STUDY GUIDE · 14 MAY 2026

Set Apart and Sent: The Child Jesus as God's Consecrated Savior

Person of Christ

Jesus enters the temple as one set apart — his parents' obedient presentation of him according to the Law of Moses frames him from the very beginning as holy to the Lord, fulfilling the Exodus pattern of the firstborn belonging to God.

Luke is careful to tell us exactly why Jesus is in the temple at all: his parents did everything according to the Law of the Lord. Van Roekel draws attention to this before anything else, because the obedient presentation of the child is not mere background detail — it is the theological foundation for everything Simeon and Anna are about to say. Two separate commands from the Law converge in this moment. From Leviticus 12 comes the purification rite for a woman after childbirth; from Exodus 13 comes the requirement that every firstborn male who opens the womb be presented to the Lord as holy. Together they frame the infant Jesus as one who belongs to God in a unique and consecrated way, even before a word of prophecy is spoken over him.

There is a profound humility in this. Van Roekel presses the point: Was Jesus a sinful person who needed to fulfill these rites? He was not. He is God Most High become a human being for our salvation. And yet he submits — God over the Law becomes God submissive to the Law as a human being, in order to fulfill all the righteousness that we owe to God. This matters because

Christians can sometimes speak as though we are saved only by Jesus' death and resurrection, quietly setting aside his life. But here, from the very beginning, we see him living the righteous life we could not live and yet owe to God. His consecration is not ceremonial housekeeping; it is the opening movement of a perfect obedience that will run all the way to the cross.

The offering Mary and Joseph bring tells its own story. A pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons was the provision the Law made for those who were too poor to afford a lamb. Van Roekel notes that God Most High chose these parents deliberately — not because of their wealth or social standing, but because they were devoted to the Word of God. They had little to give materially, and yet they gave what the Law required, and they gave it faithfully. For parents today, Van Roekel draws a pointed application: the priority God set for His own Son's upbringing is the same priority he sets for ours. In households where pressure mounts to give children every advantage, the passage calls us back to the question of what we are most faithfully passing on. Mary and Joseph taught Jesus the Scriptures day in and day out, brought him to synagogue each Sabbath, and made the four-day journey to Jerusalem every Passover. That pattern of devotion to God's Word — not any particular resource or program — is what Luke holds up as the context in which the Holy Spirit is pleased to work and speak.

- What does it mean that even the sinless Son of God submitted to the rites of purification and presentation?
- How does the poverty of Mary and Joseph's offering — two doves rather than a lamb — highlight what God values most in those he uses?
- In what ways does Jesus' consecration under the Law fulfill righteousness on our behalf, not just model obedience?

- How should the priority Mary and Joseph gave to the Word of God shape the way we order our own households?

Two long-waiting saints, guided by the Holy Spirit, identify Jesus as God's sent salvation — a light for all nations and the redemption Jerusalem had longed for. Their witness corrects shallow expectations and shows that the child is not merely dedicated to God but dispatched from God for the world.

Simeon is introduced as a man who is righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel — a phrase Van Roekel unpacks as a direct echo of Isaiah 40:1–2, where God commands his people to be comforted because their warfare is ended and their iniquity is pardoned. Simeon has been living inside that promise for years, waiting for the person in whom the promise would become flesh. When the Holy Spirit moves him into the temple at exactly the right moment and he takes the infant in his arms, his response is not excitement but peace: 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation.' Van Roekel uses this moment to press a direct question on his congregation: Are you ready to die like Simeon was? The comfort Simeon receives is not sentimental; it is the settled peace of someone who has personally trusted the Savior God sent.

But Simeon immediately widens the frame. This salvation, he declares, has been prepared 'in the presence of all peoples' — a light for Gentiles and glory for Israel. Van Roekel points to Isaiah 49:6, where God says it is 'too light a thing' for the servant merely to restore Israel; he will be a light to the nations so that God's salvation reaches the ends of the earth. That scope, Van Roekel notes, is why Christ City is an international congregation two thousand years later in Kitsilano: Jesus was sent not for some people but for all people. Yet Simeon's blessing carries a shadow. He tells Mary that this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many, a sign that is opposed, and that a sword

will pierce her own soul. Van Roekel reads this as the cross casting its shape forward: comfort and conflict are not opposites in Luke but two faces of the same salvation, because the Savior who lifts the humble must also confront the proud.

Anna completes the witness. She has spent her long widowhood fasting and praying in the temple night and day — a life Van Roekel describes as a living embodiment of Psalm 84 ('Better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere') and Psalm 42 ('As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs for you'). When she sees the infant, she cannot stop talking: she gives thanks to God and speaks of him to all who are waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. Van Roekel holds her up as a model not just of piety but of mission — the natural overflow of truly meeting the sent Savior is telling everyone you can find.

- What had Simeon been waiting for, and how does calling him 'the consolation of Israel' connect to Isaiah's promises of comfort after judgment?
- Why does Simeon say Jesus is salvation prepared 'in the presence of all peoples,' and what does that say about the scope of the mission Jesus has been sent to accomplish?
- Anna 'did not depart from the temple' — how does her posture of waiting and worship model what it means to live in light of a sent Savior?
- Simeon warns of a sword piercing Mary's soul and a sign that is opposed — how does this shadow of conflict belong within the same announcement of comfort and redemption?

The temple episode at age twelve is the hinge moment where the consecrated child begins to articulate his identity as the sent Son. His declaration — 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' — shows a growing human consciousness of divine mission, while his return to Nazareth in submission demonstrates that the mission will

unfold through obedience, not spectacle.

