

Advent in Biblical Perspective  
*The Spirit of Christ at Christmas*  
“The Holy Spirit and Simeon”

Luke 2:25–35

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This is the Word of God. Luke 2:21–35 says [21] *And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

[22] *And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord [23] (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) [24] and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” [25] Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. [26] And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. [27] And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, [28] he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,*

[29] *“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,  
according to your word;*

[30] *for my eyes have seen your salvation*

[31] *that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,*

[32] *a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and for glory to your people Israel.”*

[33] *And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. [34] And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed [35] (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Here is an old man and I guess he is somewhat of a fixture for this has been going on for quite some time given he is an old man. He has an assignment and he is there to fulfill it. When Jesus is forty days old He is brought in, in the arms of Mary and Joseph. This man named Simeon sees Him and he utters what in Latin is still remembered to this day; *Nunc dimittis*, meaning ‘Now depart.’ These are the last recorded words of Simeon. We know nothing about him until this passage in Luke 2 and we know nothing about him afterwards. We will learn some things about him from this passage for three different times in this passage it says he was being led by the Spirit of God.

These words of Simeon ‘Nunc dimittis’ were particularly embraced in the Reformation and even more specifically embraced in the English Reformation, even more specifically embraced in the Church of England by Thomas Cranmer in his Second Common Book of Prayer for worship. He uses the phrase ‘Nunc dimittis’ as the closing words and benediction in the Sunday evening worship every Sunday – Now I’m ready to depart. Every Sunday it was ready to

depart to serve the Lord or ready to depart to meet the Lord. So they have been carried down to us.

There is something interesting about Simeon. Three times in this passage it says the Spirit of God was upon him. This entire year our theme has been 'being led by the Spirit.' We have looked at key passages in Romans 8, John 13 through 17 and specific issues regarding the Spirit like blasphemy, grieving, quenching of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit and walking in the Spirit, etc. In this Advent Season I have attempted to take a look at the ministry of the Spirit in general at Christmas but specific in the lives of three in particular who were filled with the Spirit, bearing the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit and walking with the Spirit. We have looked at a man of God, the adopted father of Jesus whose name is Joseph, and a woman of God, the virgin chosen through whom would come the birth of Jesus, Mary.

In this study we'll look at an older man named Simeon but in this Advent Season I have attempted to come up with a theme. The theme is when the Holy Spirit is doing something around that is for you by His grace, He will also do something in you that will be seen from you for His glory. In other words, when God is doing the big stories, He is also doing the little stories, the back stories. When God sends a great awakening throughout a nation, the back story is that people one by one are sharing their faith in personal evangelism. When God brings people together to worship Him in Spirit and truth in ever growing crowds, it is because He is working in hearts where there is nothing more important than gathered worship to the praise of God. So while He is doing the big stories He is working personal from the inside out in the back stories.

We saw this when we did our study on Joseph. As God is doing the big story of the virgin birth which is extraordinary at this moment with the conception by the Holy Spirit and God humbling Himself as He comes as a Man, He is also doing a back story. I love verse two from the hymn 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing.' It says,

*Christ by highest heav'n adored  
Christ the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold Him come  
Offspring of a Virgin's womb  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see  
Hail the incarnate Deity  
Pleased as man with man to dwell  
Jesus, our Emmanuel  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

Nothing has been bigger than this story to this point in time for God has come in the flesh and all the while there is a back story. He works with Joseph. Joseph doesn't adopt Jesus but Jesus adopts Joseph to be His earthly father, the legal line in fulfillment of prophecy.

The Spirit of God is working in Joseph and he is marked by two things that mark men of God – strength and courage to do **truth**, compassion and sensitivity to be **gracious**. He sees his wife with child and they haven't had marital relationship yet. He assumes she has been unfaithful so according to truth he is going to divorce her but in graciousness he is going to do it privately. Then the Spirit of God through the angel lets him know that it isn't what he might think it is for it is the fulfillment of Scripture. She is still a virgin and hasn't been unfaithful for she is with child that has been given by the Holy Spirit apart from marital intimacy. So in grace

he keeps her a virgin so that not only is there a virgin conception but a virgin birth but he keeps and cares for her even as he holds to the truth. This is the Son of God come in the flesh.

