

# THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

## - NEW TESTAMENT -

### Chapter 5

**"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."**

#### Luke 2 v 21

Nowadays, little children are baptised. Baptism signifies the washing away of sin. Just as our bodies are washed by the water, so must our souls be cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus.

The Jews did not yet have baptism, but among the Jewish people the little boys were circumcised. Circumcision signifies the same thing as baptism.

Oh children, you too have been baptised, but baptism does not save. That is not sufficient. No! many people who have been baptised are still lost.

Baptism itself, I wrote, does not save us, no, baptism shows us that we must become converted.

When the Lord Jesus was eight days old, He too was circumcised. Oh, but why? The Lord Jesus did no sin. The Lord Jesus had no need of cleansing. Yet He was circumcised. Why then? ... Listen now, carefully. Actually this may be too difficult for you, but still I will tell you something about it.

The Lord Jesus was not circumcised in order to become cleansed Himself from sin, for He had no sin. He came on earth in fact to save His people from sin. That is why He became MAN. But He must in all things be like mankind. On Him was laid the sins of His people. He was accountable for their sin. And that is why the Lord Jesus was circumcised.

Oh, what a deep humiliation for the Son of God. He was counted equal with the greatest sinners. He was circumcised, that He might be in truth the Saviour.

God had commanded Abraham that all his descendants must be circumcised. That was also written in the laws which God later gave to Israel. Well then, the Lord Jesus came UNDER the law. He came to fulfil the law.

Later you will understand this better, boys and girls. This was a difficult portion, but I could not leave it out.

#### Luke 2 vv 22-40

The doors of the temple in Jerusalem stand wide open. Priests walk about in white clothing.

Daily Jews came into the temple to make offerings. Daily too, little children were brought into the temple. Oh! but why? ...

In Egypt as you already know, all the firstborn of the Egyptians had been slain by the destroying angel in that terrible night. This did not happen to the Israelites, for they had at God's command struck the blood upon the door posts. They were safe behind that.

Then God had decreed that all the firstborn of the Israelites belonged to Him. But when they camped at Sinai and had erected the

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tabernacle, the Lord did not take all the firstborn to serve in the tabernacle, but chose only the tribe of Levi for this purpose.

True, all the firstborn had to be brought into the tabernacle and later into the temple. Then that child was presented to the Lord.

The priest would take such a child in his arms and lift it on high, as if to say "Lord, this child belongs to Thee".

You can therefore well understand that children were brought daily to the temple. It was a daily duty for the priest. Oh, very often they carried out this duty without giving it much thought, but merely out of habit, mostly it was just outward form, nothing more!

That is why in the temple priests are walking round all the time. They are looking for parents who want to present their child to the Lord.

Look, there goes another couple into the house of God. The priest sees at a glance that they are not rich. They are dressed very plainly. The rich had to offer a lamb on such an occasion. But the very poor offered at the presentation a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons. God had ordained that in His law.

These people have only brought a pair of pigeons - the poor offering. Who are they then?

The husband is Joseph; the wife is Mary and that Child is the Son of God, the Messiah. But the priest does not know that. Of course not, to him it is an ordinary child. He sees nothing special in it.

The Lord Jesus is now forty days old and according to the law of Moses the child must now be presented. So that is why Joseph and Mary have journeyed from Bethlehem to the temple at

Jerusalem.

The priest takes the pigeons, kills them, catches the blood and offers them up to the Lord. Then he takes that Child in his arms, lifts it up and presents it to the Lord. Oh, priest, if you only knew Whom you hold there in your arms. But he doesn't know.

But ... look now. A man is entering the court. His face is grave. He walks straight towards that simple pair who stand with their Child near the altar.

What next? Then his eyes begin to glitter, his face brightens. Oh, look now! He takes that Child in his arms, moved with joy, and cries with trembling voice: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word."

In complete amazement the priest who stands by sees all this. He cannot understand it. Nothing like this has ever happened to him before. Joseph and Mary too look on in wonder. To them this stranger is quite unknown. Who is this man, and why does he act so strangely?

