

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 22 December 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Simeon's Gospel Message

Luke 2:21-35

In September of 1982, when I was five years old, my family packed up our Cadillac, squished ourselves into the car like sardines, and took off for a long road trip to the state of Virginia. We were going to Virginia to take my big brother David to his first year of college; and I was dreading saying “goodbye” to him! I still remember a home movie clip of my family standing outside David’s dormitory, just moments before we told him “goodbye,” and left to go back home to Ohio. In the movie, we all looked sad; but I was the saddest-looking of all. I was standing there with my head down, and wiping away tears.

That first autumn of David’s being away at college was hard for me. However, I remember how excited I was as the time approached for David to come back home for Christmas. I was told that the drive home would be about 8 hours; but that was with the assumption that the weather would be good. David and the friend with whom he was riding would have to travel through the Appalachian Mountains; and most likely, there would be snow to contend with along the way. Thus, I was told, it was likely that he wouldn’t arrive home until after midnight. I begged my parents to let me stay up to see David; but they told me that I wasn’t allowed to stay up that late, and that I would have to wait until morning to see him.

Now, what is the point of this story? The point is this: just as I wasn’t allowed to stay up to see my elder brother, so millions of Old Testament saints did not get to “stay up” to see their elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. They never had the privilege of seeing the Messiah within their lifetimes on earth.

However, there *was* one elderly saint who *did* get this privilege: and his name was **Simeon**. Ever since the Garden of Eden, generation after generation of believers had longed to see the Messiah with their own eyes, but never got to “stay up” to see Him. One by one, they all lay down and went to “sleep” in their graves. But *Simeon* got to “stay up” just long enough to see the arrival of the Lord. Imagine the joy that Simeon must have felt when he picked up the infant Messiah, and held Him in his arms, and blessed Him!

This morning, we will be reading about Simeon, and about his encounter with Baby Jesus in the Temple; and as we do so, we will examine yet another piece of the Gospel message. In the last few weeks, as we’ve examined the events surrounding Christ’s birth, we’ve seen several important parts of the Gospel message—such as the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin; that He is God in human flesh; that He came to save us from our sins; and that He came to provide “peace with God” to sinners. All these truths were proclaimed either by angels, or by God’s people, in the months, weeks, and days leading up to Christ’s birth, and even on the *very night* of Christ’s birth. However, in the passage that we will be reading this morning, we will be getting down to the very heart of the Gospel: and that is **the fact that Christ died for us**. When Jesus was just forty days old, *Simeon* had the privilege of delivering this extremely important prophecy about the Messiah. The title of this message is *Simeon’s Gospel Message*.

Read Luke 2:21-35.

I. The preacher of the Gospel message: Simeon (vv. 25-29)

The Gospel message that we read just a moment ago was delivered forty days after Jesus' birth. Joseph and Mary had circumcised Jesus when He was eight days old, according to the Law of Moses; but now that Jesus was forty days old, Mary also had to *offer the sacrifice* that God required of every Jewish mother who had given birth to a boy. In **Leviticus 12**, God commanded that on the fortieth day after the birth of an Israelite boy, the mother was to offer a pair of turtledoves, and two pigeons, as a sacrifice to the Lord. Actually, the offering that was normally given was a lamb; but if a family were poor, and couldn't afford a lamb, they were permitted to sacrifice a pair of turtledoves and pigeons. This, in itself, reminds us of an important truth—the fact that Jesus was born into a *poor* family! Jesus left His throne in Heaven, came down into our world, and grew up in poverty, so that He might provide salvation for us. In **2 Corinthians 8:9**, the Apostle Paul reminds us that although Jesus was rich, ***“yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”***

Now, while Mary and Joseph were at the Temple, they met your man Simeon. Who was Simeon? Well, we don't know much about him; but we do know that Simeon was a true believer in the God of Israel. At some point in his life, he had personally placed his trust in God's promise of the coming Saviour. He had a personal relationship with the Lord. What's more, Simeon was expecting to *see* the Saviour within his lifetime. How did Simeon know that he would see the Messiah before he left this earth? The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit had *revealed* this to Simeon at some point prior to Christ's birth. **(Read Luke 2:25-26 again.)**