Then we see a woman of God like Mary, a sinner saved by grace, and an extraordinary woman but still a sinner for she confesses Him as 'my Savior.' You only need a Savior if you're a sinner but what a work of the Spirit of God for not only does she confess Jesus as her Savior but look at the work of the Spirit of God in that she surrenders. She doesn't negotiate. She says 'Let it be done to Your servant according to Your Word.' From her soul she magnifies the Lord which is the work of the Spirit from the inside out.

Now we come to a third person who is in the back story of this big story of the virgin birth and the power of the Spirit. It is Simeon and we only see Simeon in the Bible in Luke 2 but three times in this passage we're told he is anointed and being led by the Spirit of God. We have seen a man of God and a woman of God so what do we see in Simeon? Now we are going to see an old man of God. So what are we seeing from him because of what God is doing in him? Now let's take a closer look at our passage to see what we find out about Simeon.

The first thing we know is that he is a man. The second thing is that he is an old man. It doesn't say how old Simeon is for it just says he is an old man. Here is extra Biblical tradition on this which means it is not in the Bible but extra Biblical tradition says that he was 113 years old. I don't know where they came up with that but I uncovered that in my study of this passage. Thirdly, we start to see something about the Spirit of God in him for it says he is a righteous man. That does not mean he has a perfect righteousness that saves him but it means that he like everyone else has to rest in the righteousness of Christ as a Redeemer and pursues righteousness. He is a man who wants to be obedient, not to be saved but because he loves his God who saves him. He is pursuing righteousness and there is the evidence of the Holy Spirit.

The fourth thing we see about Simeon is that he is intentional, devout. Devout is another way to say worshiper. He would not only prioritize gathered worship but he would make sure his life is worship. This isn't a serendipity thing of how he can work God into his life but this is a commitment to being devout and that is he wants to be consecrated in all that he does, says and thinks. His life is worship and he wants to serve the Lord. Fifthly, is he is waiting for something – the "consolation of Israel." He is waiting for the Hope of Israel. God had promised a Messiah that would come to Israel through Israel and who would redeem His people. Simeon is specifically waiting for the consolation of Israel, the Messiah.

Why is he waiting for the consolation of Israel? In other words, every day this man got up in his pursuit of righteousness in his devout heart, he had a singular preoccupation and that is he is looking and waiting for the Messiah. That is why he is there. Why is that true? That is true because he is anointed by the Spirit of God and that means he is now anointed to be a prophet. The Holy Spirit had come upon him and it had been instructed to him that he had, had special revelation – 'you will not die until you have seen the Messiah.' Three times he is Holy Spirit anointed with a prophecy and then when he sees the Messiah he becomes a prophet and will make a prophecy. So he is waiting for the Messiah and then will make a declaration of truth about that Messiah. So every day he goes to the temple complex and we're told he came in the Spirit. Here come the crowds and he is looking for the Hope of Israel.

This day up from Bethlehem comes a couple with the shekels and the pigeons in obedience to the Word of God. I would encourage you to spend some time personally in Luke 2 for this is the chapter on the childhood of Jesus. It is somewhat divided into three sections. There is the section of when He is eight days old, forty days old, and when He is 12 years old. You are probably familiar with the story of when He is 12 years old. They come up to Jerusalem

every year for the feast. When they leave they travel in caravans for safety reasons and the men would be up front while the women and children would be in the back. I'm speculating here but as they start back Mary says to Joseph 'Where's Jesus?' Joseph says 'I don't know, He's with you, isn't He?' 'He's not with me, I thought He was with you.' Just what kind of parents are these? They forgot Jesus, their oldest boy.

Would you like to know how many times my wife and I have stayed at church babysitting a child that a parent forgot? 'I thought he was in your car.' 'I thought he was in your car.' That's what you get for driving two cars. So why do they pick this moment out in Jesus' life? Twelve is the last year for a boy to be a child of the covenant for in the coming year at 13 he becomes a son of the covenant, a man of the covenant. They call it bar mitzvahs. Mary knows He is a man so she thinks Joseph won't miss this opportunity for Jesus to be up front with the men. Certainly Joseph is smart enough to know this. I can just see this discussion going on and of course they come back and find Him in the temple. He is not only a Man of God in the covenant but this is the Son of God and He is in a temple that one day He'll cleanse. He is the fulfillment of it and it's His Father's house. He is the Son and that means it is His. He not only is the temple but He owns the temple.

