

**“The Infant Savior,
Born under the Law”**

Introduction:

Since today is Christmas Day, I thought that we would step aside from our study of 1 Thessalonians and give our attention to several of the episodes that are recorded toward the conclusion of the infancy narratives of the Gospel of Luke—Luke 2:21-40. Let us turn there.

In the infancy stories contained in Luke’s Gospel we have taught and reinforced to us that our Savior, Jesus of Nazareth, was born to be the Savior of the world. Luke sets forth the Lord Jesus as sent by God in order to redeem lowly people, including shepherds, humble Jewish men and women, but also Gentiles. These accounts should encourage us and those with whom we speak concerning their souls, that God receives us and will receive them through the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

There are seven discernible stories, or episodes in Luke’s infancy narratives. Here they are:

- (1) The birth of John the Baptist foretold (1:5-25)
- (2) The birth of Jesus foretold (1:26-38)
- (3) The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth (1:39-56)
- (4) The birth of John (1:57-80)
- (5) The birth of Jesus (2:1-20)
- (6) The presentation of Jesus in the temple (2:21-40)
- (7) The boy Jesus in the temple (2:41-52)

We are giving our attention to the sixth episode, in which we read of the presentation of Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem. Let us read Luke 2:21-40:

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

²²Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD”), ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹“Lord, now You are letting

Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;

³⁰For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

³¹Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

³²A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.”

³³And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

³⁶Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. ³⁸And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. ³⁹So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. ⁴⁰And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

Before us are the record of events that took place in the days after the birth of our Lord. It was just a few days before that the angels had appeared to the shepherds in the fields. They had announced the fact that a Savior had been born *unto them*, that this Savior was born for all people, even lowly people like shepherds. The sign confirming this truth to the shepherds was that they would find the newborn in a manger, wrapped in swaddling cloths. The shepherds rushed to the place where the infant lie wrapped in *swaddling clothes of humility*, the attire of a pauper baby, thus their faith was confirmed that the angels spoke the truth to them. They, themselves being poor and rejected within the society of Israel of that day, nevertheless, would be recipients of salvation wrought through the life of this child.

The manner that our Lord was born into the world engenders hope, elicits peace, and encourages the approach of all lowly and needy people everywhere to come to Him for salvation from God’s wrath upon them for their sins. No one may believe himself to be excluded from the promise of the blessing of salvation that this child brings, because he is of a lower economic or social station in life. Any one may come to Him and know that He will receive him if he comes in humility and faith. You or I are assured that in coming to Him He has received us, if indeed we have come to Him on His terms. We come to Him as ones who are needy, looking to receive freely what he has to offer--forgiveness of sins, fellowship with His Father, and a life of righteousness, peace, and true joy.

Now the shepherds related the account to those present (2:17), resulting in the *wonderment* of Joseph and Mary at the news. We read of Mary in verse 20, that she “*treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.*” The shepherds then returned to their fields, “*glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.*”

By the way, this is the kind of activity that should characterize us whenever we hear news of our Lord, whether it is through preaching or teaching. We are to treasure the bit of news, storing it away as a treasure deposited securely in our hearts, so that we might work through the matter, thinking and praying for understanding regarding its implications. We are then to do as these shepherds did, they were “glorifying and praising God” that we were so blessed to have been allowed by Him to have been given such news. It is a truism, that it is a great privilege to have in our hands the news that angels longed to look into and prophets strained to understand (cf. 1 Pet. 1:12). And it is great sin to take it lightly or regard it with disinterest or of little value. May God put it in our hearts to love His Word and seek to understand it fully.

In verses 21 and 22, which we read, we have related the next episode in the life of Jesus, his circumcision and his presentation in the temple.

I. The circumcision and naming of Jesus (2:21)

We read in Luke 2:21 of the circumcision and naming of the infant. “And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.” Let us first consider...