Why did Simeon get the privilege of seeing the Messiah, when so many other godly saints *did not* get to see Him? I'm not sure that we'll ever know the full answer to that question. However, there *is* one thing we may be sure of: God would *not* have given this privilege to Simeon if he *had not* had a passionate longing for the coming of the Messiah! God would *not* have revealed this wonderful thing to Simeon if Simeon had had a “ho-hum, take-it-or-leave-it” attitude about seeing the Christ! God reveals the “secret things” about Himself to His *friends*; and the condition for close “friendship” with God is that you love and obey Him with all your heart. Jesus said in **John 15:14**: ***“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”*** You may be sure that Simeon had been passionately searching the Scripture to try to find out exactly *when* his heavenly Friend, the Messiah, would arrive. Simeon longed and yearned to see his Redeemer; and God honoured him for it.

There were many faithful Old Testament saints who were just like Simeon. They, too, longed to know when the Messiah would arrive; and they yearned to live long enough to see Him. If they couldn't see Him, they at least wanted to know as much about Him as they could. Jesus told His disciples, ***“Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those***

things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” Let’s see what the Apostle Peter had to say about these faithful Old Testament saints who were waiting for the Messiah.

Read 1 Peter 1:10-12.

Simeon was one of those righteous men who diligently searched the Scriptures to try to discover “*what, or what manner of time*” the Saviour would appear. Now, even before the Holy Spirit told Simeon that he would live to see the Messiah, he probably already *suspected* that he might live to see Him. How would he have known this? He would have known it by studying Daniel’s **prophecy of the seventy weeks of years.**

Read Daniel 9:24-26.

More than 500 years before Jesus was born, God revealed to the prophet Daniel that there would be 69 “weeks of years” (483 years) from the time of the decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem to the time when the Messiah would be “*cut off*” (“killed”). Simeon surely would have known this prophecy, and would have studied it many times. He probably struggled with understanding *why* the Messiah would be killed; but he believed it. As for the math in this prophecy, it wasn’t hard to calculate. The Jews kept very good records; and they knew very well the date when the decree had been made to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Even today, historians know, for a fact, that the Persian King Artaxerxes made the decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem on March 14, 445 B.C. Well, guess what? Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on April 6, A.D. 32, and presented Himself as King of Israel; and it just so happens that this was 173,880 days (exactly 483 Hebrew years) after the date of Artaxerxes’ decree. Only three days after Jesus rode into Jerusalem, He was “cut off” (in other words, “killed”). Daniel’s prophecy was fulfilled to the letter! We still have intact copies of the book of **Daniel** that *we know* were written at least 200 years before Christ’s birth, to confirm the veracity of it. This prophecy was not made up by a fanatical Christian who wanted to make Jesus look like the Messiah; it was given to Daniel by God, 537 years before Jesus’ birth!

Simeon knew this Scripture well—as did many other godly Jews, who was waiting for the Messiah. He knew that it would be 483 years from Artaxerxes’ decree to the death of the Messiah. He knew that the 483-year mark was only 33 years away. The only thing he didn’t know was *how old* the Messiah would be when He would die. (Thus, he didn’t know when He would be *born*.) Simeon was praying that the Messiah would be born before he died, so that he could see Him; and to his great joy, God granted that request! Imagine what it must have

been like for Simeon to know that he was looking into the face of the One who not only would save him from *his own* sin, but would bring the blessing of salvation to all mankind!

Old Simeon loved Christ's coming; and God rewarded him for it. Christian, do *you* love Christ's coming? Christ has already come once; but He is coming again; and we should be longing for it. Now, we shouldn't be trying to figure out a date for Christ's coming, because Jesus said, very clearly, that no man knows the day or the hour when He will return. However, we should *love* Christ's appearing. We should long for it, and study it in Scripture, and live our lives as though He could come for us in the clouds at any moment. In **2 Timothy 4:8**, Paul said that the Lord will give a "***crown of righteousness***" to all who "***love his appearing.***" Do *you* love His appearing?