Now back to when Jesus was 40 days old, Joseph and Mary are being obedient to the law in this next step in the life of Jesus. So on the eighth day at Bethlehem they had Jesus circumcised according to the law for that would have been required according to Leviticus 12. So now the One who will shed His blood at the cross brings the first drops at circumcision pointing to the cross which is a symbolic death pointing to the actual atoning death that He will make when He cuts away our sin from us. Five times in this text it says they did things 'according to the law of God.' When the Spirit of God shows up in Mary and Joseph then the Word of God becomes important so that they don't just confess the Word of God but they conform to the Word of God.

We call this a Reformation principle for the Scripture alone is our only rule of faith and practice. So they are being obedient to the Word of God. They are being obedient to Leviticus 12 and also to Exodus 13 at day 40. There are two things they are doing here as they bring Him to the temple – cleansing and consecration according to the law. The cleansing is for Mary. Whenever a woman would give birth, the first seven days if it was a son she was unclean. Then she was being cleansed to be baptized on the 33<sup>rd</sup> day afterwards which would be the 40<sup>th</sup> day if it was a son. If it was a daughter she would be unclean for 14 days after the birth and then 66 days she would be purified with a baptism as she would step into the water and it would be poured down upon her. Jesus is a male child. On this 40<sup>th</sup> day Mary is coming to the temple to be baptized and declared cleansed.

There is something else happening. Ever since the Passover the first born of the covenant people of God had to be redeemed. Because Jesus is the first born He is being redeemed with shekels and an offering. The normal offering would be a lamb with a dove or a pigeon unless you had been declared poverty then it would be two doves or two pigeons. Mary and Joseph come with pigeons – two and a dove. Here are a man and woman of God where the Spirit of God leads them to obedience to the Word of God – 8<sup>th</sup> day, 40<sup>th</sup> day, 12<sup>th</sup> year. Do you see Jesus' humiliation? He is not only going to be born in a forgotten city of kings, raised in Nazareth (Can anything good come from Nazareth?) from parents in a line of forgotten kings but He is in a family who can't even afford a lamb.

When they walk in the temple on that 40<sup>th</sup> day an old man, devout, righteous and looking for the consolation of Israel, sees them and says [29] *"Lord, now you are letting your*

*servant depart in peace, according to your word; [30] for my eyes have seen your salvation [31] that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, [32] a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” (Luke 2:29–32) Simeon says ‘now I can depart.’*

The Greek and Latin word are interesting here. They are used to talk about loosening something but they are most often used whenever you loosen the tent pegs to fold up a tent. Now loosen the pegs from this tent for I’m ready to go. I’m ready to depart, to move on to glory for I have seen Him. The word Lord used here is from one of two words used for Lord. One is *Adonai* and *Yahweh* but a third word that is used five times in the Bible is *Despotes* which is used here in Luke 2. We get the word despite from it and it means an unchallenged sovereign master. For us despite takes on negative things but back then it did not.

Why is Simeon ready to go? Then comes his glorious benediction song. He has seen His Salvation. It has come to fruition. Here is the One who frees us from the penalty of sin, sets us free from the power of sin, eradicates the practices of sin, will lead us to the absence of the presence of sin and who will win the victory over all of His enemies and our enemies. This is the Salvation from the Lord prepared, not in a corner but in the presence of all the peoples.

I’ve been to Israel now about 14 times and every time I go I don’t ever have the thought “I’m in the one nation that is a Middle Eastern democracy ally of the United States” or that here are the Jewish people that were a failed plan in the Old Testament that the church replaces. Simeon knew that the promise to Abraham was to be sent to the Gentiles because the Gentiles weren’t an afterthought. It is the fulfillment of what God has promised. Whenever I think of Israel or Jewish people, I long for them to know that their glory is not that strip of land but it is the Messiah who was given to them and through them to all the peoples. I long for them to know that Jesus should not be rejected for He is glory, the glory of Israel, the light of salvation to all the peoples.

Then Simeon moves from a benediction song to a blessing. Luke 2:33–35 says *[33] And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. [34] And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed [35] (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”*

He blessed the legal father and biological mother. Then he specifically talks to Mary. What does it mean when he says for the fall and rising of many? Is he talking about every Christian who in order to rise has to fall? To be saved we have to be humbled. To come to Christ in victory and triumph we have to be broken that we come to Him. Or is he speaking of the fall of kings and the rise of those who follow Him which seems to be where Mary’s magnificat goes or is he speaking of both? I think he is speaking specifically of what is going to happen in the next 33 years for in the next 33 years there will be men, women, and kings in authority fall under His judgment but they will see those who humble themselves rise yet Mary will have a sword that pierces her soul.

