

Simeon's Song

<i>Text</i>	Luke 2:25-35
<i>Reading</i>	Leviticus 12; Isaiah 40:1-12; Luke 2:1-35
<i>Theme</i>	Simeon gave thanks for seeing God's salvation in Jesus and prophesied about the divided response to him.
<i>Purpose</i>	To focus your attention on God's salvation in Jesus and call you to a response of faith.

There are times when you meet a person only once but they make such an impression on you that you remember him or her.

In the same way you come across people in the Bible that are mentioned only briefly but they are striking and memorable.

Simeon is such a man. This is the only place in the Bible he is mentioned. These eleven verses are all we know about him. We don't know who his parents were, how old he was, where he lived, what he did or whether he had a wife and children.

We do know that he was "righteous and devout" and that he was "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (v 25). The word consolation means comfort. Isaiah prophesied that God would comfort his people and he would do that through the coming of the Messiah. The phrase "the consolation of Israel" was a Jewish way of speaking about the Messiah, the One God had promised.

He was "waiting" for him. Luke uses this same Greek word in verse 38 where he tells that Anna, the prophetess, spoke about this child Jesus to all "who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem" (ESV). And at the end of his gospel Luke tells us about Joseph of Arimathea who was "waiting for the kingdom of God" (23:51).

The people of Israel were waiting for the coming of the Messiah. The Greek word for Messiah is "Christ". The Holy Spirit has told Simeon that he "would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (v 26). No wonder he was waiting, with eager anticipation!

Then, one day, the Holy Spirit directed him to go into the temple courts just as Joseph and Mary were going there with their child Jesus.

This was the first time Mary had been in the temple since Jesus had been born. The OT law commanded that after the birth of a baby boy a mother had to wait 40 days before she could go to the temple. When she went there he had to dedicate her firstborn son to the Lord and offer a burnt offering and a sin offering. As they

came into the temple to do this they met Simeon who took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God and made a prophecy about this child.

1. HIS THANKSGIVING FOR JESUS

He thanked God “for **my eyes have seen your salvation**”. This child he was holding, named Jesus, was going to be the Saviour of the world; this is what the angels had told the shepherds on the night Jesus was born. He would save his people from their sins and from the punishment that their sins deserved.

God had been preparing for the birth of Jesus for a long time. Even before the creation of the world God knew that we would break his commands and so, even before he made us he planned to send his Son into this world as our Saviour. All through the OT centuries God had told his people about the coming of the Messiah.

Now that he had arrived Simeon thanked God for this child who would be “**a light for revelation to the Gentiles**” (verse 32).

In his gospel Luke emphasises that Jesus did not come only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. Simeon mentions the Gentiles first. His words fulfil the promise God made to Abraham that “all peoples on earth would be blessed through you”; all peoples, not just the Jews!

Through Isaiah God had prophesied that he would make Israel “a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). This is what God would do through Jesus. Jewish Christian missionaries like Paul and Barnabas declared this good news about Jesus throughout the Roman Empire.

But God’s salvation through Christ was also “**for glory to your people Israel**” (verse 32).

There is a lot in the OT about God revealing his glory, his splendour, to the people of Israel. But the greatest, fullest and truest demonstration of the glory of God was to be seen in his Son, Jesus Christ; he came here as the light of the world and as the radiance of God’s glory (Heb 1:3).

One writer comments that Simeon spoke about the Gentiles before the Jews because after the full number of the Gentiles has come to faith, then the church will see the conversion of many Jews to faith in Jesus. The apostle Paul wrote of this in Romans 9-11.

Because he had now seen the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, Simeon was content to leave this life; “now dismiss your servant in peace” (v 29). He had seen Jesus and so he was ready to die; he was at peace and satisfied with seeing this child, born to be king! Through faith in God he had no fear of death because he knew that he would go from this life to the next and that he would be with God the Father!