Everyone in Jerusalem knows this man. The priest too knows him well, for evidently he came often into the house of God. But Joseph and Mary do not know him. Who is he then? ...

His name is SIMEON. Now just read what the Bible says about him: He "was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him". Thus it is written in God's word.

He has for years looked and longed for the coming Redeemer, for the Saviour. He waited for the consolation of Israel. The Lord had promised Simeon that he should not die before the Saviour was born. Yes, and more, he should not die before he had seen the Lord Jesus with his

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own eyes.

How long he had had to wait we do not know. Oh, very likely years had passed by. Years of looking and longing. It was such a long time. Oh, would it ever be fulfilled? Could not death come unexpectedly and take him before he had seen the King? You may be sure that Simeon was often attacked by the prince of darkness, that is, by the devil.

Now he comes into the temple. Why? ... Just read what is written in God's word: "he came by the Spirit into the temple".

When he approaches these simple people a sense of heavenly joy fills his soul. Oh, he feels it, the Holy Ghost says to his heart, that this is the king of Israel, the Son of David.

The priest sees nothing exceptional in that Child, but Simeon certainly does. That is because Simeon sees Him through faith. That Child is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

He cries out with joy: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!" It is as though he says: "Let me die now, Lord, now let me go, for I have seen the Saviour." But Simeon sees more. Jesus is not only his Saviour, Jesus is not only the Saviour for many Jews, but also for the heathen. Many heathens shall be redeemed from sin by this Saviour. He will be a light, to lighten the Gentiles.

For a moment there is silence. Joseph and Mary marvel at these things.

Then Simeon turns towards Mary, the mother of Jesus. Solemnly he continues "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against." It is as though he says: "Mary, not

everyone will believe in Him. Oh no, many will reject Him, many will mock and despise Him".

Simeon then, knows and sees through faith that the Lord will be despised and spurned by thousands.

"A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also", he says to Mary.

It is just as though he has a sight of Mary standing by her Son's cross, and he feels the pain and grief which will pierce that mother-heart. That is why he prophesies that that will happen.

Slowly and timidly an old woman draws near. This is Anna, a prophetess. She is a widow, 84 years old. She was always in the temple, serving God day and night. So she too was a God-fearing woman. Anna too, had longed for years for the coming of the Saviour.

Then at last she gets close by them, a sense of heavenly joy fills her soul also. She too gave thanks to the Lord, which means that she also sees in this little Child the Son of God. She too sees in this Child her Saviour.

A little later they have all left. Mary and Joseph return with their Child to Bethlehem. The priest also departs and possibly relates it to the other priests. Simeon and Anna too leave the temple. Simeon went to his home with peace in His heart, with a happy smile on his face. But Anna does not go straight home. No, Anna has many friends who still live in Jerusalem. These were people who feared God and who longed for the fulfilling of God's promises. She goes to tell them. She cannot keep silence. Her eyes glisten, her voice trembles with joy. "Oh, I have seen Him", she tells them, "the Messiah has been in the temple". In this way, these gracious people were informed of the birth of Christ.

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You think this is a lovely story, don't you? In your thoughts it is just as though you are standing close by. Is that all? Is there in your heart too a longing for the Lord Jesus? Oh, by nature, no. By nature we hate him. We do not need the Saviour, at least we think not. Yet we deceive ourselves fearfully. Without the Saviour we shall never, never receive peace in our souls.

Oh, children, do you belong to the mockers and despisers of the Lord Jesus? The Saviour has come not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. You, too can be saved. What a

terrible thing it would be to have to meet God unconverted. Kneel down then and ask if He will also give you a new heart. Plead with Him daily for grace. Who knows, He may hear your prayer. We do not know whom God has saved and whom he has not. That is not for us to judge. It is our duty to plead with God, without ceasing, for mercy. It is our duty to use the means of grace which God has given us.

What a privilege it is that God still gives us these means of grace.