

Passions of the Heart — Simeon & Anna

This week I was reading a story about a new minister who had just moved into town. It was late at night by the time he and his wife had arrived and started unpacking some of their belongings. The minister was in bed, and his wife was getting ready to get into bed when all of sudden she remembered that their dog, Trouble, needed to go out. Since it was late at night, and she assumed that all the neighbors would be asleep, she slipped on her robe, put the dog on a leash, and stepped out the back door. No sooner had she stepped out the back door, when the leash slipped out of her hand, and the dog ran off to investigate new territory. She ran after the dog along the side of the house. When she arrived in the front yard, a police car arrived. The policeman saw her, stopped, and asked her if she needed some help. She said, “No thank you, I am just out here looking for Trouble.” When I heard that story, I thought I would like to know the rest of the story. It was a great story.

Now why did I tell that story? I told the story because it was about looking for something valuable. Her dog, Trouble, was valuable to her. All of us on occasions look for something that is valuable. In preparation for today’s service, I was looking for a goblet to use during the communion service. We all look for things that are valuable. Maybe it is a long awaited trip to someplace very spe-

cial. Many of you may have had a trip like that. Or maybe it was a wedding. Everyone at some point looks forward to finding something very valuable.

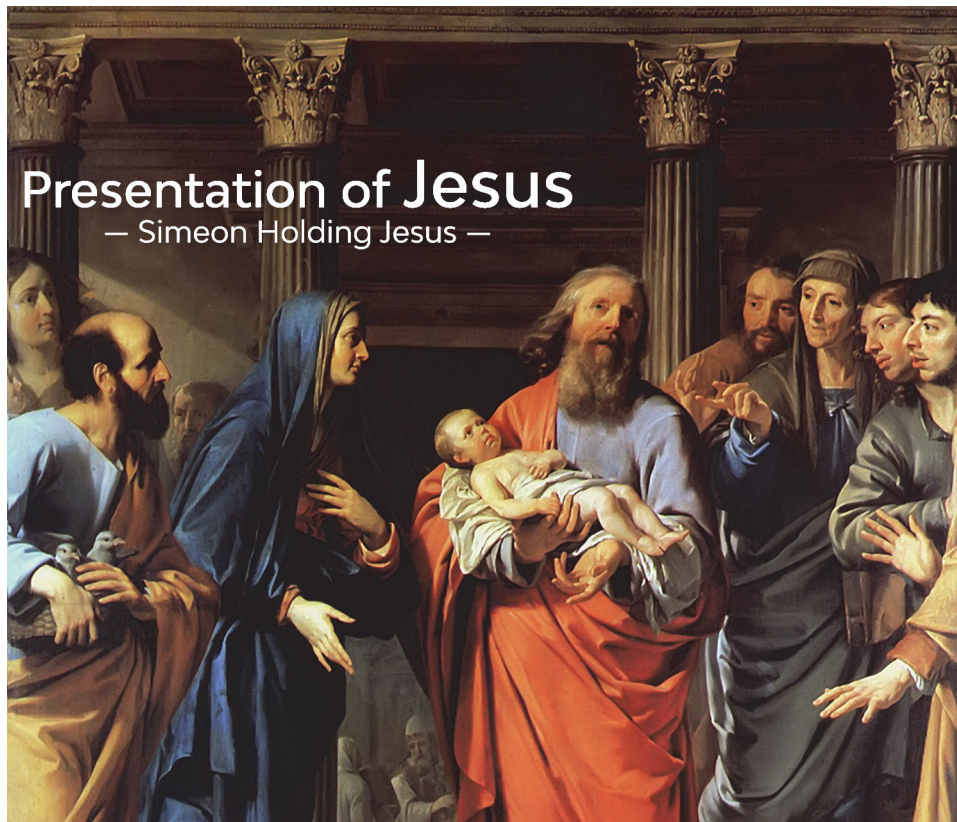
BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST. Our study is about two people who are looking and waiting with passion for something very special. Our passage is in Luke 2:21-38. The first part of Luke 2 is about the birth of Jesus. He has already been born, angels have already appeared to the shepherds and the angels have given the shepherds some great news. The angels told the shepherds that a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, had been born. We are told a heavenly host appeared in the sky. Then the shepherds left their field and went looking for Jesus in the village of Bethlehem. Some wonderful things occurred when

they finally found Christ. But when we come to verse 21, eight days have elapsed since Jesus was born and an important event occurred. Here is the way the verse reads:

And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given

by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Luke 2:21 (NASB)

CIRCUMCISION AND NAMING OF JESUS CHRIST. Here we are told that eight days have elapsed since Jesus was born.



So He was circumcised. Medical experts tell us that on the eighth day after a boy is born, the vitamin K and the Prothrombin levels in his body are at their very maximum level for his life span—110 percent of what is normal.¹ The eighth day is significant; because if circumcision had occurred earlier, bleeding would have been very severe.² That is, on the eighth day bleeding is minimized. It is the safest day for the surgery. So God prescribed that on the eighth day a male was to be circumcised (Leviticus 12:1-3). God in His great wisdom, prescribed the optimal time for circumcision to occur. This is a strong argument that reveals God intends for males to be circumcised. When God gives us a commandment, He does it for our good.

Then notice what happened next. Not only was Mary's baby circumcised on the eighth day, but He was given the name of Jesus. In our culture when a child is born, we try to name them immediately. We often have a name picked out in advance. Mary and Joseph had already been told that His name was to be Jesus, but they did not name him on the day He was born. The naming took place on the day that He was circumcised. So verse 21 is important; it was the day of His circumcision and the day He was named. We are told that His name was given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb (Luke 1:31).

SACRIFICES OF DEDICATION. When we come to Luke 2:22, Luke does *not* tell us how many days have elapsed since Jesus' circumcision. He assumes that we know Leviticus 12:4-5 says that thirty-three days were required in the white spaces between verse 21 and verse 22. The passage says,

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. Luke 2:21 (NASB)

Now if we add the thirty-three days that were required for a woman's purification and the seven days that were required for a woman's uncleanness (Leviticus 12:1-2) we obtain 40. So forty days had elapsed since Jesus had been born. Cur-

rent medical practice says that six weeks are prescribed for a woman before she is completely healed after giving birth. If we take the six weeks and multiply that by seven days, we get forty-two days. But God requires forty days—two days shorter than more current medical practice. It is wonderful to see scripture and science coincide. God prescribed this timeline for the health of women before modern medical science concluded that was a good time frame for healing.

After the days of Mary's purification were completed, they made the trip to Jerusalem to present Jesus to the Lord. Verse 23 explains why Jesus was taken to the temple and refers to Exodus 13:2, 12-14,

(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "EVERY firstborn MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD") . . . Luke 2:23 (NASB)

So why are they making a trip to Jerusalem after Mary's days of purification were completed? The first reason is to dedicate Jesus to the Lord. This is a requirement from Exodus 13, verses 2, 12-14. And verse 24 tells us . . .

... and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS." Luke 2:24 (NASB)

Now verse 24 is important. If you are like me, the first time I read the verse I said, "Oh, okay," and kept reading. But we need to stop and read carefully. We are told in verse 24 that they offered a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. There is a reason we are given this information. Leviticus 12:7-8 explains why they offered a sacrifice for purification. They offered a sacrifice because Mary had just given birth to a child. There were two kinds of sacrifices that could be given. One of them was prescribed for a poor couple. They could give a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Verse 24 tells us that Joseph and Mary were poor. They were not a wealthy couple or a middle-income couple. They were poor. That is why verse 24 is so important.