II. The Gospel message that Simeon preached (vv. 30-35)

(Read Luke 2:30-35 again.) In **verse 27**, we are told that Simeon came "***by the Spirit***" into the Temple. That little phrase, "***by the Spirit,***" tells us a lot about Simeon! Simeon was a man who allowed God to lead him in his daily life; and at this point, God was *literally* leading him. God directed his steps to the very place where Jesus was. Although the Scripture doesn't tell us whether Simeon was actually speaking by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we may safely assume that he was doing just that. The Holy Spirit arranged this important meeting in the first place; and we may be sure that the Spirit also gave Simeon the very words that He wanted him to say concerning the Son of God.

Make no mistake about it, though: even though the Holy Spirit was giving Simeon the words to say, Simeon was not ignorant of what he was talking about. Simeon's words were based upon the Scriptures; and he knew the Scriptures well. Several times he quotes, or references, the Old Testament. Simeon had a good deal of understanding of how salvation was going to be provided for us, because he had been bathing his mind and heart in the Word of God; and for that reason, there is much rich truth concerning the Gospel in Simeon's prayer.

Let's take a look at Simeon's prayer. First of all, Simeon says that Jesus would be "***a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.***" Simeon understood that Jesus was going to bring the light of salvation not only to the nation of Israel, but also to the whole world. Simeon wasn't filled with hatred toward the Gentiles, as most Jews were: he understood the truth that "***God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.***" Let's look at the Scriptures that Simeon was quoting.

Read Isaiah 42:6-7 / 49:6-7.

Simeon understood that the “good news” of salvation would be for *all* men. But that’s not all. Simeon also understood that Jesus would cause many people in Israel to “*fall*,” spiritually speaking. **(Read Luke 2:34 again.)** What does Simeon mean when he said that Jesus would occasion the “*fall*” of many in Israel? Does he mean that God *wanted* people to fall? No. He simply means that Jesus cannot be ignored. Sinners *must* choose what they will do with Jesus Christ; and their choice determines their own fate. When a sinner chooses *not* to believe on Jesus, spiritually speaking, he “stumbles” over Him. Just as a person trips over a big concrete block will get seriously hurt, so people with unbelieving hearts “stumble” over Jesus, to *their* hurt. Let’s look at the Scripture that Simeon probably had in mind as he spoke these words.

Read Isaiah 8:13-15.

Isaiah prophesied that the LORD Himself would be like a “*sanctuary*” (in other words, a place of safety) to those who fear Him and trust Him. But to those who *refuse* to believe on Him, He would be a “*stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence.*” Who is this “stone,” exactly? It is the second Person of the Godhead. This is a prophecy of Jesus Christ! Because most of the Jewish people refused to believe on their God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, they “stumbled, and fell, and were broken, snared, and taken.” Spiritually speaking, they were ruined, and fell into the snare of the devil. Make no mistake about it, though: it isn’t just the *Jewish* people who “stumble” over Jesus; *all men* and woman who refuse to believe on Jesus stumble over Him, and are broken. Countless multitudes of people stumble and fall over Jesus, to their peril—not only in this life, but for eternity.

However, there is good news. Simeon *also* understood that Jesus would be the cause of the “*rising again*” of many people in Israel. *Every* soul who believes on Jesus is “*raised up*” from his condition of spiritual death, and is made alive to God, and is made to “*sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*”

Read Ephesians 2:1-9.

Simeon said that Jesus would be “*for the fall and rising again of many*” in Israel; and, as I said before, this is true not just for the people of Israel, but for *all* nations. Tragically, the overwhelming majority of people in our world *stumble* over Jesus in unbelief; yet, there are still “*many*” people, from many nations, who are rising again to new life in Christ. How many is “many”? I have no idea. I don’t know how many people will believe on Jesus before the end of the world; but whatever that number is, it will be a *great* number! In the vision of

Heaven that God gave to the Apostle John, John saw “***a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,***” standing “***before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,***” and crying, “***Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.***”

My friend, are *you* in that number? Have *you* received the gift of eternal life? *Every soul* will either rise to eternal life in Christ, or fall into everlasting judgment in the Lake of Fire, depending upon how he (or she) responds to Jesus Christ. No one can "sit on the fence," and not decide what he will do with Jesus. Either you have believed on Jesus, and have been "raised up" into new life in Him, or you are continuing to stumble over Him in disbelief, and are headed for eternal ruin in the Lake of Fire. Peter wrote, “***Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient.***” Which of these is *your* spiritual condition? Do you have eternal life in Christ, or are you still lost in your sins?