Why wouldn’t he say this to Joseph? As far as we know Joseph isn’t there at the cross, that’s why. I think I know why he isn’t at the cross. After reading and thinking about what Mary went through and what Jesus went through getting to the cross I know what I would have done if I was His daddy. There probably would have been a big fight so the Lord has already taken Joseph home. How and when I don’t know but he isn’t around during the time Jesus was going to the cross. Mary goes with Him all the way to the cross and the sword will pierce her soul for the One that she has brought forth is our salvation. In His suffering we are redeemed yet see her grief. So these things are then declared. So what’s the takeaway?

The takeaway is those led by the Spirit to embrace Christ in life are also those ready to depart this life in Christ for a forever life with Christ. Can you imagine that moment that Simeon saw that Baby? Old people do this all the time, 'Can I hold that baby?' They know that they won't be told 'no.' Simeon comes and takes Jesus, this 40 day old baby, in his arms and he knows he is holding his Savior. This is the Lord, Salvation, to be proclaimed to all the earth. This is the glory of Israel. We exist by which, through which God is bringing this Messiah. This is our glory. Day after day, decade after decade, Simeon has come to the temple but this day he is handed and embraces this baby Boy through these poverty stricken parents, who have come in obedience to the law to be faithful to the Word of God, and Simeon says 'This is the consolation of Israel! This is the salvation of the Lord! This is the glory of Israel, the light of salvation to all the Gentiles!'

With this man of God marked by grace and truth, Joseph, with this woman of God surrendered, obedient and trusting, both walking according to the law of God, now on this day which becomes that day, I have seen the Messiah. Simeon says 'this is my life and now I'm ready to depart.' Loosen the cords. When Christ is embraced in life then we are ready to depart this life to be with Christ in a forever life so witnesses the Holy Spirit. A few years later Stephen, like Simeon, will be ready to depart as he sees the heavens open and the gates wide, enter in. It is like Saul who says "I don't know whether to pray to stay or to go. To stay would be for your benefit and to go would be to be with the Lord for absent from the body is present with the Lord. That day as Hebrews 9:27 says [27] *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.*

When the Spirit of God brings you to Christ and you embrace Him in life for life then you are ready to leave this life to be with Him in a forever life. That day is a glorious day. If you are not in Christ that is a terrible day. Hebrews 10:31 says [31] *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,* apart from Christ. There is coming a day for every one reading this where you will wake up and you won't go back to bed that night. There is coming a day when the final number of your numbered days has arrived. It's an appointment and we'll keep it. For those in the Spirit of God who have been brought to Christ and embraced Him by faith and repentance that day holds no terror, for it's a glorious day. He has gone away to prepare a place for us so that where He is there we may be also. That day is coming for all of us but this day is the day of salvation.

Have you embraced Christ as your life? I'm not asking for an addition to your life because He doesn't offer that. Is Jesus your life this day? If so then that day 'loosen the tent pegs Jesus for I'm ready to go.' 'Nunc dimittis.' I'm ready to depart. Can you get by the Christmas pageantry like Simeon? Here is a 40 day old baby and what he sees is the Lord of glory with nail pierced hands stretched out to receive us. What he sees is the King of Glory with nail pierced feet who makes all of His enemies His footstool. Can you see that Savior? Then embrace Him for now you have life and on that day loosen the cords of this tent for I've got another one to be with Him forever. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, I thank You so much for I see the evidence of the Spirit of God at work in the life of Simeon in such glorious ways and to see it at work in thousands upon thousands throughout the ages. God I ask that it work here. If there is anyone reading this today who is not ready for that day which will be a terrible day if they are not in Christ, would You this day allow them to see not the pageantry of a nativity scene in sentimentality, but the King on His way to the cross to

redeem them, and this day embrace Him who will hold us until that day when we meet Him.  
Loosen the stakes O Jesus, for I pray in Your Name, Amen.

### Power Point

When the Holy Spirit is doing something around you that is for you by His grace, He will also do something in you that will be seen from you for His glory.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SIMEON

- Man
- Old
- Righteous
- Devout
- Waiting for the “Consolation of Israel”
- Holy Spirit –Prophecy-Prophetic - Prophecy

### LIFE TAKEAWAY

Those led by the Spirit to embrace Christ in life are also those ready to depart this life in Christ for a forever life with Christ.