

**He Was Born For This**  
**Luke 2:21-40**

Well brothers and sisters – one of my friends asked me what I would be preaching on this coming month and I told him that I was working on a series called “Who is this Jesus?” To which he responded – “you mean you don’t know Him?”

Now he was joking and having a bit of fun with me – but it’s a good question to ask ourselves? Do we really know Jesus... and how well do we really know him?

Because friends, the truth is that Jesus is one of the most familiar and well-known persons across this world, and yet he is arguably one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented persons at the same time. I think this little video clip will show you what I mean... (show video clip)

Now the key line in this video clip is “*I like to picture Jesus as...*” Because the truth is that we all like to picture Jesus in a particular way.

It might not be as outlandish or silly as we see here in this video clip – but it’s our own version of Jesus none the less.

We have all these little bits and pieces of who Jesus is from Sunday school, the bible – and probably a few things that are not from the bible as well.

Maybe we like to picture Jesus with blue eyes and blond hair... or maybe our Jesus is ready to help others – who help themselves... or maybe our Jesus is more God than human or more human than God...

And friends - these pictures of Jesus we’ve from come from what we’ve been told about Him, what we’ve heard about Him, and because of what we want to think about Him...

So that brings us back to that question – do we really know Jesus? And how well do we actually know Him?

You might remember hearing about a fellow named Judas who betrayed Jesus – because he discovered that Jesus was not who he had hoped he would be.

And the tragedy for Judas was that in reality Jesus was everything that he really needed – only he didn't know it, or he refused to see it, and it cost him eternal life.

So it's important to look at this question of who is Jesus because we don't want to end up like Judas – following Jesus, thinking we know Him, only to discover one day that He wasn't who we thought He was and missing out on what who Jesus really is and the eternal life that He can offer us.

So brothers and sisters, for the next two months we are going to study the gospel of Luke – which was written specifically *“so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”* (Luke 1:4)

Now I've just mentioned that Jesus can offer us eternal life – but don't take my word for it... You need to be able to go to

the scripture yourself and check what I've said to see if it is really true.

There are many things that are said about Jesus, many things that are taught about Jesus, some of it is true, some of it is partially true, some of it spun for an agenda and some of it is just downright false... and it's been like this from the start.

Fortunately someone named Luke realized it was necessary to provide a *“carefully investigated, orderly account”* (Luke 1:3) about Jesus so that we would have something trustworthy and reliable to use as reference guide about whatever we hear or think about Jesus - and see if it's correct.

And if it is – we hang on to it, if it needs correcting we correct it... and if it is false – we reject it.

Now the first thing you will notice about the gospel of Luke – especially in comparison to the gospels of Mathew, Mark and John is that – is that this is where almost all the material about baby Jesus comes from.

There is nothing in Mark or John about baby Jesus at all - and Mathew only brings up baby Jesus with the visit of the Magi, which did not occur right after the shepherds left the stable as we often show in our Christmas pageants, but probably when Jesus was about two years old.

So, why does Luke include what he does about baby Jesus? Does he want to give us the option of praying to cute and cuddly little baby Jesus, because he's more approachable?

No brothers and sisters – Luke wants to show us that Jesus' identity and who He was is an integral part of His birth – in fact we could even say that it gave birth to Him...

What do I mean? I mean that Jesus' identity and who he was had been decided and determined long before He was born and Luke wants to make sure that whatever we have may heard or think about Jesus that we set it in its proper context of what actually gave birth to Jesus.

Now you might be saying “wait a minute... I may not know a lot about Jesus, but I do know that He was born to a virgin named Mary!”

And that's correct– you can read about in Luke 1:26-34, but... why did Mary have to be a virgin? And why did she need to be engaged to a descendant of King David when Jesus was conceived? What made those conditions a necessity? Do you see what I'm getting at here?

Everything that Luke records about Jesus' birth and childhood is meant to tell us about who Jesus was born to become and what He would do and how we ought to understand Him...

Now if you want the answers to those questions I just posed... you will have to go and read the sermons from previous Decembers on our church website 😊

Today I want to focus our attentions on what Luke writes about Jesus being circumcised and how Mary and Joseph presented Him to Yahweh at the Temple and what happened

when they did that – because we typically skip past this section once Christmas Eve is done.

But everything Luke includes about baby Jesus is important in telling about Jesus – so what is this telling us?

