

Reading Luke 2: v. 21-38.

Title: The Witness about Jesus.

<sup>21</sup> And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. <sup>22</sup> Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD"), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." <sup>25</sup> And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name *was* Simeon, and this man *was* just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> So he came by 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, <sup>28</sup> he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

<sup>29</sup> "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,  
According to Your word;

<sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen Your salvation

<sup>31</sup> Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup> A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles,  
And the glory of Your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup> And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against <sup>35</sup> (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." <sup>36</sup> Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; <sup>37</sup> and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day. <sup>38</sup> And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

### Introduction

This year we are learning things that are not normally taught in connection with the Christmas story.

We have looked at Prophecy in the Old Testament concerning Christmas.

We learnt about Zacharias, Elizabeth and John the Baptist, and now we are going to be introduced to Simeon and Anna.

All of these things are connected with the birth of Jesus.

The story of Simeon and Anna and the circumcision and naming of Jesus would have been very important in Jewish culture and Law.

I am going to divide our teaching today into three sections.

1. The circumcision and naming of Jesus. – v. 21-24.
2. The Testimony of Simeon about Jesus. – v. 25-35.
3. The Witness of Anna about Jesus. – v. 36-38.

### **1. The Circumcision and naming of Jesus - Luke 2: v. 21-24.**

There were a few Jewish Laws that Mary and Joseph had to obey after the birth of Jesus.

On top of these Laws they had to call the child by a specific name.

Quote all these verses in the N.L.T.

#### Leviticus 12: v. 1-8.

The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. If a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son, she will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her menstrual period. <sup>3</sup> On the eighth day the boy's foreskin must be circumcised.

<sup>4</sup> After waiting thirty-three days, she will be purified from the bleeding of childbirth. During this time of purification, she must not touch anything that is set apart as holy. And she must not enter the sanctuary until her time of purification is over. <sup>5</sup> If a woman gives birth to a daughter, she will be ceremonially unclean for two weeks, just as she is unclean during her menstrual period. After waiting

sixty-six days, she will be purified from the bleeding of childbirth. <sup>6</sup> “When the time of purification is completed for either a son or a daughter, the woman must bring a one-year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtledove for a purification offering. She must bring her offerings to the priest at the entrance of the Tabernacle. <sup>7</sup> The priest will then present them to the LORD to purify her. Then she will be ceremonially clean again after her bleeding at childbirth. These are the instructions for a woman after the birth of a son or a daughter. <sup>8</sup> “If a woman cannot afford to bring a lamb, she must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons. One will be for the burnt offering and the other for the purification offering. The priest will sacrifice them to purify her, and she will be ceremonially clean.”

#### Quote Exodus 13: v. 1-16.

Then the LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> “Dedicate to me every firstborn among the Israelites. The first offspring to be born, of both humans and animals, belongs to me.” <sup>3</sup> So Moses said to the people, “This is a day to remember forever—the day you left Egypt, the place of your slavery. Today the LORD has brought you out by the power of his mighty hand. (Remember, eat no food containing yeast.) <sup>4</sup> On this day in early spring, in the month of Abib, you have been set free. <sup>5</sup> You must celebrate this event in this month each year after the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites. (He swore to your ancestors that he would give you this land—a land flowing with milk and honey.) <sup>6</sup> For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast. Then on the seventh day, celebrate a feast to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> Eat bread without yeast during those seven days. In fact, there must be no yeast bread or any yeast at all found within the borders of your land during this time. <sup>8</sup> “On the seventh day you must explain to your children, ‘I am celebrating what the LORD did for me when I left Egypt.’ <sup>9</sup> This annual festival will be a visible sign to you, like a mark branded on your hand or your forehead. Let it remind you always to recite this teaching of the LORD: ‘With a strong hand, the LORD rescued you from Egypt.’ <sup>10</sup> So observe the decree of this festival at the appointed time each year. <sup>11</sup> “This is what you must do when the LORD fulfills the promise he swore to you and to your ancestors. When he gives you the land where the Canaanites now live, <sup>12</sup> you must present all firstborn sons and firstborn male animals to the LORD, for they belong to him. <sup>13</sup> A firstborn donkey may be bought back from the LORD by presenting a lamb or young goat in its place. But if you do not buy it back, you must break its neck. However, you must buy back every firstborn son. <sup>14</sup> “And in the future, your children will ask you, ‘What does all this mean?’ Then you will tell them, ‘With the power of his mighty hand, the LORD brought us out of Egypt, the place of our slavery. <sup>15</sup> Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, so the LORD killed all the firstborn males throughout the land of Egypt, both people and animals. That is why I now sacrifice all the firstborn males to the LORD—except that the firstborn sons are always bought back.’ <sup>16</sup> This ceremony will be like a mark branded on your hand or your forehead. It is a reminder that the power of the LORD’s mighty hand brought us out of Egypt.”

