

The Cradle and the Cross – 12/17/23

TEXT- Luke 2:25-35 *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout,*

INTRO – If Jesus were born today, would it be any different than it was 2,000 years ago? Are we any more prepared for the coming of Christ than they were in Bethlehem? Most people weren't prepared for his coming.

- **Herod wasn't, nor were the scribes (even though they knew where he was to be born).**
- **The rich and powerful of Bethlehem didn't**
- **The rulers of the world never knew he was born.**
- **Many never knew he lived or died.**

In Rome they paid no attention; in Athens and Alexandria no one took note. In China and India no one knew a thing.

He came silently, quietly. The Apostle John put it this way: **John 1:10-11** *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

Quiet In The Land

But there were some who were ready.

- The Magi are a good example. They came all the way from Persia to greet the infant King. They represent a great number of Gentiles who were ready to receive Him.

But even with Israel, there were those who believed the time was drawing near for God to keep his promises and send Messiah.

Luke tells the story of one man who had been waiting for years to see the Messiah, and his long wait is finally over.

The Days Of Purification

We pick up the story in **Luke 2:21-24**.

- **On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.**
- **Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord**

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord) **Leviticus 12:8** *And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.*

Three different aspects of the Old Testament Law are intertwined in these verses:

1. The Law required that all male children be circumcised on the eighth day.

2. The Law also required that women wait 40 days after the birth of a son before presenting themselves in the temple for their purification. **Lev. 12**

3. The Law also required that a mother and father present their firstborn son before the Lord to be "redeemed" by the offering of a sacrifice. **Exodus 13** All three things are happening in verses **21-23**.

Two Doves Or Two Pigeons

Jesus was born into a god-fearing, law-abiding home. They illustrate the truth of **Galatians 4:4** *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,*

Matthew 5:17 *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

He was born under the Law, lived his whole life in obedience to the Law, and kept its precepts to the very end.

Leviticus 12 tells us that when a woman came for her purification she was to bring a lamb as an offering. **If, however, she could not afford a lamb, she could bring two doves or two pigeons instead.**

Jesus was born into a loving, godly home that was lower middle-class. Jesus knew poverty and hardship from the very beginning.

Simeon

Forty days have passed since the birth of Jesus. Here come Mary and Joseph into the Temple precincts, ready to "redeem" their firstborn son. Aside from what we are told in Luke 2, we know nothing about Simeon. We assume he was a priest. We also assume he was an old man. After his part is over, he fades from the scene, never to be heard from again.

Luke 2:25-26 *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*

Facts about Simeon:

First, he was a righteous man.

Second, he was a devout man.

Third, he was waiting for the Messiah to.

Fourth, he was a Spirit-filled man.

Fifth, he was eagerly awaiting the imminent appearance of the Messiah. The Holy Spirit had told him, "You will not die before you see the Messiah. Simeon is now an old man and he's been waiting in the Temple for many years. Here comes Mary holding the baby in her arms with Joseph by her side. **"This Is The One"**

Suddenly Simeon's heart leaps within him. The long days of waiting are finally over. The Lord's Christ is before him. Here is the One for whom the

nation has been waiting. He walks over, introduces himself, and says, "Do you mind if I hold your child?"

At that point Simeon breaks out into a song of praise.

What follows is first the song (vv. 29-32) and then a personal word of prophetic blessing to Mary (vv. 34-35).

Luke 2:29-32 *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: 30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; 32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

In the words that follow Simeon tells us three important things about who Jesus is.

I. He is the Glory of Israel

In verse 32 Simeon calls him "the glory of Israel." In this baby, Simeon sees the fulfillment of all the hopes and dreams of the Jewish people across the centuries. **Genesis 12:2-3** *And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

Genesis 26:4 *And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;*

God spoke through Isaiah and promised that a son would be born of a virgin, and that his name would be called Immanuel—God With Us.

Now after all these years, all God's promises are coming true. That's what Simeon means when he calls Jesus "the glory of Israel." *As the song says, "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight."*

II. He is the Savior of the World

Then Simeon calls him

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

Simeon explicitly says that this baby will not only be the glory of his own people Israel. He will also be the light of revelation for the Gentiles.

He came to shine a light of the revelation of God into every nation, every tribe, every kindred and every tongue.

He's the Savior of the whole world. Rich and poor, young and old, black and white, Jew and Gentile, American and Japanese, healthy and handicapped.

All people are included in his coming. He came for the whole wide world.

"Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight."

If you are lonely Simeon included you.

If your family has rejected you, Simeon included you.

If you feel forgotten, depressed, discouraged, and down, be of good cheer, Christ is for you!

He didn't come just for the Jews.

He met a Samaritan woman at the well, and he forgave her.

He met a Roman centurion and said, ". . . *I have not found so great faith,*

He met a Syrophenician woman and healed her daughter.

When he was crucified, it was a Roman centurion who said, "*Surely this was the Son of God.*"

In all of this, Simeon is telling us something crucial. By sending his Son to the earth, he is not only fulfilling his promises to the nation. He is also bringing to the world a Savior for all people everywhere.

III. He is the Divider of the Human Race

There is yet a third thing that Simeon says. **Luke 2:34-35** *And 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.*

The third and final thing Simeon says about Jesus. He is the Great Divider of Men. He will cause many to fall. He will cause many to rise. And many will speak against him, and in speaking against him, the hidden thoughts of the heart will be revealed.

Today your heart is filled with joy. Later it will be filled with sorrow. Rejoice and enjoy this time because dark days are coming."

Born To Die

In the end, Mary stood by the cross and watched her son die an agonizing, brutal, bloody, inhuman death. It all happened exactly as Simeon had predicted. Above the cradle stands the cross. This little baby was born to die.

No Neutrality

You have to make up your mind about Jesus. Either he is the Son of God from heaven, or he's not. If he's not, then he is the greatest fraud in human history, and worthy of our deepest scorn. For if he is not the Son of God, then he is either a lunatic or he is a something much worse.

But if he is the Son of God, then the only possible response is to bow down and worship him!

At Christmastime you only have two options regarding Jesus Christ. Either you join Herod in trying to destroy him or you bow down and worship him.

CONCL — What Is Jesus To You?

When Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms, he said, "Lord, I'm ready to go home now. I can die in peace."

The Only Thing That Matters Is Jesus