

THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL... AND THE WORLD!

LUKE 2:21-40

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Introduction

Isaiah had prophesied many years before to Israel that one day YHWH would comfort (console, encourage, help) his people. "Consolation" (παράκλησις) in Scripture or the "Consolation of Israel" is a comprehensive expression for the fulfillment of Messianic hope (Gospel of Luke, Geldenhuys, pg. 123).

What beautiful and comforting words from the mouth of God, especially since our sins are ever before him! Yet he promises:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

This "Comforter" had finally arrived. In fact, as Isaiah also prophesied in chapter 9 of his "gospel", this One to comfort would be a child born to Israel- -a great and heavenly Prince of Peace. As we remember from our last sermon on the birth of the Christ, Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 9:6-7:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

This baby had been born, the son of Mary and Joseph. The Shepherds have come to the manger-cave in response to the angels, Mary loves the infant, cleans him, feeds him with her milk, and holds his tiny hands as he sleeps.

William Butler Yeats reflects on this act of God in his poem 'The Mother of God':

*"What is this flesh I purchased with my pains,
This fallen star my milk sustains,
This love that makes my heart's blood stop
Or strikes a sudden chill in my bones
And bids my hair stand up."*

This child of Mary's- -this child - -is the consolation-hope of Israel and the world.

In our passage today, we see how God more clearly shows the profound meaning of the incarnation to Jesus' parents (and us!) in this portion of scripture filled with gospel truth and glory!

We should particularly notice and greatly appreciate the overlapping of the Old and New Covenant in this passage. We see the time of promise and the time of fulfillment uniting together in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Luke 2:21-40 is a scriptural example of what the Apostle Paul teaches in Galatians 4:

^{ESV} **Galatians 4:4-6:** *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,* ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

As we read this passage, remember the depth of the words of the Apostle John:

"...And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us."

I. Jesus Christ: the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses (Luke 2:21-24)

- a. Circumcised at the end of eight days (Luke 2:21)

Why was Jesus circumcised? This is as important (and similar to) as the question: "Why was Jesus baptized?"

- i. Every male child in Israel was to be circumcised on the eighth day (Lev. 12:3).

^{ESV} **Genesis 17:10-14:** This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, ¹³ both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

- ii. Jesus Christ was truly human, truly an Israelite (Heb. 2:14-18); he had to be "made like his brothers in every way";

surely it is not angels he helps, but the offspring-seed of Abraham! Jesus was identified with Abraham's seed according to God's command.

- iii. This is part of Jesus Christ's representing his people as Savior, Lord and Covenant Head as the Second Adam.
 1. What was required of his people in the Law was required of Jesus (as we will also see in his baptism by John later).

Why? Jesus was to take upon himself the guilt and impurity of his people. His life was to undergo the requirements of the Law ceremonially on behalf of his own, and to perfectly fulfill the Law in obedience in word, thought, and deed throughout his life.

This is why it is important to understand our right standing before God (our Justification) as truly receiving by imputation the perfect law-keeping righteousness of Jesus Christ earned in his life as a human on our behalf! Rejoice!

Remember that Jesus says in Matthew 5:17-20:

"I did not come to abolish the Law and Prophets...but to fulfill them."

2. Jesus was being identified with his sinful people in circumcision (this is none other than a true meeting of type and anti-type).

The sharp circumcision knife cut into the flesh of this infant, and the blood of the covenant was spilled as Jesus is fully identified with outward sign and in blood with his people.

Naming of the Child: "Jesus" (Matthew 1:21-23)

The naming of the child took place at the circumcision, and this is even more than a normal naming, because this one special circumcised male child is the hope of the covenant promises of God, and his name is "JESUS" because he will save his people from their sins, cf. Matthew 1:21-23

^{ESV} **Matthew 1:21-23:** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

^{ESV} **Luke 1:31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

Jesus means "Jehovah (YHWH) is salvation."

b. And so all of this purification ritual was done...According to the Law of Moses (Luke 2:21-24) because Jesus was born "under the law" in order to redeem those under law (Gal. 4:4-6).

i. **Purification Laws**- Leviticus 12 (Luke 2:22a)

καθαρισμός (**purification**) is a Greek term implying the removal of those things that interfere with communion with God.