Mary and Joseph obeyed the following Jewish Laws;

- a) Circumcision of the child - This was a sign of the “covenant” that God made with his people.
- b) Purification of Mary after her child birth.
- c) Dedication of the first born son to God.
- d) The Redemption of the child, through animal sacrifices. The word redemption means to “buy back”.

Mary and Joseph had to name the child Jesus.

This name means **“Jehovah is Salvation”**

**Everything that Mary and Joseph did was in obedience to God’s word.**

#### **Application**

The application for us today from these verses is very clear.

Notice how the dedication of Jesus and his redemption is connected to the mighty hand of God that rescued the Jewish nation from slavery in Egypt.

In Exodus 13: v. 14 it says:

**“And in the future, your children will ask, what does all this mean? Then you will tell them, With the power of His mighty hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt, the place of our slavery.”**

We know that because of the hard heart of Pharaoh, it cost the death of all the first born males in Egypt, in order to rescue God's people from slavery.

Everybody in this world is born in slavery to sin.

They need to be rescued from this problem.

God, at Christmas, sent His Son Jesus to rescue everybody from the slavery of sin.

It cost God a great deal to rescue us from our slavery to sin.

It cost the death of His Son Jesus Christ.

**Jesus is our "Redemption Price".**

Mary and Joseph had to buy back their Son Jesus by paying the price of the death of two birds, because they were so poor that they couldn't afford the price of a lamb.

It is so important that we understand the teaching about "Redemption".

When we put our faith and trust in what Jesus did on the cross to die for our sins, then God is able to buy us back from the slave market of sin, and then we become one of God's children.

**This redemption guarantees our security in Christ.**

We are completely free from the Law of sin and death.

We have the freedom to live a new life in Jesus Christ.

Just as the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt, so we are free to live for God, with the help of His Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1: v. 5-8 in N.L.T.

<sup>5</sup> God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. <sup>6</sup> So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. <sup>7</sup> He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. <sup>8</sup> He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

## **2. The Testimony of Simeon about Jesus. v. 25-35.**

In Jewish society it was a basic legal principle that a person's testimony must be confirmed by witnesses.

This was all part of the Law of Moses which was declared in Deuteronomy 19: v. 15.

<sup>15</sup> "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

To make a statement that God in human flesh came into this world in the form of a baby called Jesus was an incredible statement.

Luke includes the witness of both Simeon and Anna to confirm to the reader that this amazing event that had happened was real and very credible.

Luke wanted to complete the picture of the birth of Jesus and at least two witnesses, apart from Mary and Joseph would have been needed to convince the Jewish mind-set.

This is the reason that Luke gives us such a detailed account of the birth of Jesus.

**(Luke 1: v. 3)**

<sup>3</sup> it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus,

From the scriptures that we have read, we discover 5 things about Simeon, that makes him a very good witness to the birth of the world's Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### **1. Simeon's Character - v. 25a.**

Simeon was part of a small group of people who believed the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah.

They kept the Temple worship continuing and they were devoted to God.

The N.K.J. Bible tells us that Simeon was **"just" and "devout"**.

The word "just" is actually the word "righteous" which is used by other translations.

What this means is that Simeon had "righteousness" imputed to him by faith.

To understand how people were made right with God before Jesus died on the cross for their sins, we need to go back to Genesis Chapter 15.

Genesis 15: v. 1-6. ( N.L.T. )

Some time later, the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.”<sup>2</sup> But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth.”<sup>3</sup> You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.”<sup>4</sup> Then the LORD said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.”<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!”<sup>6</sup> And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

So Abraham and all the characters in the Old Testament who believed in God by faith, were made righteous by God, through their faith.

(Romans 1: v. 16-17 –in the N.L.T.)

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”

The second description of Simeon’s character was that he was “devout”

This word comes from a Greek word, “Eulabes”, which only appears in Luke’s writing.

The word describes those people who are reverent towards God.

It conveys the idea of being careful to obey and honour God, leading a good life before other people.

The two terms that Luke uses makes it clear that Simeon was a very credible witness about Jesus. He was justified and sanctified before God.

Application

It was a famous theologian who once said, “The people who God justifies, He sanctifies”.

What that person meant was that when somebody is truly born again and justified by God, then God’s Holy Spirit continues to work in their life, to set them apart, by His Holy Spirit.

If you are a child of God, God’s Holy Spirit is always working in your life.

I have personally noticed in the last three years as I have been the Pastor here at OIC, that I have grown in various ways, through the help of the Holy Spirit, and also through the love and support of God’s people at OIC.

I hope that you have grown too?

We always need to be growing in GRACE and in the KNOWLEDGE of God’s word. May God help us all to keep growing in 2018.

## 2. **Simeon’s theology - v. 25b.**

We are told in v. 25b that Simeon was “waiting for the consolation of Israel”.

The Greek word that Luke uses here is the same Greek word that is used for the Holy Spirit.

(Paraklesis) It means to comfort or encourage.

Simeon was an old man who had waited a long time for the personal and national deliverance of God’s people.

Simeon deeply cared about God’s people and still believed in the ‘Covenant that God had made with Abraham and confirmed through David.

