

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

LUKE 2:25 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.

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.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 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.

33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

34 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.

JOHN 12:23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour.

NOTES

A Mission from Birth

(Christmas)

Lesson Text: Luke 2:25-35; John 12:23-26

Related Scriptures: Luke 2:21-24, 36-40; Matthew 26:18-45;
Mark 14:32-42

TIMES: 6 or 5 B.C.; A.D. 30

PLACE: Jerusalem

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel"  
(Luke 2:32).  
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Lesson Exposition

A BLESSED ENCOUNTER— Luke 2:25-28

A promise to Simeon (Luke 2:25-26). Eight days after His birth, the infant Jesus was circumcised (cf. vs. 21), as commanded in the Mosaic Law (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:1-4). It was on the eighth day that a child was formally named. Both Joseph and Mary had been informed that the child's name would be Jesus (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31).

Forty days after His birth, Jesus was brought to Jerusalem and the temple for the customary dedication. Bethlehem was just a short distance away, so this would not have been a hardship.

It was at this time of dedication that Luke introduces us to Simeon. Described as "just and devout" (2:25), Simeon was "waiting for the consolation of Israel." The word translated "consolation" is often translated "comfort" (II Cor. 1:3) and could be rendered "encouragement." Simeon was therefore anticipating the arrival of the Messiah, the One who would bring true and lasting consolation. The Lord's imminent advent had in fact

been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit.

The fact that Simeon would not see death until he saw the Messiah likely meant that he was quite aged. That the Holy Spirit was resting upon him tells us that he was filled with God's prophetic Spirit specifically for this occasion.

A Spirit-arranged meeting (Luke 2:27-28). Simeon, guided by the Holy Spirit, came into the temple seeking Messiah at the very time Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus were there for His dedication. Simeon was brought into the temple at just the right place and time to witness the fulfillment of the promise God had made to him.

It is unlikely that Joseph and Mary knew Simeon previous to this occasion. It may have come as a surprise to them when he took their infant son in his arms. He seems to have simply walked up to them and taken Jesus from them as he began praising the Lord.

It is no secret that God blesses us, but we do not usually think of ourselves

as blessing God. The Greek word translated “blessed” in verse 28 is *eulogeo*, from which comes our English word “eulogy,” literally meaning “good word.” In this case, Simeon’s blessing meant that he was praising the Lord for fulfilling His promise to send the Messiah, as well as for allowing Simeon, before departing this world, to bear witness to Messiah’s arrival.

BLESSING AND SORROW— Luke 2:29-35

The light of salvation (Luke 2:29-32). Having seen and also taken into his arms the very Saviour of mankind, Simeon acknowledged that he could now die in peace, having experienced the greatest privilege of his life.

This was “according to thy word,” that is, according to the promise made to Simeon. It is not clear whether this promise had been made many years previously or had been received recently.

With the infant Jesus still in his arms, Simeon declared, “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (vs. 30). Simeon knew that he had now been privileged to behold the very embodiment of God’s promised salvation to humankind. He knew that at that moment, the tiny infant in his arms was salvation personified.

While Israel indeed had a unique role in bringing the Saviour into the world, the blessings of redemption had been promised to all peoples. Including Gentiles had always been God’s plan. Consequently, the message of salvation is to be taken to all the world, and disciples are to be made from all nations (Matt. 28:19).

That the Lord Jesus is “a light to lighten the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32) echoes what is found in Isaiah (9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 62:2). While Jesus’ earthly ministry was primarily among His own people, the Jews (Matt. 15:24; John 1:11), the gospel was to be preached

to Jews first, but then to all other peoples (Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16). As those first Samaritan believers acknowledged, Jesus is indeed “the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42).

Perplexity (Luke 2:33). Surprised by what Simeon proclaimed about their tiny infant, Joseph and Mary “marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.” Considering what they already knew and had experienced relating to the birth of this Child, it is significant that this dramatic demonstration by the devout stranger took them by surprise, but it would not be the last turn of events in Jesus’ life that would leave them astonished or bewildered.

Coming conflict (Luke 2:34-35). Next, Simeon’s attention turned to address Joseph and Mary. He blessed them, but his message also contains an ominous element. Simeon prophesied that Jesus would become a polarizing figure in Israel. Those who rejected Him would fall, but those who received Him would rise. Although many would denounce Him, He would become the ultimate watershed between those who remained under God’s righteous wrath, and those who would be delivered from that wrath to inherit the kingdom of God (cf. John 3:36). Even Joseph and Mary themselves would be pierced to their very souls by this conflict (cf. Heb. 4:12).

Mary’s experience as Jesus’ mother would not always be a pleasant one. There would be many painful moments, especially as she watched Him be rejected, tortured, and crucified. Witnessing her son suffer on the cross must have been a most cruel sword that pierced Mary’s soul.

