

“The Testimony of Simeon”

Luke 2:25-32

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Scripture reading tonight will come from Luke 2, as we will read and consider together the testimony of Simeon. We will begin in verse 25 and read to 32.

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, 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. 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, he took him up in his arms and blessed God, and said, Lord, you are now letting your servant depart in peace according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.

Thus far the reading of God's Word.

Well, just this last week, we concluded our Walk Through Nativity Ministry here at Briarwood, which enabled thousands of people to come and not only relive the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, but even and especially the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. It enabled thousands of people to relive not only the birth of Jesus, but also his life, his death, and his even his resurrection. Now imagine how strange it would be if during this Nativity, somebody, after seeing the birth narrative of Jesus, said to themselves, you know, I don't have to see any father of the story, because what I have seen now, I have seen it all. Upon seeing the birth of the Messiah, I have seen the very end for which he came. Now, to some extent that might be kind of strange. It might be a little strange to hear that kind of response here in the walk through Nativity. But to some extent, I think that's exactly what we see with the response of Simeon here in Luke's gospel. Upon seeing the birth of the Messiah, he said, "I have seen the end for which he came. I know exactly where the rest of the story is going, and I don't have to see the rest of it."

The question I want to ask and answer tonight is simply this. What is it exactly that Simeon saw? And what is it that so many others did not see? Herod saw him as a threat. The Pharisees saw him as a blasphemer. Even many today, in our own day, see him as a liar or even a lunatic. But what is it that Simeon saw in this child? What did Simeon see? I think the most basic and even simplistic answer we could give is that when Simeon came into the temple, he saw a baby boy, one who would have been no less than thirty-three days old, according to the Levitical law. It might seem quite simple, but this is actually quite remarkable when you think about it, for I would expect Simeon or someone like him to say this kind of a statement, perhaps at the apex of Jesus's ministry, perhaps after Jesus had performed a miracle or especially an exorcism. And even more so after Jesus was raised from the dead. I would expect for someone to say, now let your servant depart. For my eyes have seen the resurrected Lord Jesus. And I have seen his salvation. And yet Simeon says this at the very beginning, before Jesus did any mighty works, and while Jesus was at his weakest and his most dependent.

So what is it that Simeon saw? What did Simeon see when he beheld this child? Simeon said that he saw the very salvation of God, not merely the Savior, but the very salvation that this Savior would accomplish and make known to the ends of the earth. And he describes this kind of salvation in two ways. Firstly, as something that had been prepared in the presence of all people. In other words, this isn't something that should catch anyone by surprise. The birth of the Messiah isn't something that should catch anyone off guard. Rather, it is to be expected and even anticipated. In Simeon and Anna and Other Saints, in the early narrative of Luke's Gospel, expressed this kind of longing in this waiting to actually behold the Messiah that was promised all throughout the Old Testament, in the Old Testament has prepared us to look for this kind of Savior and Messiah to come even from as early as Genesis three fifteen. We are told that salvation will be accomplished through the seed of the woman. And even though his heel will be bruised, he will crush the head of the serpent again. Even the mosaic covenant, especially Exodus chapter four, reminds us and tells us that salvation will be accomplished through a faithful son who, unlike every other Israelite, will fulfill the law of God in its entirety and earn a righteous reward for his people.

The Old Testament is preparing us to look for that kind of Messiah to come, and even in the servant songs of Isaiah, they to prepare us to anticipate this salvation to come, we are told that salvation will be accomplished through the suffering servant, the one who would be pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, so that by his wounds we may be healed. So this plan of salvation has been prepared before the presence of all peoples, all throughout the Old Testament. And Simeon is saying to us, I get to behold the fulfillment of this promise with my very eyes. Let your servant depart, for my eyes have seen your salvation. Salvation prepared from the earliest of times in the Old Testament. But even more, Simeon goes on to describe this salvation that he saw as light, a light that would serve as revelation to the Gentiles and glory to the people of Israel. Prior to this point, the Gentiles walked in darkness. Strangers of the covenant promise they were without hope in the world. But upon the dawning of the birth of the Messiah, with the coming of Christ, salvation will not only stay in the nation of Israel, but rather it will extend beyond the borders of Israel, even to the Gentiles. The light that has come in the Lord Jesus Christ will serve as a revelation to even the Gentile nations around Israel. And this is not a new thing either. Our Old Testament anticipated even this, particularly the servant song of Isaiah in chapter forty nine, when God says, he will make the servant a light for the nations, that his salvation may reach to the end of the earth. And here again Simeon is saying, I get to see the fulfillment of that promise with my very eyes. The light that was promised all throughout the Old covenant has actually dawned with the birth of the Messiah.

This is exactly the kind of thing that Paul builds on in Ephesians chapter four. He said, God made me a minister in order to bring light for everyone. The mystery hidden for ages in God. That is, the Gentiles, too, are fellow heirs and partakers of the promise. Simeon gets to behold the fulfillment of this promise with his very eyes. But moreover, this salvation is not only revelation to the Gentiles, we'll also serve as the crowning glory of the nation of Israel. The most valuable possession of the nation, her very Savior and King has come. But how will the nation respond to the glorious King that has come in a manger? Simeon tells us later that some will receive this Messiah, but others will reject this Messiah. He says in a few verses that the Messiah will lead to the rising and falling of many in Israel, and a sign to

be opposed. But even when they reject him, even when his own nation rejects him, they will not diminish or smother his glory. In fact, they will only magnify it all the more because it is through his rejection and crucifixion that the glory of his salvation will reach to the ends of the earth.

So the very simple question we begin with, what is it that Simeon saw? On the one hand he saw a baby boy. But you and I both know that he saw much more than a baby. To borrow the image of light here in Luke, as well as in the book of Isaiah, when Simeon saw the Messiah, he was like a watchman in the night who saw the first light over the horizon, and he was content to leave his post, because he knew beyond a shadow of doubt that this faint light of salvation would eventually reach to the highest points of the sky and shine not only on the nation of Israel, but that light of salvation would go to the very ends of the earth. And Simeon tells us, he saw that when he beheld the Messiah, a light for the nations, and the glory of the nation of Israel.

Let's pray.

Gracious God and Heavenly Father, we praise you and thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, your son and our Savior. We thank you that he came, born of a woman, born under the law, that he may redeem those who are under the law. We thank you that his salvation not only came to the nation of Israel, but even to all the nations of the earth and even to us. In this room we pray, oh, father, that you would help us to respond to the Savior and His message with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance unto life. We ask it all in Jesus name, Amen.