Well brothers and sisters – let us put ourselves in the shoes of a God-fearing Gentile who has just heard the news that they can be considered legitimate members with full benefits of God Almighty's Covenant People – the nation of Israel, the Jews because of someone named Jesus.

And they could become part of God's chosen people without having to be circumcised, without having to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to dedicate their first born sons to God, they did not have to attend certain festivals or to worship at the Temple, and they did not have to restrict themselves to the court of the Women or the court of the Gentiles in order to worship God – in fact the temple had become irrelevant ... they could worship God anywhere and it did not have to include making sacrifices for sins any more.

In fact they could experience God's immediate and direct presence in a way that went beyond God's presence in the Holy of Holies – because God's Holy Spirit had been poured out upon them.

All because of someone named Jesus – so if you were a God-fearing Gentile, this would sound like an amazing bit of good news right? You would want to know more about this Jesus who has made all this possible!

Now let's switch shoes. Imagine you are one of God's chosen people – a natural born Israelite, descendent of Abraham, and you've lived a faithful and obedient life under the Law of Moses.

Not because you are legalistic - but because you love God and you show your love to God through obedience and covenant faithfulness – ask He has asked of you.

However, now you hear that these Gentiles – those whom you were required keep separate from through dress, diet, and

culture because they did not belong to God the way you did, who had often led your ancestors astray into idol worship...

These Gentiles are claiming to be a part of the Covenant relationship that you have with Yahweh without having to observe the Covenant stipulations made through Moses, and they consider themselves to be your equals before Yahweh and claim to have received the Spirit of God... all because of some man named Jesus?!

This sounds like the worst case of presumptuousness that you could possibly imagine – who are these Gentiles to make such claims – and who is this Jesus whom they base these claims upon? How dare they?! How dare He!!

Do you see the problem that is developing here brothers and sisters? And it was a very real problem for Luke – because... Luke wasn't a Jew.

Luke was a Gentile who believed the message about Jesus – which he likely heard from the apostle Paul, that because of

Jesus Christ as Paul writes in Col 3:11 *“there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.”*

But – as you can imagine – many Jewish people and their leaders did not understand how this could be, and quite a few of them rejected this message. They argued against what the disciples claimed was now possible because of Jesus.

How can this Jesus speak for God and say that God has made these changes in His covenant when He disregards the Law of Moses and appears to treat it with contempt?

If Jesus really was God's promised Messiah – wouldn't it be evident to everyone, wouldn't he rally all the religious leaders and unite all the people behind him – how can someone sent by God bring so much division to God's people?

These were serious accusations – and if they were true, it would mean that the Gentiles were being sold a false bill of goods and they were not actually included in God's family

when they thought they were – because this Jesus really wasn't who his disciples claimed He was.

So many of the Gentiles were wondering and doubting... *“are we part of God’s people because of Jesus or are we not?”*

Thus as Luke tells us, he investigated and drew up this orderly account about Jesus so that *“so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”* (1:4)

And he includes this story about Jesus being presented at the temple, to specifically counter the accusations that Jesus was a law-breaker, who was including the gentiles in ways he should not and to show the division this caused among Israel was already anticipated, and to remind the Jews that what was happening in Jesus' name honored them.

So let's look at this for a moment – in 2:21 Luke notes that Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day, which was proper according to the covenant law.

Mary and Joseph were also obedient to name him Jesus (meaning 'he saves') as they had been told to do by an Angel. This wasn't something they invented themselves.

Now let's read vs. 22- 24 *“When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”*

Brothers and sisters what Luke is showing us here is that right from the beginning Jesus was in a right relationship with the Law of Moses and thus with God - because his parents were diligent in obedience to it –even in matters that many Jews may have let slide.

Let's keep reading here vs. 30-32 where Simeon, a righteous and devout man – also in good standing with the Law of Moses, moved by the Holy Spirit no less – and thus a very

credible witness prophesies publically about the baby Jesus – with nothing to base his knowledge and words on except they have been given by the Holy Spirit...

Simeon says *“For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”*

So Luke is saying that right from the start, Jesus was born to connect to the Gentiles and that this was anticipated, it wasn't a secret that God had kept hidden and surprised His people with a sudden unexpected change...

The inclusion of the Gentiles, receiving the revelation of who God really was through Jesus, is something that affirms Israel as God's chosen people – since Jesus is one of them, by birth and by covenant obedience, and it fulfills their purpose.

And Simeon continues prophesying to Mary saying *“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against..”* (vs. 34)

So again – right from the start – Luke shows it was anticipated that Jesus would be a divisive figure for Israel and that many would speak against Him.