HOUR OF GLORY—John 12:23-26

Christ’s hour (John 12:23-24). Even when Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, a multitude of people lined the road as

He made His way into the city. This included pilgrims who had journeyed far to attend the Passover (11:55), Pharisees and other religious leaders who opposed Jesus (12:19), and those who had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus (vs. 17).

It was at this time that some Greeks wanted to see Jesus (vss. 20-22). These were probably either converts to Judaism (proselytes) or Jews of the dispersion, that is, ethnic Jews who now resided outside Israel. These men approached Philip first. Philip then told Andrew, and both of them informed Jesus of the request. Whether these Greeks ever got their interview with Jesus is not recorded.

The hour of Christ's glorification had arrived. While references to the Messiah's glory in Scripture can refer to a number of things, His atoning death and His resurrection seem to be in view in this instance. The fact that people other than native-born Jews were seeking Jesus indicates that the time had come for Christ's sacrifice for the sins of the world and for the spreading of the gospel to the farthest corners of the earth.

Throughout the Gospel of John, the idea of Christ's "hour" is prominent (cf. 2:4; 7:30; 8:20). With His arrival in Jerusalem for the final Passover, the hour had come for Him to be sacrificed and raised from the dead.

Just as a seed must die before it can produce new life, so it was with Christ. Jesus was about to die on the cross, but that would not be the end of the story. Rising from the grave not only affirmed that He was the Son of God but also made the promise of eternal life a reality for all who trust in Him.

Life and service (John 12:25-26). As Jesus was willing to sacrifice Himself for those who trust in Him, those who receive Him as Lord and Saviour must be willing to dedicate their lives

to following Him. For the true disciple, loving his own life and loving this world must be replaced with a willingness to reject selfish interests and worldly concerns in exchange for eternal life, which is offered to us through God's grace.

In order to serve Christ, we must obey Him. If we truly trust the Lord and follow Him in obedience, God the Father will honor our service. Christ died so that we could be with Him forever (John 14:1-6).

Serving the Lord and following Him are two aspects of trusting Him as Lord and Saviour, and they are inseparable in the life of the true believer.

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. How is Simeon described?
2. What had been revealed to Simeon?
3. What event brought Joseph, Mary, Jesus, and Simeon together in the temple at the same time?
4. What does it mean that Simeon blessed God?
5. How did Simeon see God's salvation?
6. What promise had God made concerning salvation and the Gentiles?
7. How did Joseph and Mary respond to these events?
8. How would a sword pierce Mary's soul?
9. What hour had come for Christ? How would He be glorified?
10. How are serving and following Christ related?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Receiving a word from God calls for faith on our part (Luke 2:25-26).
2. Encountering Jesus is the most important thing in life for anyone (vss. 27-29).
3. The salvation God has brought in Jesus is something we should all marvel at (vss. 30-33).
4. Jesus brings salvation and hope, but many violently oppose Him, to their ruin (vss. 34-35).
5. When God has called you to a great work, do it with confidence (John 12:23-24).
6. True faith is marked by sacrificial service to the Lord (vss. 25-26).

—Charity G. Carter.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Define “consolation.” Using that definition, describe what the “consolation of Israel” could be (Luke 2:25).
2. What did Simeon mean when he said, “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (vs. 30)?
3. How can Jesus be both “a light to lighten the Gentiles” and “the glory of thy people Israel” (vs. 32)?
4. What did Jesus mean when He said, “The hour has come” (John 12:23)?
5. What are some of the main differences between someone who loves his life and someone who hates his life (vs. 25)?

—Charity G. Carter.

Golden Text Illuminated

“A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

When God’s Son came to earth, He was a man on a mission. That mission, however, can be as misunderstood today as it was in the first century.

One aspect of Jesus’ agenda involves Israel. When God sought a man to father the nation through whom He would send the Saviour, He chose Abraham.

Jesus not only offered glory to Israel, He also enlightened Gentiles. Part of God’s covenant with Abraham was that through his Seed, the Messiah, “all the nations of the earth [would] be blessed” (Gen. 22:18). In other words, one of the greatest blessings to Abraham was that the Saviour of the whole world would come through Him.

Fortunately, God included the nations in the Abrahamic covenant, so Jesus also bore the sins of Gentiles. John, a Jew, writes, “He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

God’s people today are called Christians, but they are not closed off to any who will repent. Jesus also died for the sins of those who currently consider themselves to be Muslims, Hindus, and atheists. Whether drug dealer or police officer, porn star or stay-at-home mom, Jew or Gentile—all who call Jesus Lord will receive God’s pardon, God’s Spirit, and God’s now-but-not-yet kingdom. His glory is for all who believe. This was Jesus’ mission, and it is still His mission today.

—David Samuel Gifford.