

Luke 2:25~40

Leaving the shepherds in the fields and the manger in Bethlehem... Luke now brings us to the temple in Jerusalem, where Mary and Joseph bring the child to present him to the Lord. Following the circumcision and naming of the child, the mother had to go through what was called a purification period. Depending on the gender of the child, determined how long this was. If a male, it was about 40 days, for a female, it was about 80 days. But point being, that during that time, the mother was not allowed near the temple, or to touch anything holy or sacred, because she was considered *unclean*. At the end of the purification period, she was to come to the temple, and make an offering to the Lord to complete the process. Afterwards, she was considered clean. Now if the child she delivered was her first, than there were additional requirements that she needed to meet. If it was her "*Firstborn*," she was to present the child to the Lord, then turn around and redeem him/her with a lamb. This was in accordance with the commandment given by the Lord following Him delivering Israel from the hands of the Egyptians.

Review the Passover... Thus, as a testimony of the events leading up to Israel's salvation, the Lord requires that from that day forward, that every "*firstborn*" (man or beast) belongs to the Lord. The firstborn of beast is to be sacrificed on the altar as a symbol of all the firstborn that died that night. Then, the woman who has her first child, she must present him to the Lord, then redeem him/her with a lamb. Proclaiming the testimony of God throughout every generation! "*Redeemed by the blood of the lamb...*"

In keeping with this commandment, Mary and Joseph bring the small child to the temple, and upon doing so, they had a unique encounter with two individuals. The first is a man by the name of Simeon, and the other a woman named Anna. First is Simeon, whom Luke describes as a "*just and devout man*," meaning he was a righteous man, very faithful to the Lord. One who waited for the "*Consolation of Israel*," a phrase derived from Isaiah 40, where God promised to comfort His people. Console means to comfort. During Simeon's time, Israel was under the rule of Rome. Simeon longed for the day when God would send the "*promised deliverer*" to set Israel free, bringing peace to the nation.

Luke mentions something else about Simeon, the fact that the Holy Ghost was upon him, and declares that the Holy Ghost had revealed to Simeon that during his lifetime, he would see the Lord's Christ. No doubt, this had been revealed to him some time earlier, and sense then, he had been looking for that day.

Luke tells us, that on the same day Mary and Joseph were bringing Jesus to the temple to present him to the Lord, the Spirit leads Simeon to go to the temple, where he crosses paths with the child...

(Vs 27~32) ²⁷And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, ²⁸Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹Lord, now let thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: ³⁰For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, ³¹Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; ³²A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

As soon as Simeon saw the child, he knew in his heart, that this was Him! He cries out to the Lord saying that he could now die in peace, "*for my eyes have seen thy salvation.*" Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph were stunned at what Simeon was saying about their son. With good reason, when you consider what he said about the infant.

Simeon made some pretty incredible comments about this child... This morning, I want to look closer at some of the things he said... *he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,* ²⁹Lord, now let thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: ³⁰***For mine eyes have seen thy salvation...***

³⁰ ***For mine eyes have seen thy salvation...*** With that one utterance, Simeon did away with every form of religion, every ceremonial act, every ritual... The salvation of a man's soul would have nothing to do with those things, but rather it is found in **a person!** Christ is our salvation! The fact that he came, and died and rose again from the dead, secures our salvation! We will live because Jesus lives! *"As long as Jesus lives, I will live..."* My hope is not in my works, speaking of my ability to live up to a certain standard, my hope is not in my conformance to the Baptist teachings... My hope is **Jesus!**

I have "Peace"...because I have "Christ."

I have "Hope"...because I have "Christ."

I have "Joy"...because I have "Christ."

You can't DO anything to get these things; they are found in a person. All of these things are found in Him... I'm afraid that there are many who may attend church, try and do all the right things, but never truly experience the "abundant life" Christ promised us, simply for the fact they are looking in the wrong place. Think about it, you can be in the church, do the right things, yet never really get it. Why? Because this "life" the scripture speaks of is not found in religious activities, it is found in a person... Jesus...

(1Jn 5) ¹² ***He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.***

In verse 32, Simeon describes Him as ³² ***A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel...***

Here Simeon describes this child in two different ways... First in relation to the surrounding nations, the Gentiles, and the other in connection with His own people. This child will be a "light to the Gentiles..." while at the same time, He will be "the glory of Israel..."

Let's begin with the first one, "a light to lighten the Gentiles..." Light is a very common metaphor used in scripture describing the Lord. It refers to several things, life, hope, truth, and righteousness... And it is always used in contrast to darkness, which is used to portray this world, sin, captivity, evil, death...

The very fact that Simeon declares He will be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," automatically insinuates that the Gentiles are abiding in darkness, and stand in need of light.

