrifice which Christ offered was a propitiation for the sins of all mankind; the former was a type of the latter. Because the Saviour shared our nature, he is able to assist us who are tempted.

Luke 2:22-40 English Standard Version (ESV)

Jesus Presented at the Temple

2²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law,²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,²⁹ "Lord, now you are letting your servant^[a] depart in peace, according to your word;³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."³³ And his father and his mother marvelled at what was said about him.³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin,³⁷ and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.^[b] She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.³⁸ And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

³⁹ And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favour of God was upon him.

Footnotes: a. Greek *bondservant*. b. or as a widow for eighty-four years.

COMMENT: When the infant Jesus is brought to the temple no one really knows or understands that ‘the King of glory’, as described in the psalm, has come into the temple. Simeon and Anna have some understanding. They have prayerfully waited for ‘the Lord’s Messiah’ (Luke 2: 26). What actually happened at ‘the presentation of Jesus in the Temple’? The Mosaic Law does speak about ‘sanctification of the first born to God’s possession’ (Exodus 13:2, 12, 15; 34:19; Numbers 3:13) but this was no longer taken literally, the tribe of Levi having been set aside for the LORD’s permanent possession instead (Numbers 8:17 following). An alternative of paying five shekels to a priest existed, but there was no requirement that this was paid at the Temple in Jerusalem. Luke anchors this story in the Law (2:22-24,39) and it appears that Joseph and Mary were being devout in taking up a cue from the law. Thus we read about a presentation which fits the circumstances of Jesus’ conception and birth: an extraordinary beginning to his life and magnificent welcome via angels and shepherds. What devout parents in such a situation would not take their child to the Temple of the Lord? It is always worth pondering the faithfulness of Simeon and Anna. Who among us can wait so patiently on the Lord for his will to be done and his word to be fulfilled?

Psalm 24 *Domini est terra* Grail Psalter

℟ Who is the king of glory? He, the Lord, he is the king of glory.

¹ The Lord’s is the earth and its fullness,
the world and all its peoples.

² It is he who set it on the seas;
on the waters he made it firm. **℟**

³ Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?
Who shall stand in his holy place?

⁴ The man with clean hands and pure heart,
who desires not worthless things,
(who have not sworn so as to deceive their neighbour.) **℟**

⁵ He shall receive blessings from the Lord
and reward from the God who saves him .

⁶ Such are the men who seek him,
seek the face of the God of Jacob. **℟**

⁷ O gates, lift high your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the king of glory! **℟**

⁸ Who is the king of glory?
The Lord, the mighty, the valiant,
the Lord, the valiant in war.

⁹ O gates, lift high your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the king of glory! **℟**

¹⁰ Who is he, the king of glory?

He, the Lord of armies,
he is the king of glory.

R Who is the king of glory? He, the Lord, he is the king of glory.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: We could read these verses in the context of today's feast as a call to the gates/doors of Jerusalem (a walled city with gates at intervals for entry/exit) to open up so that the child Christ "aka King of glory" can enter in! In its original context these verses anthropomorphise God (make out as though God is a human) and depict God as a king returning from a glorious victory. The gates have been shut to keep the city defended, now they must be opened up to hail the returning victor. In the gospels, Jesus is the king whose true glory is hidden (save for moments of revelation to a select few, e.g. the Transfiguration). When he is in Jerusalem, the holy city does not know who he is. In the gospel reading today Jesus is just another lad entering the temple with his family, but to two people Jesus is seen for his true status: he is the King of glory.

Short Preface

And now we give you thanks because, by appearing in the Temple, he comes near to us in judgement; the Word made flesh searches the hearts of all your people and brings to light the brightness of your splendour.

Post Communion

Lord, you fulfilled the hope of Simeon and Anna, who lived to welcome the Messiah: may we, who have received these gifts beyond words, prepare to meet Christ Jesus when he comes to bring us to eternal life; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ the Son of God perfect in you the image of his glory and gladden your hearts with the good news of his kingdom; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**