

Accomplishments of the Christ Child

In the Name of Jesus our accomplished Savior, dear fellow servants of the Christ Child:

Christmas Eve words harmonized with “Silent Night” keep running through my head: “This is a time for peace. This is a time for joy. Now let us all sing together of peace, peace, peace on earth.” So beautiful, yet so short-lived for many. Many Christmas worshipers can't get beyond the swaddling clothes and baby in the manger. There's so much more to Christmas in the **Accomplishments of the Christ Child**.

“Teach us all to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” (Psalm 90:12 NIV84) **Teach us all...** This amazing Gospel reading covers every age group – from the tiniest baby and parents with young children, to elderly men, longtime widows, and teenagers too. Christ Jesus teaches us all by His **Accomplishments as the Christ Child**, giving us all we need for blessed New Years into eternity. But it's a fair question: How will God accomplish peace and joy by...?

✧ **Shedding first blood (vv.22-24)**

Today's First Reading teaches by contrast. 1000 years before Christ, Jesus' ancestor, King David's son Solomon dedicated the First Temple in Jerusalem. So many cattle and sheep were sacrificed that they lost count. God's glory cloud filled the temple too densely for the priests to perform their duties. Such glory of God is like a tiny fingernail to show that **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.** (Hebrews 9:22) In God's sight, sin is much worse than “little white lies,” or “everybody's doing it.”

Come the Christ of God to His temple as a baby boy, and the priests went right on ministering. His parents were so poor that their offering of purification was only **“a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”** (Leviticus 12:8) Who wants to go from Christmas to this? The verse before our text says Jesus shed his **first blood** at eight days old for His circumcision. Now at His day 40, a couple innocent birds have to die? Luke keeps saying, **“according to the law of the Lord,”** which meant requirements for new mothers.

Even the apostles called God's law given through Moses an unbearable burden. (Acts 15:10) God's people swore to Joshua they would serve the LORD. He warned them that they were not able. Their oath lasted only a generation before idolatry. Why were Mary and Joseph so conscientious here? Why did God hide His fulness (Colossians 2:9) in a baby looking like any other? **Accomplishments of the Christ Child – Shedding first blood** – and you don't hear Mary arguing, “It's my body; I'll do with it what I want.” Mary humbly gave her body over to the Lord to conceive as a virgin by the Holy Spirit, the very Son of God. For our salvation, Jesus comes in active obedience under God's law as our Substitute. He was also...

✧ **Dismissing in peace (vv.25-35)**

Old man Simeon was **“waiting for the consolation of Israel.”** God the Holy Spirit had said he'd not die until He saw the Lord's Christ. That day the dear Holy Spirit moved Simeon to go to the temple and enabled him to see God by faith, hidden in the **Christ Child**. Watch how Simeon takes the Baby in his arms, as easily as you and I can receive Jesus by faith. We'll sing the old *Nunc Dimittis* (CWH 951) again today. As recorded by Luke: **“Lord, you now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word, because my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”** (29–32 EHV)

If God **who lives in unapproachable light** (1 Timothy 6:16) had come in glorious majesty, no one could be in the temple at all, much less look at God directly. By hiding His glory in the **Christ Child**, God could accomplish this for Simeon and us, **Dismissing in peace** – with blessing and warning.

Simeon blessed stepfather Joseph and Jesus' mother, saying to Mary, "*Listen carefully, this child is appointed for the falling and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.*"

The purpose of Jesus' life in a human body is the *miraculous sign* above all others. In human flesh and blood, the **Christ Child** would grow up to serve as the Savior of the world. This sign demands of every sinner to reevaluate everything about himself and what he holds near and dear, that in which he takes pride, and that upon which he bases all his hopes for time and eternity. Without God's own Son there is no other hope or confidence or righteousness that counts in heaven. Mary would suffer that *sword* to her soul when Jesus died on the cross for her and for us all. God's **peace** would bloom on resurrection morning.

✧ **Worshiping in thanks (vv.36-38)**

One elderly widow was longing for that too. Only seven years of marriage, then decades until age 84, *she did not leave the temple complex....* She was too busy *worshipping with fasting and prayers night and day. Standing nearby at that very hour, she gave thanks to the Lord.* Anna wanted everyone to have eyes of faith. *She kept speaking about the child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.*

That's quite an accomplishment of the **Christ Child** over so many years. You might ask why a widow would have so much gratitude to be **Worshiping in thanks**. Anna obviously knew how the God of Israel cares for widows. Here are some samples that match Jesus' ministry (Luke 7:11-15) too:

- ✧ *The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.* (Psalm 146:9)
- ✧ *Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.* (Isaiah 1:17)
- ✧ *This is what the LORD says: "Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place."* (Jeremiah 22:3)

✧ **Growing in strength and wisdom (vv.39-40)**

Accomplishments of the Christ Child included eager words of thanks and praise for widows, peace for elderly men, full righteousness for young parents feeling inadequate and for their children mirroring the sinfulness of all of us parents. Jesus is our full strength substitute of God's righteousness that counts in heaven for us. And the *redemption of Jerusalem*, accomplished on the cruel cross, is ours too.

Yes, also for teenagers. "*When they had accomplished everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town, Nazareth. The child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God's favor was on him.*" While Mary kept pondering all these things in her heart, Jesus kept growing up. Before Luke 2 is finished, Jesus will be a pre-teen in the temple again, unfairly scolded by His mother for staying in church too long! Well, Mary and Joseph did think they lost the Son of God for three days! But Jesus would be about His heavenly Father's business from youth to His thirties when at God's own time, He would shed the only innocent blood that could wash away the sins of all.

Christian teenagers can get so frustrated with classmates, disloyal friends, the world around us, and your own personal struggles with relationships, sexual adjustments, education, careers, future plans. But keep your eyes on Jesus and remember the good counsel of Isaiah: "*You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind stays steadfast in you, because he trusts in you.*" (Isaiah 26:3 TPA) God has everything planned out for your good as He promised through Jeremiah: "*I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*" (29:11 NIV84) With all these great **Accomplishments of the Christ Child**, our New Year can be God's great **Amen!** Yes, Amen.