A. The circumcision of the infant Jesus

Our Lord was born a Jew into a Jewish family, a family which belonged to Israel, which was in covenant relationship with God through the law of Moses. This was a privileged family. God said of Israel in a number of different places and in various ways, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people." When God had established His covenant through Moses with the nation of Israel, Gentiles were excluded from the blessing and promises of God. Paul wrote of Gentile Christians, who, prior to conversion to Jesus Christ, had been outside of God's covenant nation. He wrote,

¹¹Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh-- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- ¹²that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

God had set Israel as a nation apart from the world. The Jews of this nation (along with a few proselyte Gentiles) were greatly blessed, but also greatly responsible to live before God in the manner that He prescribed for them. People entered this covenant through physical birth, and circumcision of the male infant as a sign that they were set apart from the fallen world unto God. And so, when God enacted the Mosaic covenant with Israel, a great spiritual and ethnic barrier was erected, excluding Gentiles from participation in the blessings of knowing God.

But thankfully, Jesus Christ that barrier of the mosaic covenant was removed that had separated and excluded Gentiles from the blessing of God upon Israel. Through faith in Jesus Christ, Gentiles are now citizens of "Israel", the covenant people of God. We read further in Ephesians 2 of Paul writing to Gentile Christians:

¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

¹⁹Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:1 NKJ)

Now circumcision of the male child was viewed as essential and necessary to enter into participation of Israel's stature and blessing. But with circumcision came obligation. That child upon circumcision was bound to keep the law of Moses as a covenant, as the basis of his relationship with God. Paul wrote of this binding obligation of the circumcised to the law of Moses. These words are expressed negatively to those who thought that after Jesus Christ came, died, and rose from the dead, that circumcision remained an essential duty in order to be saved from sin. Paul wrote, "And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law" (Gal 5:3). Paul declared in no uncertain terms that those days of privilege and blessing for ethnic Israel were past. After the coming of Jesus Christ, anyone who attempts to relate to God based upon the law of God as a covenant, thinking it will bring him salvation, will find himself excluded from the salvation that God gives through Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, "

²Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing...⁴You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. ⁵For

we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. (Gal. 5:2, 4-6)

When they circumcised the baby Jesus on the eighth day following his birth, his parents, his nation, but ultimately His God, bound Jesus to keep the law of Moses as a covenant.¹ And so, Jesus lived as a Jew under the law of the Jews His entire life. During His earthly ministry, Jesus ministered to the Jews exclusively, for He had come into this world, we read in Romans 15:8, to become *“a servant to the circumcision (that is the Jews) behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the Fathers.”*

And so, as a Jewish male, Jesus was to be circumcised when he was eight days old. This sign of the covenant showed that as a physical descendant of Abraham, he was obligated to keep the law as a covenant between God and His people. This covenant was a contractual agreement that God had made with the physical descendants of Abraham at Mount Sinai. There, God delivered to His people His law, after He had delivered them from bondage in Egypt. God promised that He would be their God and they would be His people providing they ordered their faith and life according to His laws. We read of this in **Deuteronomy 5:23-33**.

²³“So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. ²⁴And you said: ‘Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives. ²⁵Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die. ²⁶For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? ²⁷You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do it.’

²⁸“Then the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. ²⁹Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! ³⁰Go and say to them, “Return to your tents.” ³¹But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I am giving them to possess.’

³²“Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. ³³You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.”

Why the law? Why was the law given to the Jews and why were they under obligation to keep the law? The law of God is the revelation of God’s holy nature and will. The law reveals what God is like and it shows what men and women must be like--holy in all their being and living--if they are to have a relationship with Him. The law of God, therefore, is to be understood as “holy, just, and good.” Again, the law of God is a reflection of God Himself, what He is like and what we must be like if we are to dwell with Him and be blessed by Him.

The great problem, of course, is that people are sinners, which essentially means that they are unwilling and unable to keep the law of God wholly and faithfully. Therefore, the law of God that promises life to all who keep it, does not bring life, but rather it brings condemnation upon all, because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God that is reflected in His law (cf. Rom. 3:23).

The law of God is the standard by which each of us will be judged on the Day of Judgment when each of us will be called before the Judge of all the earth and one-by one give an account of our lives. If we are guilty of one law, the weight of the authority and condemnation of God will come upon us. God will not

¹ We would say that this obligation of Jesus was to keep the law as a covenant of works before God.

judge us according to a sliding scale, but according to His law that again reflects His eternal, holy nature. God is perfect, and only perfection will pass on the Day of the Judgment.

