

DEDICATED PARENTS—AND A DEVOUT OLD MAN

INTRODUCTION:

For the past 4 Sundays, we have been looking at instances where God “crashed” into the world of the key people involved in Christ’s coming to earth as a baby. We looked at Zacharias and Elisabeth—the parents of John the Baptist—then Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. In each case, the individuals received an unexpected visit from an unexpected angel with an unexpected message from God.

This morning we are going to look at a man whose situation was pretty much the opposite: he would not be surprised when he saw Christ because he was **told** that he would see Christ—although he was not told when. Please take your Bibles and turn to Luke 2:21-26.

1. The Dedication and Obedience of Mary and Joseph (vss 21-24)

Why were Mary and Joseph chosen to be the “parents” of Jesus? Although we aren’t told exactly, we do have a pretty good idea. First, they were both of the lineage of David—a requirement based on the prophecy of the OT.

Isaiah 9:6-7 “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, **upon the throne of David**, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Secondly, I believe they were chosen by God because they were both God-fearing and God-loving people.

A. Their dedication before Christ’s birth

Matthew 1:19 says Joseph was a just man—meaning a righteous man. He was right with God and he was right with people. He desired to please God—that is why he did not react hastily when he got the news of Mary’s pregnancy. He thought on those things—and God provided the answer of what he was to do.

Mary, too—in spite of probably being only 13—was a young woman who knew the OT and the God of the OT. Although the Scriptures were not bound in a book that she could carry or even own, her praise to God while with Elisabeth contains roughly 15 quotations from the OT. It is often said that Spurgeon spoke “Bibline”—that is in his normal conversation, Bible verses came out. The same could be said of Mary in her praise to God.

God did not choose them in hopes they would **become** faithful—He chose them for this incredible privilege and responsibility because they were **already** faithful. It is my belief that God still operates that way today. God has tasks for each one of us to do, but I don’t believe He shows us **new** things to do if we are unwilling to do what we already **know** He wants us to do.

B. Their dedication after Christ’s birth

Simply put, they knew the law of the Lord—and they obeyed it!

i. Jesus was circumcised according to the law

v 21—“And when the eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child” (See Lev 12:3)

ii. He was named Jesus according to the message from the angel

v 21b—“...His name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb.” (See the angel’s message to Joseph in Mt 1:21).

iii. Mary followed the laws of purification

v 22—“And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished” (See Lev 12:4, 6)

iv. Mary and Joseph presented Jesus to the God

v 22b—“...they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord”

That was done IAW Ex 13:2 which is partially quoted in verse 23

v. Mary and Joseph offered the required sacrifice

v 24—“And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord...” (See Lev 12:6-7)

vi. Mary and Joseph did everything they were supposed to according to the law

v 39 “And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord...” (Law referred to 5 times)

Mary and Joseph were serious about knowing what God wanted and doing what God wanted. Is that not what He wants for each of us—to have that same desire and zeal to know His will and obey it?

2. The Revelation from God to Simeon (vss 25-26)

A. The Person of Simeon (vss 25-26)

--v 25b “just and devout”—“just” again here carries the idea of righteous. He was **right** with God because he was forgiven by God; he was devout—pious and religious—because he feared God

--v 25c “waiting for the consolation of Israel....” “Consolation” translated from the Gk word “paraklasis” and carries the idea of “comfort”

Isaiah 40:1-2 “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. ²Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.”

--There was an expectation of one that would comfort them—the coming Messiah. God's people were under Roman rule and their longing was for a God-sent warrior who would rescue His people from their enemies.

--Simeon was one who **knew** a comforter would come—and had a strong desire to see Him come

B. The Promise to Simeon (v 26)

--v 26 “And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ”—God's anointed one.

--How old was Simeon when he received this promise? We don't know, do we?

--We also don't know how long he lived so we don't know how long he waited.

--What if he was 40 when he got this promise—and didn't die until he was 80? Did he have thoughts like ‘I'm young—I don't want to die yet! Please don't come too soon!’ I tend to think he was older when he got this promise, but obviously can't prove it.

--Another thing we don't know is **how** this promise was given to Simeon. We aren't given the specifics, but somehow the Holy Spirit let him know. I believe it was something that he prayed for and God assured him that his prayer was heard.

--Here are some other unknowns. What did Simeon do while he waited? Did he “hang out” at the temple every day—or did he wait at home for God to tell him “today is the day?” My guess is that he waited at home based on v 27.

C. The Prompting of the Spirit (v 27)

Similar to the Holy Spirit telling Philip in Acts 8 to “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot,” the Holy Spirit told Simeon to ‘Go today to the temple and see the Lord's Anointed One.’

Let's pause here for a moment and ask ourselves this question: What is it that you look forward to? Do you look forward to Jesus' return? Are you expecting it? Do you **live** like you are expecting it?

I John 2:18 “And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”

Wouldn't it be neat to have God convey to you one morning—Jesus is coming back today? We need to be ready, don't we? The chorus of Fanny Crosby's song, “Will Jesus Find us Watching?” goes:

“O can we say we are ready, brother, Ready for the soul's bright home?

Say will He find you and me still watching, Waiting, waiting when the Lord shall come?”