Not only did Simeon want God’s people to be released from Roman rule, he also would have been aware of the “New Covenant promise” which is found in Jeremiah 31: v. 31-34.

<sup>31</sup> “The day is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. <sup>32</sup> This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife,” says the LORD. <sup>33</sup> “But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,” says the LORD. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>34</sup> And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the LORD.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,” says the LORD. “And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.”

It was the promise of forgiveness of sin, a clean heart, and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Simeon’s theology was consistent with the Old Testament promises that God would console His people through the coming Messiah.

This made Simeon a good witness.

**3. Simeon’s anointing - v. 25-27.**

In v. 25-27 the Holy Spirit is mentioned 3 times in connection with Simeon.

We are told the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, the Holy Spirit revealed something to him, and he was led by the Holy Spirit.

Every aspect of the life of Simeon was guided and directed by the holy Spirit.

**4. Simeon’s Proclamation – v. 28-33.**

Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and blessed God. Note that he didn’t bless Jesus, because Jesus was going to be the blessing.

He was thanking God for Jesus.

Simeon’s song of praise is known in the western world as the “Nunc Dimittis” which is a Latin word.

Very briefly what Simeon says here is that he is now happy to die because he has seen the Messiah who would fulfill all the prophecies concerning Himself as detailed in the Old Testament prophecies.

We know the prophecies would also include the Salvation of the Gentiles, that is us, if we are not Jewish.

Simeon was witnessing to the true identity of Jesus.

**5. Simeon’s warning - v. 34-35.**

After Simeon’s praise came an abrupt warning.

Simeon gave Mary and Joseph four main warnings.

**Firstly**, that Jesus was going to determine the destiny of people.

Some Gentiles would become believers and some Jews would stumble.

**Secondly** there would be opposition to the ministry of Jesus.

Many Jewish people would speak against Jesus, they would reject Him, deny Him and contradict Him.

All of these things accurately describe what happened to Jesus through unbelieving Jewish people.

**Thirdly**, we are told that a sword would pierce through Mary’s own soul.

This probably happened many times but the hardest must have been when Mary stood at the foot of the cross and looked up at her son.

What a heart wrenching moment that must have been.

**Finally**, we are told that the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed by Jesus.

In the Gospels we are told of a number of situations where Jesus revealed things about people, making it clear that he knew what was in their hearts, and he knew their past sins and experiences.

The classic example is the story of the “woman at the well” in John Chapter 4.

(John 4: v.29)

29. “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”

**3. The testimony of Anna about Jesus – v. 36-38.**

Finally, we come to the last testimony about Jesus from Anna.

Anna was an 84 year- old widow.

She served God with fasting and prayers night and day.

Anna was one of several prophetesses found in the Bible.

Others included Miriam( Ex. 15:20) Deborah (Judges 4:4) Hulduh (2 Kings 22:14) Noadiah (Neh.6:14) who was the wife of Isaiah and Philip's daughters quoted in Acts 21: v. 8-9.

Anna happened to be in the right place at the right time and was therefore able to be a witness to all of these events.

Anna witnessed to everybody who was interested in the "Redemption" in Israel.

What a challenge we have from the life of this old lady.

### **Application**

There are lots of applications that I could make from these verses but for the sake of time, I will make the most important one.

The most important application here for us is that we might be a good witness for Jesus Christ in 2018.

Tomorrow we will start a New Year.

It is a new beginning, many of you will celebrate the New Year with your families and relatives.

You can begin tomorrow by being **a good witness for Jesus Christ.**

The Challenge from Simeon is to **walk in step with the Holy Spirit of God throughout next year and for the rest of your life, even when you are old, like me!!!**

Simeon was full of the Holy Spirit, he was led and guided by the Holy Spirit, and things were revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

He was old and yet continued to serve God faithfully.

Psalm 92: v. 12-15.

<sup>12</sup> The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,

He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

<sup>13</sup> Those who are planted in the house of the LORD

Shall flourish in the courts of our God.

<sup>14</sup> They shall still bear fruit in old age;

They shall be fresh and flourishing,

<sup>15</sup> To declare that the LORD is upright;

*He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.*

Somebody said to me once, why does the Bible tell us that we have to keep being filled with the Holy Spirit?

The simple answer is that we "leak".

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are guided and directed by the Holy Spirit and our lives are a good witness for Jesus.

However, things sometimes go wrong, we say and do things that go against God's will.

Then we need to say sorry to God and start again.

It is at those times that we must ask God for a fresh filling of His Holy Spirit.

God's Holy spirit will never leave us but sometimes it doesn't control us.

The challenge for all of us, including me, is to yield our lives to the Holy Spirit.

To let Him control the things that we say and do.

If we do this, we will be a good witness for Jesus.

The second challenge is from Anna.

**She fasted and prayed.**

It is not easy to fast and pray. However, it does glorify God and it does make our witness for Jesus effective.

**May God guide us in our fasting and prayers for 2018.**