This is why each of us needs a Savior. This is why you need a Savior. How will you answer your God on the Day in which you are assessed by His holy law? How will you stand? How will you respond? How will you be able to pay your debt to God's justice on that Great Day? The answer is you will be unable to do so. The consequence is everlasting punishment because you never did nor could you ever live according to God's law. We need a Savior. We need one who may deliver us from the condemnation of God's law on Judgment Day. We need someone to enable us to pass God's scrutiny of us and so that even after a thorough examination of all our thoughts, attitudes, actions, we may be found righteous. But how is this possible?

It is necessary that someone represent us on Judgment Day. The sinner will not stand in the judgment. One must stand on behalf of the sinner. This Advocate for the defense must be able to satisfy the demands of God's law that is over us. The debt we owe due to our sins, the multitude of transgressions against God's law, must be seen to have been duly paid. God's justice with respect to us in the light of His law must be fully satisfied.

This is why the Lord Jesus must have been One who was born under the law. This is what God has done on behalf of poor helpless condemned sinners. We read in Galatians 4:4, 5,

When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Gal. 4:4, 5)

Our Lord was to be under the law of God His entire life, serving it fully and blamelessly. He did so for two reasons. **First**, He kept the law perfectly so that when He died on the cross He could be a perfect substitutionary sacrifice to pay fully for the sins of all His people. In this way the debt to God's justice owed by them could be fully paid by Him. God's justice is satisfied with the death of the perfect Son of man on our behalf. **Second**, He kept the law perfectly so that His righteousness could be credited to us. In this way God will declare believers not only not guilty in the Day of Judgment, but He will declare them to be righteous, in entire conformity to His law through Jesus Christ. In this way God will not only pardon our transgressions, but He will glorify us in a way or manner that we might share with Him in His glory through eternity. Forgiveness of sins is only half of salvation; conferred righteousness is the other. Salvation is not merely a cancellation of sin; it is the imputation of righteousness.

And so, we see in the circumcision of Jesus on the eighth day after his birth that He is obligated to keep the law of God. From his earliest days, we see our Lord submitted to the Law, one of the circumcised, one of the covenanted people of God, a child of Abraham. The importance of this sign is set forth in **Genesis 17:9-14**. There we read,

God said unto Abraham, "You shall keep my covenant therefore, you, and your seed after you in their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your seed after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised. And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of your seed. He that is born in your house, and he that is bought with your money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.

The Jewish parents exercised in having this rite performed on their sons. The outward sign of circumcision signified their faith in the word of Promise given to their Patriarch Abraham and to his

descendants after him. But it obligated them to live holy lives before God, lives in accordance with His law.²

B. The naming of the Child (2:21)

On the occasion of His circumcision, the baby was officially named. Verse 21 indicates that He was named **Jesus**, in accordance with the angel's instruction recorded in 1:31. "Jesus" means "Savior." When the name of the child was announced in the temple, all would have understood the meaning of the name being conferred upon the child. That He was named on the occasion of His circumcision indicates that His work as Savior would be tied to His law-keeping on behalf of His people.

II. The presentation of Jesus in the temple (2:22-24)

Again, we see in this episode that the infant Jesus and his family were firmly rooted in Judaism. The instructions for purification in childbirth are contained in Leviticus 12. We read there that a woman was regarded as ceremonially unclean for 40 days after the birth of a son (80 days, if a daughter). In Luke 2:22 it states that the "days of her purification" arrived. The law required that they come to the temple. Joseph and Mary would have brought Jesus to the temple with two purposes in mind. *First*, since Jesus was the firstborn child, they would *present* Jesus, or "offer" their son, to God. The firstborn child stood in a privileged and special relationship before the Lord. *Second*, they were to offer *sacrifice* to the Lord.