However – at that moment, Luke wants to show some would speak in favor of Jesus so Luke introduces us to the prophetess Anna.

But Luke isn't quite done with showing agreement with the Law. In Deuteronomy 19:15 it says *“One witness is not enough... a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”*

Simeon is the first witness, and Anna is Luke's second witness and she has impressive credentials - she is *“the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.”* (vs. 36-37)

And what is her testimony? *“She gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.” (vs. 38)*

So this testimony about Jesus is legally presented in accordance with the Law.

Furthermore Anna’s reaction to the baby Jesus shows us there is something special about this child, and it reinforces the more specific details that Simeon has prophesied.

So in all of this shows that Jesus was raised to respect and keep the Law of Moses, by pious godly parents, it is testified to by respectable aged devout elders – and Luke has gathered this information to refute the charge that Jesus was at odds with the Law of Moses – not so... He was raised to love it.

What this means is that Gentiles who had gladly received the news that they could belong to God’s covenant family because of Jesus - did not need to doubt that this was true when they heard these accusations about Jesus.

In fact these accusations against Jesus actually serve to confirm Jesus’ work and mission because they had been anticipated right from the start, see how that works?

Now, all this might have you might be thinking - So what??? It’s interesting and all... but really, what does this have to do with my day to day life? How is it relevant to me?

Well friends, Luke records how Simeon says that Jesus is going to be *“a light for revelation to the Gentiles...” (vs.32)*

Simeon doesn’t say that Jesus is going to be a light that is relevant to the Gentiles...

You see relevance is all about how something that is outside of our day to day experience and activities can find its way into our life, fit into it, and become a part of it.

For example there is a mayoral election coming up in Calgary, and over the next few months the candidates for mayor are going to make their pitch as to how they can make their way



into your everyday life and fit into it – beneficially – so that you will give them your vote. That is ‘relevance’

Revelation is what happens when we become aware of something outside of our day to day experience and activities that is so significant... it shifts what our life is focused on, and it becomes the center of our life.

When it was revealed to the people in the Caribbean and Florida that a massive Hurricane was bearing down on them – their day to day life shifted and became centered and focused on preparing for the arrival of this storm. That is revelation.

You see the difference?

So – through the events that take place at the very beginning of his life, Jesus reveals to us Gentiles that God’s Covenant Law is the central focus of a relationship between God and humanity, and it defines it.

When God revealed himself to Israel as Yahweh and made his Covenant with them, He took them out of their day to day life as slaves in Egypt, and shifted the focus of their daily life to be on Himself as their God through His covenant law.

And one of the distinguishing features of God’s covenant law was that Israel was not to make any images – statues or pictures or representations of Yahweh... why?

Because friends - when we make images of God we tend to project whatever our life is centered on into the image God ends up reflecting us. We end up defining God instead of God defining us.

So brothers and sisters – Jesus makes us aware, reveals to us that life should be centered on a Covenant relationship with God characterized by loving obedience. What Luke tells us about baby Jesus reveals to us that if this is not our main concern - it should be.

Otherwise friends – even as we call ourselves followers of Jesus – we will attempt to make Jesus relevant instead of understanding that He is a revelation.

So Friends – let’s examine our picture of Jesus over the next month as we do this series and honestly evaluate if it lines up with the picture we see in the Gospel of Luke.

Because how you picture and understand Jesus will reveal to you what is truly at the center of your life. It will show you if you focused on God’s Covenant relationship with humanity and with you... or on something else?

Like Ricky Bobby’s friend, Cal Naughton said in that clip we watched... *“I like to think of Jesus as wearin' a Tuxedo T-shirt, 'cause it says, like, "I want to be formal, but I'm here to party too." I like to party, so I like my Jesus to party.”*

Brothers and sisters – we do not define Jesus, Jesus needs to be re-defining us...

And that starts by accepting what Luke shows us about Jesus at the beginning of his gospel - it’s not about Jesus’ being relevant to us, but understanding that He a revelation.

So may the Holy Spirit work in our hearts and minds so that our lives begin to shift and become centered on what Jesus reveals is the relationship framework between God and humans - our Covenant relationship with God and His Law.

And as we do this – may it become true of us what Luke says of the baby Jesus as He grew up... May we grow and become strong; and be filled with wisdom, and may the grace of God be upon us.

Because Jesus was born for this - Amen