In the Old Covenant, God gave pictures to his people so that they would understand his holiness. God distinguished between what is clean and unclean in his holy presence.

For his people, so that they might worship him, and be in his presence, God provided purification laws and rituals. The people would follow these rituals for purification so that they could stand and worship in God's presence again; this pointed forward to the child who would be born in the fullness of the times who would purify God's people once and for all by his own blood!

Leviticus 12:6-8: "And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, ⁷ and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. ⁸ **And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.**"

ii. Jesus was "Presented to the Lord" (Luke 2:22b).

- As true human child, identified with his people, Jesus is presented to the Lord in dedication at the Temple (this is loaded with eschatological significance). Here is the True Temple of God, “very God of very God”, who is united to human flesh, and is being offered in the Temple of God- -back- -to God the Father, in order to build a Temple of people who would be united to him by faith, worshippers who would worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.
- iii. **What kind of sacrifice?** Significance of Joseph and Mary’s Sacrifice?
1. Mary and Joseph offered up either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons because they could not afford a lamb (v. 24).
 2. Luke shows to us again the poverty and worldly insignificance of this couple. What Pastor Kent Hughes recognizes rightly as an example of “spiritual destitution” before God (Luke, pg. 93).
 3. Yet, in their hands was the very Hope of the World- - the One who came to be sacrificed for his parent’s sins, and the sins of all those who believe!
- One scholar of the Gospel of Luke eloquently wrote: “According to Exodus 13 a sacrifice had always to be offered for a first-born to symbolize the fact that the death penalty lay on him and had to be taken away through sacrifice. This sacrifice is brought in the case of Jesus because He has taken upon Himself the death penalty of the sinful people for whose salvation He became Man.” –Geldenhuys, pg. 118.
- iv. The true meeting of Type and Anti-Type (Circumcision and Sacrifice).

II. **Jesus Christ: the Consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25-38)**

Here we meet Simeon and Anna...full of anticipation of Messiah’s arrival, and eagerly hoping and eschatologically expectant of the dawn of a new age:

“Mine eyes have seen the glory!”

We should be reminded of Jesus' words: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...for they shall be filled."

Simeon and Anna hungered greatly and expectantly for the coming of Jesus Christ. We too, should eagerly anticipate as the "Maranatha People", Christ's second return, particularly as we come to worship each Lord's Day- -but throughout the week remembering that we do not know the hour or the day that he shall suddenly come for his own!

"Come, Lord Jesus!" (Maranatha)

a. **SIMEON:**

i. **Example-picture of a believing, elect Israelite.**

Simeon is a picture, an example of a believing Israelite during this time. He was righteous because he had found favor with God; he was devout in that he lived by God's law by grace alone, and followed the commands of God to atone for his sin; he was anticipating the consolation of Israel (Isaiah 40:1; 57:18), that is, the comfort that Jerusalem was to receive by God's grace: forgiveness from God and "her iniquity pardoned" in Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Simeon was a believing, elect Israelite because of both his words and his deeds.

ii. **Simeon was righteous and devout** (Luke 2:25b)- This means that Simeon was not merely externally or ethnically an Israelite, but that he was a believer in God's covenant promises to him.

1. Abraham was reckoned righteous because of his faith (Romans 4:1-12). The Scriptures teach us in Romans 4:

^{ESV} **Romans 4:1-3:** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? ***"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."***

^{ESV} **Romans 4:11-12:** He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that

righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² **and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.**

This was the righteousness of Simeon as well. It was faith in God's promises as Abraham his father believed God –it was not merely claiming ethnicity or mere outward conformity to God's laws, but it was belief from the heart.

As we are reminded in Galatians 3:11 by the Apostle Paul:

ESV Galatians 3:11 **Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."**

2. Noah is also called "righteous" before God (Gen. 6:9); all believers are called "righteous" (cf. 1 John 3:7) because they are forgiven and united to Jesus Christ by faith- -and have received his righteousness as their own.
3. **Simeon was also devout:** That is, he was not merely a believer in word, but showed it in his faithful life of service and love to God.

iii. **Simeon was waiting for the Consolation of Israel** (Luke 2:25c).