Now, let's see what else Simeon had to say about Jesus. Simeon said that Jesus would be a “***sign which shall be spoken against.***” In other words, He would be greatly disliked and rejected by many people. This is exactly what the prophets of old foretold.

Read Isaiah 53:1-3.

Read Psalm 118:22.

All His life, Jesus was intensely hated and spoken against; and He will be hated and spoken against for the rest of history. To this day, the world has a particular hatred of the name "Jesus." By the way, even the name "Christ" (*by itself*) is not hated as much as the name "Jesus" is. Why is that? Because the name "Christ" has been twisted by many cultists, to suit their pride and their lusts. For example, many people these days have bought into a lie called "christ consciousness." This is the idea that "christ" is not a person, but rather some kind of universal "force" or "consciousness" that you can "tap into" as you become more aware that *you* are a "god." "Christ" is a name that has been perverted by many cults, to exploit people. **The name "Jesus," however, is Christ's human name.** The name "Jesus" means "Saviour." "Jesus" is the name that the *second Person of the Godhead* took on when He wrapped Himself in human flesh, and became part of our race. What does the full name "Jesus Christ" mean, then? It means that Jesus is God *and* Man! Satan and his angels passionately *hate* that full name, "Jesus Christ," because every time they hear it, they are reminded of the fact that God took on human flesh in order to destroy the works of the devil. That is why you especially hear people blaspheming the name of "Jesus," or of "Jesus Christ." Satan despises that name;

and he wants to get as many people to despise that name as he possibly can. But to us who believe, the name of “Jesus” is precious. Is He precious to *you*?

Now, there is something else that Simeon understood. Simeon also understood that the Messiah would die. How do we know this? Well, first of all, Simeon said that the Messiah would be a “*sign*” who would be “*spoken against*.” Now, that statement practically jumps from the pages of **Isaiah 53**, where Isaiah said that Jehovah’s Servant would be “*despised and rejected of men*.” Simeon was obviously well acquainted with the truth of **Isaiah 53**, that the Messiah would be rejected; and if Simeon understood *this* truth from **Isaiah 53**, then he also would have understood the truth that the Messiah would *die*. There is no way that a man of Simeon’s spiritual understanding could have read **Isaiah 53** without realising that somehow, and in some way, the Messiah would die. Lest you doubt this, look again at what Simeon said to Mary. He said, “*Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also*.” Now, think about that. If a sword were to pierce through Mary’s soul “*also*,” then there obviously was someone *else* who would be “pierced.” Who is that Person? It is Mary’s son, Jesus—the one who, Simeon said, would be “*spoken against*” by the people of Israel. Simeon clearly understood these things. In **Zechariah 12:10**, the LORD had prophesied that Israel would “*look upon me whom they have pierced*.” In **Psalm 22:16**, David wrote, “*they pierced my hands and my feet*.” Simeon surely knew this psalm; and he knew that David had never had *his* hands and feet pierced. David was prophesying about *someone else* whose hands and feet *would* one day be pierced. Though Simeon didn’t say it directly, he was implying, in his prophecy, that Jesus would one day be “pierced.”

Simeon understood that Jesus would die. But that still is not all. He also understood that Jesus would *rise again*. How do I know? Well, he had just implied that Jesus would be “pierced”; yet, he had also said that Jesus was “*a light to lighten the Gentiles*.” Now, if Jesus were to bring the light of salvation “*before the face of all people*,” then He couldn’t remain dead now, could He? He would have to come back to life! Simeon must have understood this. If he had read **Psalm 16**, **Psalm 22**, and **Isaiah 53** (and he surely would have done so), then he could not have overlooked all the prophecies of Christ’s death and resurrection.

Jesus’ body was literally “pierced” with a spear. That is why Mary’s soul would also be “pierced.” (**Read Luke 2:35 again.**) We don’t know of any historical record that Mary ever was physically pierced with a spear, or otherwise died a martyr’s death; but what we do know is that her soul was “pierced” with sorrow. Jesus’ suffering was the cause of much emotional pain to Mary. It cut her to the heart. Even Jesus’ miraculous *birth* was a cause of pain for her. For the rest of her life, she was accused of adultery by people who refused to believe that Jesus had been born of a virgin. That had to hurt! It must have been extremely painful to Mary to watch as most of the nation of Israel rejected Jesus; and it must have been supremely painful for her to watch as Jesus was tried as a criminal; as the flesh was ripped off His back;

as a crown of thorns was rammed on His head; and as He was nailed to a cross to die in shame and agony.