A. The presentation of Jesus to God

The instruction to this is found in Exodus 13. The setting is Egypt in which Israel was in bondage. God had brought great judgment on the land so that the Egyptians would release the Israelites from slavery. On a single night the death angel was to pass through Egypt slaying all of the first-born sons of every household. To spare the first-born of Israel, the Lord told Moses to set them apart. On behalf of each household a Passover lamb was offered so that God would pass over that household sparing the oldest son of that household. Thereafter, the firstborn son was to be dedicated (in a sense sacrificed or offered) to the Lord, dedicated to His service. We read in **Exodus 13:11-12**:

And it shall be, when the Lord shall bring you into the land of the Canaanite, as He swore unto you and to your fathers, and shall give it to you, that you shall set apart unto the Lord all that opens the womb, and every firstling which you have that comes of a beast; the males shall be the Lord's.

We may see, therefore, that our Lord Jesus was dedicated to God the Father from his earliest infancy. And so, emphasis is given to the observance of the law of this family.

B. They offered sacrifices to God

Actually the law required that they offer two sacrifices. The family would offer both a burnt offering and a sin offering to the Lord. A *burnt offering* was a confession on part of the worshipper that he was a sinner and that what that what was done to that sacrifice, was what he himself deserved. The lamb would be

² One of the distinctions of Reformed Baptist covenant theology over against paedobaptist covenant theology is that God entered into covenant with Abraham in two senses, or actually with two different covenants. God entered into covenant with Abraham and his physical seed, which was a covenant of works, entered by physical birth and physical circumcision, which is illustrated through Ishmael, who was born according to the flesh. But God also entered into covenant with Abraham and his spiritual seed, who is Jesus Christ, and thereby with all those who are redeemed through Jesus Christ, who have the same faith as Abraham. Abraham's spiritual descendants are illustrated through Isaac, the child of promise (cf. Gal. 4:21-28).

slain and set upon the brazen altar containing fire. It is an emblem of God's condemnation and punishment of the sinner. But the sacrifice on behalf of the worshipper also taught the worshipper and foreshadowed the fact that God would provide a substitute for the sinner. Here we read of the burnt offering of the family of Jesus, Himself the substitute of sinners. A *sin offering* pictured Christ laden with our sin when He died on the cross. Christ as a sin offering is what God has provided for us. ***“For He (God) has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”*** (2 Cor. 5:21).

The law called for a lamb as a burnt offering, but in the place of a lamb, the poor could offer a turtledove. We see in the sacrifice offered that our Lord's earthly family was a poor one. The poverty of the couple once again stressed, for they offered two turtledoves in accordance with the Law (v. 24). Our Lord Jesus is always associated in the Scriptures with the needy and the helpless. He stands as one with us and one for us. He sympathizes with us in our weakness and afflictions.

The details of vs. 21-24, although certainly important and provide details of our Lord, these verses actually serve to lead up to the main emphasis of the passage--that being the encounter with Simeon and his prophetic utterance regarding the person and work of this child. And so, let us consider the . . .

III. The story of Simeon (2:25-35)

A new character is introduced in verse 25. He is an older, godly, wise man, who was inspired of God to provide us with further information regarding the child. His description serves to show the reliability of his witness. He is described as “righteous.” He is depicted as “devout” (v.25). He is said to have been full of faith and hope because he was “looking for the Consolation (comfort) of Israel.” The title speaks of the comfort that God had promised for His people who returned from the Babylonian Exile. We read of this in Isaiah 40:1ff.

“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. ²“Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD'S hand Double for all her sins. (Isa 40:1 NKJ)

“Comfort” is another word for “consolation.” Israel had fallen under the curse of God for having transgressed the Mosaic covenant. The curses of God were upon the nation, which had been evident since the destruction of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah, in the 8th and 6th centuries B.C. But God had promised to bring reconciliation and restoration to a remnant of His people. Simeon was looking for the consolation of Israel, for the Messianic Age, the time of the Christ, the anointed one of God who would bring redemption to God's people. However, “The Consolation of Israel” may be regarded as a formal title of the Messiah. He was looking for the Messiah.