1. Greek: παράκλησιν τοῦ Ἰσραήλ
2. Definition of "Consolation": Encouragement, help; comfort. The hope is for comfort as Isaiah prophesies (Isa. 40:1; 57:18), but it is a comfort or peace with God because iniquities and sins no longer separate God's people from God (this was typified in the sacrifices and many ceremonial laws in Israel- -God showed Israel pictures of clean and unclean to reveal his spiritual distance from his people until the "fullness of the times" (cf. Gal. 4:4).

ESV Isaiah 40:1 **Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.**

ESV Isaiah 66:13 As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

iv. **Simeon was controlled and led by the Holy Spirit of God**
(Luke 2:25d-27)

This is still an Old Testament milieu and so the Holy Spirit is still communicating and revealing the truth of God in and outside the Scriptures; this will continue until the canon is closed with completion of the writing of the New Covenant Scriptures.

1. Luke's gospel is "full of the Holy Spirit"!

- a. Angel's proclamation about John the Baptist and Jesus having the Holy Spirit.
- b. Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit.
- c. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit when the baby in Mary's womb came near to her.
- d. Zechariah (Zecharias) prophesied in the Spirit in his 'Benedictus'.
- e. ...And this all in Luke chapter 1!...Now we are told that the Holy Spirit was "upon Simeon" (Luke 2:25d).

v. **Simeon's Blessing and Prophetic Message to Joseph and Mary** "in the Holy Spirit" (Luke 2:29-35):

Luke 2:27: "And he came in the Spirit into the temple..."

Simeon was led by the Spirit to the Christ; part of the Holy Spirit's ministry is taking from what is Christ's and making it known to his people, cf. John 14-16.

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the prophets, is leading Simeon to his hope of salvation as God had promised him.

Simeon took the Christ in his arms and blessed God for his faithfulness to his covenant promises!

Simeon's song or prayerful blessing has been called the "Nunc Dimittis" ("Lord...you now dismiss your servant in peace...")

^{ESV} **Luke 2:29-32:** "Lord ["Despotes- "absolute master of a slave", Gk: Despothj- see also Acts 4:24], now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰

for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹ 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."

1. Geldenhuys writes: "The thought underlying the wording [of Simeon's 'Nunc Dimittis'] is of a slave who is instructed by his master to keep watch through the long, dark night on a high place to wait for the rising of a special star and then to announce it. After wearisome hours of waiting he at last sees the star rising in all its brightness. He announces it and is then discharged from keeping watch any longer" – Commentary on Luke, pg. 119.
2. Simeon could die truly in peace, not in a prophetic-Old Covenant time merely of type and promise, but in a time of anti-type and fulfillment! (v. 29) ("...Dismiss your servant..." is language that means to die and be with the LORD).
3. Simeon had seen with his own eyes the "salvation" or redemption for all the people in the world who believe in the Lord's Christ (vv. 30-31). Not a part or portion of God's salvation; not one of the many ways to God the Father, but the salvation who is the way, the truth, and the life- -NO Man comes to the Father except through Christ alone (John 14:6).
4. Simeon understands that the baby of Joseph and Mary is none other than the Servant of YHWH prophesied in Isaiah chapters 42, 49, and 52-53 (v. 32), who is come to save a people (both Jew and Gentile) who are in sinful, pitch darkness.
 - a. "A light for revelation to the Gentiles..."
 - b. "...and for glory to your people Israel."

Notice how Simeon sees the salvation of God (cf. Zechariah's '**Benedictus**' in Luke 1:68ff), and that God's revelation has prepared the peoples, and that the believing Israelite hoped in the fact that this revelation would not only be for Israel, but as Isaiah had prophesied, it would be "**a revelation to the Gentiles**" - and again, Joseph and Mary marvel at what is said about their son, who is God's son.

5. Simeon blesses Joseph and Mary with these important gospel preaching-words:

Here in Simeon's blessing to the parents, ***Simeon cuts to the heart of the matter***. This child (not any child, not another child, but 'this child') is appointed (that is, he is decreed) for the fall and rising of many in Israel.