By the way, Christian, I believe we can find an application in this. You may be sure that some “swords” that will pierce *your* soul, also—if, that is, you are serving the Lord with all your heart. There is tremendous joy in serving Jesus Christ; but you need to understand that there is often much pain, as well. As you pour your heart and soul into others, and do your utmost to win them to Christ, you develop a deep love and burden for them; and for that reason, it hurts deeply when people whom you love so much, and whom you want so badly to be saved, decide to turn away from the Gospel, turn away from God, and toss aside their friendship with you, as though you were an old shoe. It hurts when people whom you love so much decide not only to reject God, but to reject you, and to speak evil of you. It hurts when even fellow *Christians* do not appreciate the sacrifices of love that you are making for them. The Apostle Paul told the church of Corinth, **“I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.”** Christian, are you counting the cost of being a vessel of service to God? There *is* a cost in this world for being completely sold out to God! It cost Mary much pain. However, the rewards for serving God are “out of this world.” If you will allow Christ to use your life, He will reward you abundantly in Heaven.

III. The end result of the Gospel message (v. 35)

(Read Luke 2:35 again.) Simeon prophesied about the Gospel message. He said that Jesus would be rejected; and he clearly implied that Jesus would be “pierced”—that He would die. He also implied that Jesus would come back to life. (The only way that Jesus could provide salvation **“before the face of all people”** was to come to life again!) By inspiration of the Holy Ghost, Simeon had just proclaimed the message of salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Yet, what is the *end result* of the Gospel message? Simeon answers that question, as well. The end result is that the thoughts of people’s hearts are revealed. No one can escape the Gospel message. No one can escape the Light of Jesus Christ. Like a spotlight, Christ exposes our sin. He shows what is really in our hearts. He also reveals the thoughts of our hearts in regard to Himself. He knows those who have truly believed on Him; and He knows who are rejecting Him. In **1 Corinthians 4:5**, Paul says that Christ will one day **“bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.”** Many people *appear* to be believers in Jesus, when, in fact, they have never repented of their sin; and they are nothing but hypocrites. Some false believers eventually get tired of living a lie, shed their hypocritical mask of “Christianity,” and unapologetically jump back into the muck of the world; while others keep up the appearances right to the end of their lives. Many people openly reject Jesus, while still trying to uphold a façade of morality (when, in fact,

their hearts are full of sin). Some people not only openly reject Jesus, but openly declare their sin, and have no shame about it. But whether here in this life, or in eternity, the true thoughts of people's hearts, and their true attitude toward Jesus Christ, *will* be revealed.

The thoughts of *your* heart will be exposed one day, too. When you stand before God to be judged, and all the world sees the secrets of your heart, what will they see? Will they see a heart that was hiding wicked, ugly sin? Will they see a heart that never humbled itself before Christ? Or will they see a heart that humbled itself before God, and received forgiveness and cleansing? Will they see the *new heart* that God gives to sinners who repent and believe on Him? Or will they see the same old sinful heart with which you were born? If you have never placed your trust in Jesus, I urge you to believe on Him, and receive a new heart from Him!

Conclusion: Simeon declared an important piece of the Gospel message. He prophesied that Jesus would be rejected; that He would suffer death; that He would cause people either to “rise” or to “fall,” depending on how they respond to Him; and that He would reveal the thoughts of people’s hearts. At this very hour, there are still people who are rising to new life in Christ; but, tragically, most people are stumbling over Him in condemnation. Which is true of you? Should you be stumbling over Jesus Christ, please stumble no longer. Receive God’s gift of salvation, and plant your life upon the Rock of Jesus Christ!

Christian, this message is for you, too. You may be sure that there will be sorrow in your life as you endeavour to serve the Lord. Don’t resent suffering as an “intruder” in your life; regard it as part of your cross, and joyfully serve the Lord—just as Mary did!