Can you say these words of Simeon, “now dismiss your servant in peace”? Some of you are elderly; are you ready to die? Do you have the peace that Simeon had? And if you do, is your sense of peace about dying well-founded? Is your hope based on wishful thinking, the hope that you *might* go to heaven? Is it based on your own good works, that they may be good enough to be acceptable to God? These will not give you peace in death and they will not give you entrance into heaven!

You need a peace that is based on a sincere and solid faith in Jesus; this is the only peace that is secure and reliable.

2. Simeon spells this out more clearly and specifically as he goes from thanksgiving about Jesus to a **PROPHECY ABOUT JESUS** (v 33-35): “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel.”

The word “**destined**” means that Jesus had come into this world by God’s appointment. He was no accident of history but was the central person in God’s plan.

God had caused him to be born into the world at that particular time and place.

As he went about his ministry he would “**cause the falling and rising of many in Israel.**”

He would be the cause of the “*falling*” of some. For the Jews he would be “the stone the builders rejected” and therefore “a stone of stumbling and a rock that makes them fall” (1 Peter 2:6-8; Luke 20:17f).

For other people he would cause a “*rising*”. In the NT this word usually refers to a resurrection and that fits with the meaning here. The Holy Spirit causes some people to be raised to new life spiritually by being born again, or regenerated. Through this spiritual new birth they come to believe in Jesus and have a new life through him.

And one day, when Jesus comes again you who believe in Jesus will be physically resurrected, as Jesus was; you will receive a new body fit to live in a new heaven and a new earth for all eternity.

We have seen that Jesus came to bring salvation to the world, to the Jews and the Gentiles. This salvation is offered to all people, regardless of their race or colour or social position, but each one of you must consider this for yourself. The good news about Jesus is a universal offer of salvation but it brings a personal challenge to every individual, to each one of you.

Is Jesus the person you refuse to believe in, the stone you reject, the king you will not submit to?

If that is so then you will stumble over him and fall and be broken to pieces; Jesus will fall on you and you will be crushed (Luke 20:17-18).

Or is Jesus the person you do believe in? Is he the foundation stone upon which you have or will build your life? Is he your Saviour and your Redeemer?

Is he your Lord and Master whom you will willingly serve for your entire life?!

If so, then you have and will rise to a new life spiritually, and one day you will receive a new resurrection body. You will have eternal life!

But Simeon goes on in his prophecy: Jesus will be **“a sign that will be spoken against.”**

The miracles Jesus did were signs that pointed to who he was as the Son of God. But Jesus himself was a sign in that he showed who God was and is; he explained the Father and made him known. He told us about God the Father so much so that he could say, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

But Simeon prophesied that Jesus would be a sign “that would be spoken against.” That is exactly what happened in his ministry. The Jewish religious leaders spoke against him. The Pharisees disagreed with this teaching and the Sadducees denied his miracles. They called him a “Samaritan”, a “deceiver”, and a “blasphemer”! They spoke against him and then handed him over to the Romans to be put to death by crucifixion!

Simeon prophesied, **“the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.”**

The way you respond to Jesus reveals the thoughts of your hearts; it shows what you think of Jesus.

What are the thoughts of your heart?

When it comes to Jesus you cannot be neutral:

you are either for him or against him;

you either accept him or reject him;

you either follow him or turn away from him.

Are you committed to following Jesus? Do you love him with all your heart and mind and soul? Do you want to serve him in all you do? Do you trust him no matter what is going on in your life?

Simeon closes his prophecy by saying to Mary, **“And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”**

Jesus was going to go through great anguish and suffering and he was going to die. This would have a great effect on Mary.

Mothers know this. When your child or grandchild suffers – physically, emotionally or spiritually – you suffer with them; you empathise and sympathise with the pain they experience.

When Mary stood by the cross of Jesus and watched her son die the slow and painful death by crucifixion she felt that sword go through her own soul.

This is Simeon's song of thanksgiving about Jesus and his prophecy about who he would be and how people would respond to him.

Everything Simeon said has come true: a sword pierced Mary's soul; Jesus was spoken against and he has caused the falling and rising of many.

How do you see Jesus?

Who is he to you?

Is he destined to cause your falling or your rising?

Amen