Why? So that true worshippers, the true hearts of the people would be revealed in how they respond to the Lord's Christ. Do you believe? Here's Simeon's gospel message:

"Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Important Gospel Truths:

- a. This Child: Not any child; not another child- - but THIS CHILD- -the one in Simeon's arms, Mary's son and Mary's Lord!
- b. This Child: Will be both a blessing and a curse depending upon whether one believes in him or not ("the fall and rising of many in Israel").
 - i. This child will be a stumbling block for those who stand proudly, but he will be a Savior for those who bend their knee in obedience, service and worship by God's grace. Those bowed down humbly before Christ will be lifted up and rise to be called sons of the living God.
 - ii. No one can take a neutral stance toward this child; no one can be indifferent- -he causes either your rising or falling.
- c. This Child: Will be a sign that is **opposed** ("He came to his own people, and his own people did not receive him", John 1:10-13).

- i. Greek for “opposed” (antilegw). This word is used in the New Testament in a negative way about those who contradict or oppose truth (Titus 1:9; 2:9), and particularly the response of many unbelieving Jews.

Definition: ἀντιλέγω (aor. ἀντείπων) object to, oppose (εἰς σημεῖον ἀντιλεγόμενον for a controversial sign Lk 2.34); contradict, refute; be rebellious or obstinate; οἱ ἀ. ἀνάστασιν μὴ εἶναι those who say there is no resurrection (Lk 20.27).

- ii. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 10:

^{ESV} **Romans 10:21** But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and **contrary** (antagonistic, rebellious, obstinate) people."

- d. This Child: Will pierce Mary’s soul personally as his mother who has given birth to him, will raise him, and will accompany him when he is crucified 33 years later on Golgotha. Mary had been called rightly the *Mater Dolorosa* (Mother of Sorrows).
- e. This Child: Will reveal what is in the hearts of many people (the way a person responds to this child is a matter of eternal salvation, and reveals those whose hearts love God, as well as those who are merely hypocritically living outwardly).

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 17:9-10:** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? ¹⁰ "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

^{ESV} **Hebrews 4:12-13:** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And

no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

^{ESV} **Mark 7:21** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

b. **ANNA:**

- i. Example-picture of a woman, female, believing, elect Israelite.
- ii. Anna is a prophetess, a true Israelite by faith and by ethnicity (Luke 2:36).
- iii. Anna is a woman who was faithful to her husband (Luke 2:36-37) and is now a widow who God particularly cares for and thus she “did not depart from the temple” (v. 37)(cf. 1 Timothy 5:3ff).
- iv. Anna is a true worshipper from the heart.
- v. Anna fasts and prays from the heart or “in secret” not to be merely seen by men (cf. Matthew 6:1-11).
- vi. Anna providentially (v. 38) comes up at that “very hour” when Jesus is in the Temple with Mary and Joseph and gives thanks to God, for she, too, understands that this baby is the salvation, redeemer, and consolation-peace of Israel.
- vii. Anna evangelizes those who are awaiting this child (Luke 2:38) - -telling the good news.

c.

III. Jesus Christ: the Hope of the World- -both Jew and Gentile

- This child is the consolation-hope for the world, whether Jew or Gentile.
- This child is the salvation for all who believe. Do you “see God’s salvation” in Jesus alone as Simeon.
- This is the child who “for us and for our salvation came down from heaven” so that he could live for us, die on behalf of our sins, be resurrected for us, and enthroned at God’s right hand in the New Jerusalem!
- This is the child you cannot reject, nor remain neutral or indifferent toward him. God cares not for how you respond to Jesus merely outwardly for others to see;

what is important to God is to reveal your true heart before him based on how you truly respond to Jesus in truth, and in word and deed.

- This child is the person of Jesus Christ who we eagerly expect and eschatologically anticipate to return soon.

