

Jesus Is Salvation, Light and Glory

Luke 2:21-40

Key Verses: 30-32

“For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

Happy New Year 2017! Thanks be to God for bringing us through the year 2016 to know and love and serve our Savior and King Jesus! May God bless and guide us this new year by his living Word and Holy Spirit. Let's learn more about Jesus day by day. He is our salvation, light and glory.

First, the blessing of godly parents (21-24). Jesus was born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. It was the custom of all observant Jews to circumcise male baby boys on the 8th day. Would there be any exception for Jesus, the Son of God? Not according to verse 21. Like every newborn Jewish boy, Jesus was circumcised on the 8th day based on God's covenant with Abraham. Mary and Joseph were serious about their Jewish faith. They were in covenant with God. It was the only way they knew how to love and obey God. The day of circumcision was also the day to name their baby. They had already been given the baby's name by God through an angel: Jesus. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which both mean, **“The LORD saves.”** So they named him Jesus, just as they had been told to do.

Verse 22 jumps another month. Baby Jesus was now 40 days old since a Jewish woman had a purification time of 33 more days after giving birth to a boy. They brought baby Jesus to Jerusalem to present him at the temple. They followed the Law of the Lord carefully which said, **“Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord.”** Jesus was no ordinary child. But they did not treat him as a special case or give him special privileges. Jesus went through all the requirements for Jewish baby boys. They dedicated their firstborn son to the Lord.

They also offered a sacrifice in keeping with the Law of the Lord. Luke describes their offering. For those who couldn't afford a lamb and a dove for the sin and burnt offerings, two doves or two pigeons could be given instead. This is the offering that Joseph and Mary gave. It means they were too poor to offer a lamb. Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. But he did not receive special treatment and privileges. He was not born in a palace and laid in an expensive crib. He was laid in a manger. His parents were poor.

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Suppose you, as a parent, were to send your child to live somewhere? I expect you would choose a safe and comfortable place, wouldn't you? But God's Son was placed in low circumstances. God did not look for a wealthy, powerful family to raise His Son. He chose Mary to be his mother, and Joseph his father-figure. Why? We don't know for sure. God can choose whomever he wants. But we can say this: Joseph and Mary were serious about following God in God's way. For them, that meant keeping the Law of the Lord. It meant living a life of prayer and devotion to God. Jesus was raised by godly parents. Imagine the pressure on them that they had to raise the Son of God and Messiah, who would reign forever on David's throne!

How about the parents of today? How are we to raise our children? What is our strategy for raising our children? Most parents put a lot of time, effort and energy in seeing or at least hoping that their kids get the best education. Money and prestige rank high to most parents' hopes for their children.

I see from Joseph and Mary that instilling in my children the way of the Lord is the best thing I can do for my children. Missionary Isaac and Rebecca Choi have been dedicating their time to give this truth to parents in our ministry all over the world. Surely God will bless us, our children, our congregation and even our nation as we seek to live for the Lord first for ourselves and next for our children.

Second, Simeon, a man led by the Spirit (25-28). Luke has already introduced us to some righteous people, like the godly couple Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Joseph and Mary. He mentions two more in this passage: Simeon and Anna. Simeon is described as old, righteous and devout, and he was waiting for the consolation of Israel. What does that mean?

Consolation means comfort. Most people are waiting for some personal relief or blessing, like the day they can retire or a long-desired vacation. But Simeon had a national hope. He hoped his nation would be comforted. Obviously, his nation was in a time of suffering. What comfort did he hope for?

Isaiah 40:1-2 describes his hope: **“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.”**

Simeon was looking for relief, deliverance and salvation, not just for himself, but for his nation. How could he have such a noble, national desire? The

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Bible says “the Holy Spirit was on him.” Simeon was a righteous, devout man of God with a national hope. What is your hope for yourself? What is your hope for our nation? How do you pray for yourself? How do you pray for this nation?

In his inaugural address on Jan.20, 1961, President John F. Kennedy said the famous words, “Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.” Soon after that, he ended his speech saying, “...let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God’s work must truly be our own.” To extend JFK’s words in an even clearer spiritual direction we should ask not what God can do for us, but what we can do for God.

This was Simeon’s spirit. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. He would not get to see the Messiah’s ministry, nor his death or resurrection. But he would be privileged to see baby Jesus and hold him in his arms. Moved by the Spirit to go to the place where Jesus was, he went into the temple courts and met Jesus at that moment. Probably most people saw Jesus as a cute baby boy. But Simeon saw him differently. God revealed to him that this was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior for all people.

Here we learn about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us holy desire to live a holy life. The Holy Spirit reveals the Savior to us. The Holy Spirit leads us to Him.