I want you to think about this. There are at least three things we have learned about this couple already. First of all,

1. McMillen and Stern. *None of These Diseases*. Revell Publishing, 2000. p. 83.

2. McMillen and Stern report that from the first day to the sixth day the Prothrombin levels are below 80 percent. Between the second and third days the maximum levels are about 40 percent.

they were godly or righteous. This couple wanted to obey the Lord. The second point is that they did not ignore biblical responsibilities. They could have skipped going to Jerusalem. They could have named Jesus on another day. They could have circumcised Him another day. They could have done whatever they desired. But the Mosaic Law prescribed that things were to be done in a very exacting way. Now think about what God might want you to do. Have you ever read scripture and thought, “Ah, this is just too much. I am not going to do this. I do not have to do that. We do not believe in legalism. I can do what I want. I have freedom!” Joseph and Mary could have responded in a different manner, but they obeyed because they wanted to please the Lord. I hope the reason that you obey the Lord is because you want to please the Lord, and not just because you have to do it. If you obey because you feel you have to do it, then it is legalism and God is not pleased. But if you obey because you want to obey, that pleases God. This couple obeyed because they wanted to honor God.

They could have stayed home. They could have dedicated Him at home. They could have said, “We will just have a little prayer service at home, lay hands on Him and read some scripture. We do not need to make a trip to Jerusalem and do all that stuff. Mary is tired. Mary has just gone through a difficult time.” Can you hear the potential rationalization some people might make and ignore what the Lord wanted? This couple did not do that. They did what God wanted. Even though they were poor, they gave anyway! They were willing to sacrifice in order to please the Lord. The Lord was more important. This is the type of parents that Jesus would have wanted, and He was given them. Why? He chose this great couple. He chose a couple that we should all be like.

DEDICATION—SIMEON BLESSES JESUS. When we come to verse 25, Mary and Joseph have now completed their trip to Jerusalem and are at the temple. When they arrived, they met a man named Simeon.

And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Luke 1:25 (NASB)

Here we learn some very wonderful things about Simeon. First of all, he was righteous and devout, just like Mary and Joseph—holy or godly. Then we are told he was full of the Holy Spirit. That is really important. The Holy Spirit was upon him.

This man was also a prophet. At the end of verse 25, we are told he was looking for the consolation of Israel. The word for “looking” in the Greek is *prosdechomai*. It has the idea that he was looking with expectancy. He was not simply looking. In the Greek there are different words for “to see” or “to look.” This word has the idea that they are not just looking. I can say I am looking at the wall or at the tree. This word has the idea he was looking for and expecting something specific to happen. So it tells us that Simeon was intently looking and waiting for the consolation of Israel.

What is the consolation of Israel? The next verse gives us the answer. Verse 26 says,

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. Luke 2:26 (NASB)

For what was he looking? He was looking for the Lord’s Christ. He is looking for his Messiah because we are told the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before he would see the Lord’s Christ. What a glorious privilege! He would see the One promised to Adam and Eve. He had the incredible privilege of seeing his Savior.

Verse 27 adds,

And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, then he took Him into his arms . . . Luke 2:27 (NASB)

As Mary and Joseph came into the temple, Simeon was there and he saw them. He took Jesus into his arms. The only way that happened was because the Spirit led him to do that.

What was his reward? He is allowed to see the Lord’s Christ. He saw the baby Jesus. Verse 28,

... then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said
... Luke 2:28 (NASB)

Verses 29 through 32—I have coined the phrase—is the Psalm of Simeon. There are a number of things for you to notice. The first one is that Simeon was a man of faith. Look at verses 29 and 30. It says,

Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,

According to Your word;

For my eyes have seen Your salvation . . .

Luke 2:29-30 (NASB)

This man of faith said, “Now Lord, you are releasing your bond-servant to depart in peace according to your word.” He had been trusting the Lord that he would be allowed to see the Messiah. He had waited and trusted. The book of Romans tells us that one of the ways we glorify God is by trusting Him. We have faith in Him. If you want to glorify God, have faith! Simeon was such a person. I have found waiting is the hard part of faith because we want things to happen now, and we want it our way. When it does not happen now, our faith starts to weaken. Simeon did not do that. He had faith and waited. Notice what he said, “Your bond-servant is ready to depart in peace according to your word.”