Luke frames the entire temple episode between two nearly identical statements: 'the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him' (v. 40), and 'Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man' (v. 52). Van Roekel calls this a deliberate sandwich — Luke wants us to see and not miss that Jesus had a full human childhood and a full human adolescence, including a growing human mind. According to his divine nature, there is nothing the infant Jesus did not know; according to his human nature, he had to learn to speak, stumbled through bad grammar, and worked his way through the synagogue readings every Sabbath just as any Jewish boy would. He learned the words of God — his own revealed Word — from Joseph and Mary. There was, Van Roekel adds, no laziness or lack of love in Jesus that kept him from that study: every word of God fell on the soil of his heart and produced fruit.

The climax of the scene is the twelve-year-old's question to his mother: 'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' Van Roekel notes that this is a shocking statement with no Old Testament precedent. Neither David, who longed to build the temple, nor Solomon, who built it, nor any king, priest, or prophet ever addressed God as 'my Father' in the first person. Jesus speaks this way because, according to his divine nature, he has existed as God the Son in relationship with God the Father for all of eternity. What Luke is showing us, Van Roekel suggests, is the human mind of Jesus growing into conscious awareness of his divine identity — a 12-year-old beginning to understand that his true Father was not Joseph but God Most High, and that for this mission, there was nowhere he needed to be more than in his eternal Father's house.

Yet the episode closes not with Jesus asserting himself but with Jesus going home and being submissive to his parents — parents who, Luke tells us, did not understand what he had said. Van Roekel finds this astounding: Jesus actually knew everything his parents were about to say before they said it, and still placed himself under their instruction. That willing submission is not a pause in the mission; it is the mission taking its proper shape. The obedience that began at his

presentation in the temple continues here, pointing forward to the ultimate submission — to the cross — through which our broken humanity is healed.

- Why is it significant that Jesus calls the temple 'my Father's house' when no figure in the Old Testament ever addressed God as 'my Father' in the first person?
- Luke brackets this episode with nearly identical growth statements in verses 40 and 52 — what is he trying to ensure we do not miss about Jesus' full humanity?
- How does a child who is fully divine also genuinely grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man?
- What does Jesus' willing submission to imperfect parents — even though he knew more than they did — reveal about the shape of the mission he was sent to accomplish?

The child who was presented to God in the temple and who declared himself sent by the Father is the same Savior who, as fully human and fully divine, lived the obedient life we could not live and died the death we deserved. His consecration and his commission converge at the cross and resurrection, opening adoption as children of God to all who trust him.

The fourth-century church father Athanasius used an illustration that Van Roekel returns to more than once: when an artist's portrait is marred and scratched beyond recognition, the loving artist does not throw it away. Instead, he invites the subject to sit again so he can redraw the broken image in the likeness of the perfect original. This is what God does through Jesus. The Son adds full humanity to his full divinity — not to perform a ceremony or model piety, but to take our corrupted humanity into himself, carry it to the cross, and raise it renewed. What is not assumed cannot be healed, as Gregory of Nazianzus put it. Jesus took a fully human mind to heal our twisted

minds, a fully human soul to heal our disordered desires, and fully human flesh to redeem our bodies toward resurrection. His life of perfect obedience — from the temple presentation through the adolescent submission at Nazareth — is not a warm-up for his death. It is the substance of a righteousness he earns on our behalf.

This is where Galatians 4:4–6 becomes luminous. God sent his Son, born of woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, 'so that we might receive adoption as sons.' Because Jesus as a human being called God 'my Father' — something no one had ever dared in the first person — we now have the right to do the same. The Spirit of the Son has been sent into our hearts, crying 'Abba, Father.' Van Roekel calls this the most staggering implication of the incarnation: that the infinite God of all creation becomes approachable as Father for all who trust in Christ. Simeon held that promise in his arms and said he could die in peace. We hold it by faith, and the peace is the same.

The invitation at the end of both sermons is identical: stop looking at an imagined Jesus and look at the real one — the one who is fully human and fully divine, who brings comfort, conflict, and redemption, who was set apart from the womb and sent from the Father for the world. It is in beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:18, that we are transformed from one degree of glory to another. The most practical thing any of us can do is see him more clearly — and then, like Anna, go tell everyone we can find.

- How does seeing Jesus as both consecrated to God and sent by God change the way you think about what he accomplished in his life — not just his death?
- Simeon could say 'now I depart in peace' because he held the sent Savior — what does that peace look like for those who trust in the same Jesus today?

- What is the relationship between Jesus' perfect, fully human obedience and our own growth from one degree of glory to another?
- Which reality do you find hardest to hold onto — that Jesus brings comfort, that he brings conflict, or that he is both fully human and fully divine — and why?

Conclusion

From the turtle-dove offering of two poor parents to a twelve-year-old's quiet declaration in the temple courts, Luke shows us a child who is at once the object of God's consecration and the agent of God's sending. Mary and Joseph carry him into the temple in obedience to the Law; Simeon and Anna receive him as the fulfillment of Israel's centuries-long hope; and Jesus himself announces, with a directness that astonishes everyone in earshot, that he must be in his Father's house. Consecration and commission are not two separate stories — they are one story, told from two angles, about the same child who will one day tear the temple curtain with his own flesh and rebuild the meeting place between God and humanity in his resurrection body.

The witnesses in these passages show us how to respond. Simeon waited, worshiped, and died in peace because he held the sent Savior with his own hands. Anna never left the temple, fasting and praying and longing — and when she saw the infant, she could not stop talking about him to everyone waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. That is still the shape of the faithful life: waiting with expectancy, worshiping with wonder, and telling everyone within reach that the redemption they have longed for has a name. His name is Jesus — the light of the Gentiles, the glory of Israel, the consolation of every soul that has ever sat in the shadow of judgment and dared to hope for comfort. He was set apart for you. He was sent for you. Behold him.

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