Simeon is also said to have “the Holy Spirit upon him.” The Holy Spirit had communicated with Simeon that he would see the Messiah before he died. “So he came by the Spirit into the temple.” Luke presents Simeon's witness as absolutely reliable.

Now, I might insert this at this point. If we desire our witness to be effective, these qualities need to be recognized about us-

- 1) We are to be “righteous and devout” living rightly and consistently before others; (people even in a pagan society know enough about Christianity to know how you ought to be behaving)
- 2) We are to be “full of “faith and hope” so that others are seeing that we are ordering our lives according to God's words and His promises;

3) We are to be walking and speaking giving evidence that “the Spirit is upon us.” When this is evident people realize that there is truth in your words whether or not they respond to what you have to say.

The main point of the episode is Simon’s speech that is recorded in verse 29-35. There are two parts to Simeon’s speech: 1) The song of thanksgiving voiced to God (vs. 29-32), and then 2) the prophetic word given to Mary (vs. 34, 35)

A. The Song of Thanksgiving (vs. 29-32)

²⁹“Lord, now You are letting
Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;
³⁰For my eyes have seen Your salvation,
³¹Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
³²A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.”

Through divine illumination, Simeon recognizes the child (2:27). Simeon takes and lifted the child up before God, blesses God, and then makes this prophetic utterance recorded in these verses. The emphasis of the passage is on the universal scope of salvation that God was bringing through this child. In the previous episode, the shepherds were told that the Lord Jesus would bring salvation to “all people” (2:10), that is, even the lowly. Here, Simeon announces that Jesus would bring salvation to “all peoples”, that is even to Gentiles (2:31). The grace of God bringing salvation was so great that even Gentiles would be included within its scope.

And so, God had determined that this child would be a glory to Israel, whose illuminating life would even give knowledge of God to the Gentiles. And so it is, that Christ Jesus dissipates the darkness of the knowledge of God among the peoples of the earth. When people come to Him and come to know Him, they are coming to God and coming to know God through Him.

If you see yourself in darkness regarding who God is and how you might know Him, if you feel ignorant of His person and desire to come to understand Him and you long to know Him and serve Him and receive His life that He gives to people, then come to Jesus, for there you will have the darkness removed and understanding will be given to you. Though you may be currently separated from Christ, excluded from the people of God, stranger to all the promises of God, having no hope and without God in the world, having lived in disregard of Him and perhaps even in opposition to Him, in Christ Jesus you can encounter peace, reconciliation, if you but come to Him in humility acknowledging your darkness and need of mercy and grace, pardon and power, to become one of His own.

What a glorious end of a godly life that Simeon experienced. He was, as one described him,

As a slave having been instructed by his master, to keep watch from a high place through a long, dark night to wait for a special star and then to announce its appearance. And after many wearisome hours of waiting, he at last sees the star rising in its brightness. He announces its appearance and is then discharged from keeping watch any longer.

Simeon fulfils his watch, he does his duty having stood his watch, and he declared that God had indeed fulfilled His promise to bring salvation to all peoples.

B. The prophetic word given to Mary (vs. 34, 35)

After he concluded his blessing of God, Simeon turns to the “amazed” parents and blesses them, and then gives this word to her.

“Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

This Child will grow and become a cause for **“rising”** of many in Israel--those who currently fallen, humble, needy, outcast sinners, shall He cause to “rise”, i.e. receive the salvation of God and all that it involves. But He will also bring the **“fall”** of many in Israel. Those who are currently “standing”, that is, they think they are standing--pride, self-righteous--this child will spell their doom. For the Gospel is “good news” to some--sinners who need Him-- but to them who say or think they have no need for His salvation, His birth spells and seals their doom.

The standing of men and women before God, their rise or fall, is determined to their attitude and responsiveness toward Jesus Christ. There is no neutrality. One is for Him or against Him. One will rise or fall based upon their standing before Him. On Him His Father has set His approval. If one says to God, “I would know you!” Then the Father says to that one--“Then look to My Son! Hear Him! Believe on Him! Serve Him! Honor Him!” For there is no other name given under heaven than Jesus Christ, whereby one may be saved.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.
(Heb 13:20f)