He knew that God was going to keep His promise, and when he saw the Messiah, when he saw the Lord’s Christ, he knew his life would be coming to an end. Everything about Simeon reflected a faithful man.

Now the second thing I want you to see is also in verse 30. We are told he said,

... for my eyes have seen your salvation.

I thought it was interesting he did not say “our” salvation—but “your” salvation. “My eyes have seen your salvation.” He was talking to God. Did you know that our salvation is of the Father, from the Father? Salvation is His plan. He designed salvation for you and me. Salvation is not in ritual. Did you

notice what Simeon said? “I have seen. My eyes have seen.” Watch this: salvation is in a person, not a ritual. Salvation is found in the person of Jesus Christ. Yes, we are required to believe in Jesus Christ. We need to believe we are sinners. Saving faith realizes that we need to have our sins forgiven. Saving faith responds with repentance. Saving faith believes in the work of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection where He paid the price for the forgiveness of our sins. I just love what he said when he gazed at the babe in Mary’s arms. “My eyes have seen your salvation.”

The next thing I want you to see is in verses 31 and 32. He said,

Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,

And the glory of Your people Israel.”

Luke 2:31-32 (NASB)

The third point is that salvation is for Jews and Gentiles. I have discovered this year that the real test of faith is not just believing that we have our sins forgiven and that we are going to heaven. Salvation is more than just going to heaven and having our sins forgiven. Salvation includes trusting Him for everything in this life. The real test of faith is do you trust Him for all your needs? Do you trust Him for your health? Do you trust Him for your family? Do you trust Him for your income? Do you trust Him for... You fill in the blank. For what are you trusting Him? Jesus is the object of faith. If you really trust Him, you will trust Him for everything in your life. Salvation is not just something in the future. Salvation is living your life today dedicated to Jesus and trusting in him. Simeon was a great, great example in both his life and in what he has said.

Now for truly great news. Look at verse 33.

And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. Luke 2:33 (NASB)

I rejoice with Joseph and Mary! I would have been stunned too! Verses 34-35 state,

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother,
“Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in
Israel, and for a sign to be opposed — and a sword will pierce
even your own soul — to the end that thoughts from many
hearts may be revealed.” Luke 2:34-35 (NASB)

Simeon made a couple of important comments. When he said “the rise and fall of many,” he was referring to the fact that Jesus would be accepted by some and rejected by others. We know that there were people who believed in Christ, but most of the people rejected him. When he said that He would be a “sign to be opposed,” I believe it was referring to Christ’s ultimate rejection, His crucifixion, and His death. When Simeon said that “a sword will pierce even your own soul,” I believe that was referring to Mary’s own anguish as she stood at the foot of the cross and watched Jesus die. Even though she knew that He was going to return to life— at least she should have known—she still would have had pain. Simeon was a prophet. His prophetic statements were very accurate.

DEDICATION—ANNA BLESSES JESUS. Verse 36 says there Anna, the prophetess was at the temple.

And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel,
of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived
with her husband seven years after her marriage . . . Luke 2:36
(NASB)

She had been married for seven years. Then verse 37 says she became a widow and then lived to the age of eighty-four. We are told,

. . . and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never
left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and
prayers. Luke 2:37 (NASB)

Anna was dedicated to the Lord. She was at the temple night and day. This lady was incredible. Notice that Scripture did not condemn her for her incredible commitment. In fact, she is praised. She is honored in the pages of scripture.

Verse 38 then tells us Anna walked over to Jesus.

At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks
to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were
looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. Luke 2:38 (NASB)

Like Simeon, Anna was looking and watching. Two incredible people - a prophet and a prophetess, were looking for Jesus, for the Messiah to come.

CONCLUSION. What have we discovered? I want to address two points. The first is that we have more confirmation about who Jesus really is through Simeon and Anna. We have already discovered from Mary and Joseph and the shepherds that Jesus is the Savior and King. Simeon and Anna have just echoed this truth.

I would like to share a reading from the pen of William S. Plummer.