Listen, it's vital that we have the right understanding about those who abide in **darkness**... Here, Gentiles are referred to as those being in darkness, referring to the fact they were not part of God's covenant people. Israel had light, they had hope, for they were the people of God. They had God's word, God's guidance, God's protections, etc... But all the other surrounding nations, sat in **darkness**. Given that, the Lord intended for Israel to be a light to their neighbors, by reaching out to them and sharing with them the knowledge of their God. But rather than reach out to them who set in darkness, rather than offering them the word of life, the word of light, they sat back in all their "piousness and self-righteousness," and condemned them! Rather than reach out a hand to them, they distanced themselves from them, and blasted them with their tongues, devoured them with their teeth...

As God's people, Israel should have been light in the midst of **darkness**! But as a result of their self-righteousness, stemming from their misunderstanding of the Law, they were anything but light. Their judgment and condemnation on those out in darkness revealed that their hearts were no better than the ones they condemned. And it also revealed that they were not as godly as they perceived themselves to be. Matter of fact, they were anything but godly! Their judgment and condemnation of those out in the darkness, revealed their true spiritual condition...that of being in **darkness**.

(Vs 34~35) Simeon declares to Mary, that this is one of the very things her child will do, reveal the darkness of His people's hearts!

³⁴And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and **for a sign which shall be spoken against**; ³⁵(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) **that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.**

One of the things that Jesus would accomplish during his visit to earth, would be *to reveal the darkness of the hearts of his people*... Jesus would come in true righteousness; He would be the model of what true godliness is! Jesus went to the sinners, those in darkness, reaching out to them with the love of God. The bible describes Him as a “*friend of publicans and sinners!*” He came to bring hope and light to those who sat in darkness! And in doing so, He would be condemned right along with the Gentiles by the very ones who proclaimed to be children of the light! Outwardly, they may have appeared righteous, by their adherence to God’s Law, but by condemning Christ and those He reached out to, it simply revealed “*the thoughts of their hearts,*” their hearts were dark, hardened and cold.

Tragically, the same is often true within the church today... Rather than loving and reaching out to those in darkness, they are often judged and condemned by the church... Beloved, that’s nothing like God...but the contrary that simply reveals a heart that has never been changed by the grace of God. It reveals a heart that is still in darkness, an individual who is yet blind to the truth...

As God’s people, it is imperative that we see those in darkness, the same way He does... As people who are perishing, as people held captive, as people in bondage to sin, as people who are perishing! I don’t know how you “*see*” those out here in darkness, but I can tell how God sees them. He sees the precious souls of men and women, lost, wandering out in the darkness, held captive by Satan, and perishing... Rather than despising them, rather than distancing Himself from them and condemning them, God is broken over them! His heart is filled with pity towards them. God is not angry with the world, God is not disgusted with sinners...longing to destroy them. For He sees things in a much different light, He sees them in truth, He sees the true problem...and not simply their sin. They are in darkness, they see not where they go, they are deaf, and they are lame, sick dying people...

All the other nations sat in darkness...that is, until now! Here Simeon declares that this small infant will come and do what Israel was purposed to do, “*be a light to lighten the Gentiles!*” By reaching out to sinners, by reaching out to Gentiles, those in darkness, Jesus was taking the light into the darkness. Simeon stated He would be a light to the Gentiles, and the “*Glory of Israel.*” Jesus would be the “*Shinning example*” of *true righteousness*, the *true glory of God* of the God of Israel! This would be in contrast to the darkness manifested by the religious leaders of his day, the scribes, the Pharisees, etc... And true to Simeon’s word to Mary, “*he revealed the hearts of many...*”

Simeon also mentions there in verses 34~35, that this child ***is set for the fall and rising again*** of many in Israel... This is in reference to him being a stumblingblock to some, and a cornerstone to others. He will be rejected by some, resulting in their downfall, and received by others, resulting in their salvation.

Simeon declares He shall be “*a sign which shall be spoken against...*” Referring to his rejection. “³⁵(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) Referring to the pain she would endure *upon his rejection!* Simeon seems to be alluding to his suffering and death when he says to Mary... It’s interesting he should use the analogy of a sword piercing her, because according to the scripture, when the Roman soldiers were breaking the legs of the others, (to speed up the death) they came to Jesus and he was already dead. To ensure that was, they took a sword and pierced his side, and water and blood came running out. To which, Mary was a witness... “³⁵(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,)

Right in the midst of Simeon’s words...Luke introduces us to an elderly woman by the name of Anna...

(Vs 36~37) Luke describes this woman as being a prophetess, and declares she was the daughter of a man by the name of Phanuel, who was of the tribe of Aser. There's no other mention of these two in scripture. Luke goes on to say of Anna, that she married early in life, and that after seven years, lost her husband, and had remained a widow ever since. At the present time, Luke tells us she was 84years old, a woman that departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. It alludes to the likelihood that she lived on the premises. Widows, who were faithful to the Lord, were to be taken care of through the temple, and furnished a place to stay. In turn, they would work in the temple...

But Luke tells us, that upon hearing the words of Simeon, she too erupted in praise to God... "*and spake of Him to all them that look for redemption in Jerusalem.*" The passage seems to suggest that God honored her for her faithfulness, by allowing her, along with Simeon, to be on the few people to see the Lord's Christ and to recognize His as that, and then the privilege of declaring the arrival of the "lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world..."