Scripture Text-Exegetical Notes

^{ESV} **Luke 2:21** And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised [Obedience to the Law of Moses: Leviticus 12; Jesus says: "I have not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it; Jesus was circumcised in the flesh (type), and circumcised on the cross (anti-type), and we are circumcised "in Christ"- Colossians 2:11-16/Here we have the eschatological meeting in the "fullness of the times" (Gal. 4:4) of type and anti-type/not only in the circumcision, but with the sacrifice itself!],

he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. [The naming of the child took place at the circumcision, and this is even more than a naming, because this one special circumcised male child is the hope of the covenant promises of God, and his name is "JESUS" because he will save his people from their sins, cf. Matthew 1:21-23]

²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses [Leviticus 12:6-8: after the time of Mary's 33 days of uncleanness, she is to go to the priest for their purification with sacrifice to make atonement for their sins], they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (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." [Leviticus 12:6-8; Luke again shows to us that Mary and Joseph are very poor because they cannot afford a lamb, but they offer up to God the very Lamb of God himself!]

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. [Simeon is a picture, an example of a believing Israelite during this time. He was righteous because he had found favor with God; he was devout in that he lived by God's law by grace alone, and followed the commands of God to atone for his sin; he was anticipating the consolation of Israel (Isaiah 40:1; 57:18), that is, the comfort that Jerusalem was to receive by God's grace: forgiveness from God and "her iniquity pardoned" in Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit was upon him. This was a believing, elect Israelite because of both his words and his deeds.]

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. [This is still an Old Testament milieu and so

the Holy Spirit is still communicating and revealing the truth of God in and outside the Scriptures; this will continue until the canon is closed with completion of the writing of the New Covenant Scriptures.]

²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple [Simeon was led by the Spirit to the Christ; part of the Holy Spirit's ministry is taking from what is Christ's and making it known to his people, cf. John 14-16; The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the prophets, is leading Simeon to his hope of salvation as God had promised him],

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, [Simeon took the Christ in his arms and blessed God for his faithfulness to his covenant promises!]

²⁹ "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹ 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 marveled at what was said about him. [Simeon primarily quotes from the "Servant Songs of YHWH" found in Isaiah chapters 42 and 49. Notice how Simeon sees the salvation of God (cf. Zechariah's 'Benedictus' in Luke 1:68ff), and that God's revelation has prepared the peoples, and that the believing Israelite hoped in the fact that this revelation would not only be for Israel, but as Isaiah had prophesied, it would be "a revelation to the Gentiles"- - and again, Joseph and Mary marvel at what is said about their son, who is God's son.]

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 opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." [Here in Simeon's blessing to the parents, Simeon cuts to the heart of the matter: This child (not any child, not another child, but 'this child') is appointed (that is, he is decreed) for the fall and rising of many in Israel. Why? So that true worshippers, the true hearts of the people would be revealed in how they respond to the Lord's Christ. Do you believe?]

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. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. [An example of a believing, elect "woman" Israelite: one who is faithful to her husband, faithful to God as a believing widow (cf. 1 Timothy 5:3ff); she worships at the temple (since she has no husband, she worships God who is her husband-authority in the place of her dead husband, she worships and fasts and prays.)]

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. [Anna, too, awaits

the consolation or redemption of Jerusalem (spoken of as "Jerusalem" but this means of all of believing Israel, cf. Isaiah 40:1-5; Luke 1:68-75). The comforting-consolation of Israel is the same as the redemption of Israel: forgiveness of sins, atonement being made, peace with God and light to the Gentiles.]

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 favor of God was upon him.

Scripture Lesson

^{ESV} **Isaiah 40:1-5: Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.** ³ A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵ **And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.**"

^{ESV} **Isaiah 42:1-9:** Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. ² He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³ a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. ⁵ Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶ **"I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. ⁸ I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. ⁹ Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.**"

^{ESV} **Isaiah 49:1-7:** Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. ² He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. ³ And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." ⁴ But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God." ⁵ And now the LORD says, **he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him- for I am**

honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength-⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."⁷ Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

^{ESV} **Matthew 1:21-23 [The Angel of the Lord to Joseph betrothed to Mary]:** She [Mary] will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

^{ESV} **Leviticus 12:1-8:** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,² "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, 'If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean.'³ And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.⁴ Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed.⁵ But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days.⁶ "And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering,⁷ and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female.⁸ **And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.**"

^{ESV} **Colossians 2:9-14:** For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.¹¹ **In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.**¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.