Jesus has an almighty arm and a brother’s heart.
None is more exalted; yet none stoops so low.
None is mightier; yet none is more tender.
He will not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax.
He is meek and lowly, merciful and mild;
At the same time He is the Omnipotent Jehovah.
He enlightens, purifies and comforts the heart.
His word cannot be broken; His power cannot be resisted.
The ultimate in divine love and kindness is in His heart.
Great is His faithfulness.
His royal titles are Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,
To the righteous, Jesus is the source of all hope, all joy,
All peace, all life, and all comfort.
Jesus is still as gentle, as kind, as tender, as when he wept at the
grave of Lazarus, and He gave eyes to the blind and feet to the
lame, or granted mercy to a wretch hanging by His side.
Jesus: in Him dwells all the excellences.
He is full of grace and truth.
He takes the poor, vile, ignorant, guilty, helpless sinner, and
He raises him to son-ship with God when they believe in Him,
And makes them partakers of His holiness.
There is none like Him—no, not one.³

3. William S. Plumer, “Sinners Saved by Unmerited Kindness.

That is who we have been reading about. That is who we have been discovering during this Christmas season. There is none like Jesus.

There is a second point I want make by asking a question. But first let me remind you that Simeon and Anna were a righteous man and a woman who were seriously looking for Jesus Christ. Titus 2:11-13 reminds us,

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus . . . Titus 2:11-13 (NASB)

This passage tells us that believers need to be pursuing godliness, and looking for the appearing of Jesus Christ. Jesus promised that He would return and now we are to look for His second coming! That is what we ought to be doing as believers. If you really truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be looking for Jesus to return. In 1 John 3:2-3 we find that believers will be those who are looking for the Lord Jesus will seek to purify themselves by living pure lives. 1 John 2:28 says that if we will do that, we will not shrink away at His coming. We are to be just like Simeon and Anna—looking for Jesus. The day is coming. You are going to see Jesus. It may be in heaven, or it may be at the Rapture.

Now are you ready for my question? Are you looking for Jesus? If so, why? Is it because you are hoping to escape the world or the troubles that you have? Or are you looking to be with Jesus? Why are you looking for Jesus? The answer is important, because if you are looking to escape the world or the troubles of this world, you have your eyes in the wrong place. But if you are looking to be with Jesus, then you have your eyes on the right place. You are looking for Jesus. *You should not be running from His return; you should be running to Jesus.* If you are running to Jesus, then you are going to run hard and be seeking to please Him in everything that you do. You should have a passion. Your passion should be to pursue a life that pleases Him, and you will be eagerly looking, eagerly waiting, for Him. Is Jesus the passion of

your heart?

I would like to close with a story that is told by Chuck Swindoll. He said,

I worked in a machine shop for four-and-a-half years, alongside a fellow named George. His job was to sweep and to clean out the shavings underneath a huge lathe and the machines that we were running. George was born again, and he loved the teaching of scripture on prophecy. I remember hearing him sing hymns as he worked. Many of them had to do with the coming of Christ, such as “In the Sweet By and By,” and “When the Roll is Called Up Yonder.” Late one Friday afternoon, about ten minutes towards quitting, when we were all weary, I looked at George and I said, “George, are you ready?” He said, “Uh-huh.” But he was all dirty and it was obvious that he was not ready. In fact, he looked like he was ready to keep on working. I said, “Are you not ready to go home?” And he said, “Yup, I am ready.” I countered, “Look at you, man! You are not ready, you have to clean up!” “No,” he said, “let me show you something.” So he unzipped his coveralls and underneath were the cleanest, neatest clothes you can imagine. He had them all ready. All he had to do when the whistle blew was just unzip and step out of his coveralls and walk up and punch his clock, and he was gone. He said, “You see, I stay ready to keep from getting ready—just like I am ready for Jesus.”⁴

Are you ready for Jesus? Are you a believer in Jesus Christ? I trust you have found Him and are now looking for His return. Is Jesus the passion of your heart?

⁴ Charles R. Swindoll. *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*. Word Publishing, 1998. pp. 506-507.