Third, Simeon’s prayer (29-40). Simeon’s song or prayer is called the Nunc Dimittis which is Latin for “now dismiss.” Holding baby Jesus in his arms, Simeon praised God saying: **“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”** It is actually a prayer to the Sovereign Lord God, who kept his personal promise to Simeon and his national promises to Israel and his global promises to mankind. Simeon was ready to die in peace, since he could see with his own eyes Jesus the Messiah. Simeon described three things that he prophetically saw in the child Jesus: salvation, light and glory. Let’s consider each of these.

Salvation. **“For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations...”** Luke had already introduced us several times to

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salvation. Mary rejoiced in **“God [her] Savior”** (1:47). Zechariah called Jesus **“the horn of salvation,”** who brings **“salvation from our enemies,”** and he also mentioned **“the knowledge of salvation, through the forgiveness of sins”** (1:69,71,77). Angels declared to shepherds **“a Savior has been born to you...the Messiah, the Lord”** (2:11). Yes, Jesus made salvation available to all humankind. Later in Acts 4:12, Peter declared, **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”** Salvation is indeed good news for all people, because it is what all people need. Whoever doesn't think they need a Savior is fooling themselves and lying to God and people. Praise God for our wonderful Savior Jesus Christ!

Light. As already said, this salvation is not for the Jews only. It is for the whole world, all nations. To the Jews, the word is “Goyim” which means Gentiles or nations, all the non-Jews. Simeon said, **“a light for revelation to the Gentiles.”** The prophet Isaiah foretold this light to the Gentiles in Isaiah 42:6, **“I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.”** Again Isaiah 49:6 says, **“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”** This world is filled with death and darkness. But Jesus is the light of the world. Whoever follows him will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life (Jn 8:12). Jesus is the light for us to bring us out of any darkness. When we see that others are walking in darkness, we can help them to come to the Light, Jesus, or bring the Light to them. Sometimes it seems like people prefer darkness. That is actually deception and slavery. Souls yearn for the Light, the Truth, Freedom. Jesus is the Truth who sets us free.

Glory. **“...and the glory of your people Israel.”** Of course, Jesus brings great honor and glory to Israel, since the Messiah and Savior of the world came to them and through them into the world. Even more than that, glory is the presence of God. God dwelt with his people in a glorious cloud above the ark of the covenant. The Hebrew word is “shekinah.” The Jews had the greatest privilege to have God dwell with them. Now the Messiah had come to dwell among them, to show them the way, to draw all nations to the light of God. St. Paul saw the light and glory of God in Christ. He wrote, **“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the**

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glory of Christ, who is the image of God....For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4,6).

After speaking about the baby in his arms as salvation, light and glory, Simeon had more words to say to the parents. They marveled at his words, and he blessed them. Then he spoke some heavy, ominous words to Mary. He said, **“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”** Since Jesus is salvation, light and glory, we would think that all people would rejoice and follow him. But that was not the case then, and it is not the case now. People love darkness when their thoughts and actions are evil. Rather than repenting and coming into the light, sometimes people get mad and rebel. This is a typical childish response. When children are corrected or rebuked, they often get mad and throw a tantrum.

Isaiah understood this: **“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.”** (Isa 30:15). People fall by rejecting Jesus. People rise by repenting and believing in him and following him. Many people speak against Jesus because they don’t want to expose their secret sins and dark hearts. But those who acknowledge and confess their sins find forgiveness and new life. Jesus’ life would be difficult because the world is often against God’s way and Spirit.

Simeon foretold suffering for Mary too, that a sword would pierce her own soul. Prophets of God are not well-received by corrupt and sin-sick people. Mary would suffer along with her Son, Jesus. As long as the world is hostile to God, the people of God will suffer rejection and persecution.

Luke introduces another godly person, an old prayerful woman named Anna. She was married only 7 years then was a widow until she was 84. After losing her husband, Anna devoted herself fully to God. She never left the temple but stayed there worshiping night and day, fasting and praying. And she was a prophet. She is another devout person and precious to God. So she too had special insight from God to recognize the baby Jesus. She came up at that very moment, gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. Like Simeon, she prophesied that Jesus would bring the great

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blessing of redemption to God's people. Jesus would redeem or set his people free. Luke has much more to say about this later.

Jesus returned with his parents to Nazareth, where he grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was on him. We'll study more about this in the next passage.

Today we thought about the importance of godly parents and being led by the Spirit. Especially we learned more about Jesus, who is salvation, light and glory to all who accept this good news. May God give us humble, earnest hearts to learn of Jesus and follow him faithfully and fruitfully in 2017.