

42-02-04.wpd —Appearance and Reality
Epiphany, Incarnation, glory, revelation,
Luke 2:21-35

Jesus may appear to be *just a man*, but in reality, He's God's Son.

INTRODUCTION: (text from Scripture reading)

—In the late 1800s, an poor-looking couple walked into the office of the president of Harvard University, waiting for hours after asking to see him. Finally, to get them out of his office, the president had them come in. The lady told him, "*We had a son that attended Harvard for one year. He loved Harvard. He was happy here. But about a year ago, he was accidentally killed. My husband and I would like to erect a memorial to him, somewhere on campus.*" Instead of being touched, the president was shocked, and said gruffly, "*Madam, we can't put up a statue for every person who attended Harvard and died. If we did, this place would look like a cemetery.*" "*Oh, no,*" the lady explained, "*we don't want to erect a statue. We thought we would like to give a building to Harvard.*" Staring at their plain clothes and common appearance, he exclaimed, "*A building! Do you have any idea how much a building costs? We have over seven and a half million dollars in the physical plant at Harvard.*" The lady fell silent, then turned to her husband and said quietly, "*Is that all it costs to start a University? Why don't we just start our own?*" Her husband nodded. Then, leaving the office of the Harvard president, the couple, Mr. & Mrs. Leland Stanford traveled to Palo Alto, CA, where they built the university that bears their name, a memorial to a son that Harvard no longer cared about. Appearances don't always match reality. To many today, HOM.idea. People need an "epiphany."

—*Epiphany* = "*a manifestation.*" Among the biblical events manifesting who Jesus really was is His circumcision and presentation in temple.

—Jesus was born under and immersed in the Old Covenant of God with Israel. The two terms used in the NT to identify the OT were "the law and the prophets." This epiphany passage directly connects Jesus with those terms. His presentation at the temple in obedience to the law made Him *appear* to be just like any other Jewish, first-born baby boy. But God let it be *manifested* through the prophet Simeon that *in reality* God was presenting us with the Messiah, the Anointed One!

I. The Infant Jesus Was Presented to the Law in Three Ways

A. Circumcision at 8 days old: "*it's the law!*" (What did it show?)

1. It illustrated Christ's future words: "Not my will" [In the hospital we joke: "*Does he want a circ?*"; Jesus passively experienced the minor suffering of circumcision under an earthly parent's will; later He actively submitted to God the Father's will for *ultimate* suffering.

2. It identified Jesus as a candidate to fulfill the promise that all the world would be blessed in "the seed of Abraham" (every Jewish boy was *circumcised* as a visible sign of that hope and possibly as the boy who would fulfill that hope and end the need for its sign.)
3. When Jesus *fulfilled that hope*, His own circumcision became a new sign foreshadowing the Law's fulfillment at the Cross, and transforming the meaning of circumcision from an outward ritual to an inward holiness— Col 2:11, In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ.

B. Purification after birth: "*it's the law!*" (What did it show?)

1. It portrayed *original sin* being dealt with temporarily in a holy way— Lev 12:6-7a , When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her....
2. Mary and Joseph appeared too poor to afford the required lamb [the poor could bring 2 pigeons instead], but in reality they brought "the Lamb of God" who would "take away the sin of the world."
3. As with His circumcision, Jesus' birth would fulfill the need for purification after birth: He would bring a "*new birth*" that gave people the *real purification* that the ceremony only pointed to. (Our *first birth* can't make us holy; *new birth in Christ* does!)

C. Consecration of the 1st-born son: "*it's the law!*" (What did it show?)

1. A reminder of how God redeemed His people-- Exo 13:12-15, you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD. Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons. "In days to come, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.'
2. It *appeared* that Mary and Joseph were *buying back* Jesus from the LORD [at a redemption price of 5 shekels of silver], but *in reality* God had given His Son as *the redemption price* to "buy back" the lost human race to Himself.

TRANS: From all appearances everything was happening in normal

Jewish fashion, but for *this little Jewish boy* these ceremonies had a deeper reality. They were presenting Him to the requirements of a Law that He was sent to fulfill. But this wasn't clear until a 2nd voice from the Old Covenant spoke. The law required that "*in the mouth of two or three witnesses, let every word be established.*" This happened with Simeon...

II. The Infant Jesus Was Presented to the Prophets

- A. The "teacher of the law" & "the prophet of the Lord" [two lips-one mouth]
1. "the Word of the Lord" & "the power of the Spirit" (both are necessary)
 2. *confession of truth & conviction of truth* (one supports the other)
 3. *mental comprehension & emotional commitment* (we need both)
- B. Simeon's hope for "the consolation of Israel" promised in the Word was energized by his relationship to the Spirit (read v.25-27a):
1. "*the Holy Spirit was upon him*" (He's *in* us, yet are we responsive to Him as Simeon was? Are we "*waiting*" as Simeon did?)
 2. It was "*revealed to Him by the Holy Spirit*" (Do we listen as Simeon?)
 3. He was "*moved by the Spirit*" (Do we follow the Spirit's prompting?)
- C. Simeon looked past the appearance and saw the reality: "*my eyes have seen your salvation*"
1. The reality of Christ reached beyond Simeon's expectation: "*a light to the Gentiles*" (not just a Jewish hope, but for "all people")
 2. What appeared to be a little Jewish baby was in reality the center of all human destiny–
 - a. Christ is the focal point of both "*falling and rising*"
 - b. Some would miss God's "*sign*" [the *miracle* of incarnate Deity), and it would be "*spoken against*" [sign of Christ still rejected by unbelievers]
 - c. Simeon saw in Jesus the reality of the coming judgment: "*the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed*" (now we ask the Lord to search our hearts; later the exposure will be *involuntary*).

CONCLUSION:

--The OT finished its job when the two lips of the law and the prophets combined as *one mouth* testifying to the reality of Jesus being the long-awaited Messiah, the Anointed Holy One.

–**Jesus may appear to be just a man, but in reality, He's God's Son.** He's not to be admired as just a *great human teacher*, but to be accepted as *incarnate Deity and the Savior of the world*.

Luke 2:21-35 (NIV)

21On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

22When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord

23(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"),

24and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

25Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was **waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.**

26It had been **revealed to him by the Holy Spirit** that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27**Moved by the Spirit**, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,

28Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.

30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people,

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

33The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

34Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,

35so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."