3. The Declaration of Simeon to Mary, Joseph—and Us! (vss 31-35)

A. The Identification of the Child who came

Notice what Simeon calls the child Jesus

--In v 30, Simeon calls Him “salvation”

--In v 32, Simeon calls Him “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”

Hard to imagine that Simeon did not know **Isaiah 49:6**

“And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a **light to the Gentiles**, that thou mayest be **my salvation** unto the end of the earth.”

What exactly does it mean to be a “light to lighten the Gentiles?” I believe another verse from Isaiah will shed light on this ☺!

Isaiah 42:6-7 “I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a **light of the Gentiles**; ⁷To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”

The “light of the Gentiles” would open blind eyes and bring prisoners out of prison and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. Although Jesus did heal several who were physically **blind**, do we read in the Gospels of Jesus bringing prisoners out of prison? We don’t, do we? The light that Jesus provided has more to do with what He came to do **spiritually** than what He did **physically**.

“Blindness, imprisonment, and darkness” are all words to describe the spiritual state of someone who is lost.

--They are spiritually blind to the truth that salvation is only in Jesus

--Although not in a physical prison, they are in a spiritual one. They know they have sinned against God and feel the weight of their guilt and the uneasiness of an unknown future.

--And they sit in darkness—no light, no hope, and no chance of escape.

But Jesus came as a light not only to show the way—He came to **be** the way. He came to take away the penalty that we deserve by paying for our sin when He died on the cross. And He came to take away the guilt we could never escape on our own because God was satisfied with what Jesus’ payment for our sins.

How about you? Are you still under the penalty for your sin—or have you been set free? Come to Jesus—the light of the world and the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!

Simeon didn’t just talk about who the young child was, however, he also declared the results of Jesus coming to earth;

B. The Ramifications of Child that came

What would be the impact—the ramifications or consequences—of Jesus’ coming to earth?

i. Ramification #1—Jesus was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel (vs. 34b)

“Is set” means appointed or will be the effect. Some commentators point out the fact that the word “again” is not in the Greek so the idea is NOT that the SAME people will fall and rise again.

Rather, this child is appointed/destined/will cause many to **fall**

What does it mean to fall? Simeon, of course, is talking in a spiritual sense. No one was going to physically fall or stand up because of this promised Child. He was a sign, though, an indicator of the thoughts of hearts according to verse 35. To fall in this sense means to suffer disappointment, shame, and ruin. It means to have your hope shattered and your pride broken. It means to be humbled, to be proven wrong, and to become miserable.

Who are the ones who **fall** because of Christ? Who are the ones who stumble over Him?

--The proud; those who believe they are good enough in themselves and don’t need God or want God

Not only would many fall; many would **rise** because of Christ. **What does it mean to rise?** To rise means to be exalted, be lifted up. Instead of being resisted by God, it means to be assisted by Him and given grace. It means to be blessed, favored, and considered precious and valuable. It means to be forgiven and loved and to become a member of His family.

Who are the ones who **rise** because of Christ? Who are those who don't stumble over Him?

--The humble; those who recognize they are sinful and can't get to heaven by their works and need mercy and forgiveness from God

ii. Ramification #2—Jesus was given as a sign which shall be spoken against (v 34c)

--Is not Jesus a sign that is spoken against?

--Paul reminds us that Christ crucified is a stumblingblock to the Jews—and foolishness to the Gentiles

--No one is offended if we say "God loves everyone; everyone is just fine the way they are"

--If, however, we hold to what Jesus plainly declared—He is the Way—the only way—to heaven and He is the truth and He is the life and absolutely NO ONE gets to God without Him, we are labeled as bigoted and unloving and unkind.

--Jesus is indeed a sign that is spoken against!

iii. Ramification #3—A sword would pierce through Mary's soul because of Jesus (v 35)

--Think of the anguish of heart Mary must have felt while watching the events unfold at His crucifixion

--In John 19:25 we read, "Now there **stood by the cross** of Jesus his mother..."

--We don't know how close she stood, but we know she was there—and she saw.

--She **saw** the whipped body of her Son—yet God's Son—gasping for breath, blood coming from His brow and His back and His face and His hands and His feet. She saw the mocking and the disdain and the hatred for someone she knew first hand to be absolutely sinless

--She also **heard**. She heard "Crucify Him; crucify Him. She heard, "Come down off the cross and save thyself if thou be the Christ." And she heard Him cry, "My God, my God—why hast thou forsaken me!"

--No wonder Simeon said, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also"

iv. Ramification #4—The thoughts of **our** heart are revealed by our views of Jesus (v 35b)

Simeon's prophecy of Christ is still being fulfilled today—and you and I are fulfilling it. Who is Jesus to **you**? Is He your Savior? Have you humbly come to Him in repentance and faith, admitting your need for forgiveness and trusting what He did on the cross to provide forgiveness—or are you too proud?

If you humbly come to Jesus, He will forgive you and lift you up and make you a child of God.

If you reject Him—if you stumble over Him in your pride—you will fall...you will suffer misery...forever...

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

1. Who is Jesus to you? If He is not your Savior in **this** life, there are no second chances in the next life. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts"

2. What do you look forward to? We all look forward to special events coming up in our life, but do we look forward to the Jesus coming again? If so, does our life show we are ready—or will we be ashamed?

3. Mary and Joseph were dedicated to obeying God. Are you and I? If we are, we will need to know what it is He wants us to do. How do we find that out? Reading God's Word with the intent to obey it.