

## **Testimonies to the Incarnation**

Luke 2:1–38

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I read to you the 2nd chapter of Luke, and I'd like you to turn back to Luke, chapter 2. I want to look together with you at the subsequent portion of the chapter, starting in verse 21 where we left off. Carmella asked the question in that song that is the appropriate question: "What child is this who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping?" That is the question. That is the age old question. That is the Christmas question: "What child is this?"

That is the most important query that anyone can ever ask. To ask that question and answer it correctly is the most glorious and gracious reality that any human being can ever know. To know that question, to answer it correctly, to embrace that child as the Son of God, the Savior, the Lord of heaven and earth – to acknowledge Him as your Lord is to enter heaven; even now, to enter into the heavenly realm while your life on this earth goes on, and one day, into the eternal glories of the presence of God where all is love and joy and peace forever. It is the determining question.

In the section that I want to read to you, there is a statement made that is a defining statement. It's in verse 34 and it's at the end of the verse. It says, "To the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. To the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." What we're going to see in the context is that what a person does in response to Jesus Christ reveals the heart. It reveals the heart in such a massive way that it reveals destiny. A person's destiny in time and eternity is determined by their response to Jesus Christ – but we'll get to that in a moment.

We're all familiar with the story of Christmas. We love the elements of that story. We're even familiar, backing up a little bit, with Elizabeth, Zachariah, and the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner. We're familiar with the encounter between Mary and Elizabeth. We're familiar with the angel coming to Mary and the angel coming to Joseph, and we're familiar with the angels coming to the shepherds as we read earlier. We know about the shepherds and how they came and saw exactly what the angel told them they would see, and they went glorifying God and praising Him.

We're familiar also with the account of the wise men who came, and we know about Herod and the slaughter of the innocents, and we know about the family and trying to save their own lives, and the life of the Lord Jesus Christ – took a trip to Egypt and came back only when the time was safe and Herod was not there anymore. We all know those elements. We love those parts of the story. We know about the gifts of the wise men. But there's a part of the story that is so often overlooked, and that's the story that I want you to take into consideration this morning. The things that we're familiar with are all important because they're all inspired by God and placed in Scripture.

But there's another scene around the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ that has immense importance, critical importance, and is more explicit than prior testimonies. Yes, the wise men came. They actually came after what I'm going to read you, but we don't know anything they said. We don't

anything about their character. The shepherds came. We don't know anything about their character either. We know that they were glorifying and praising God, but we don't know anything specific about what they said. So while the wise men gave a kind of testimony to Christ and the shepherds gave a kind of testimony to Christ, we don't really have any other human testimony that this is in fact the Son of God, that this is in fact the Messiah – the Savior, the Redeemer – until we get to Luke, chapter 2 and verse 21.

Back in Deuteronomy, chapter 19, God said that everything that is validated must be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses, and that particular passage of two or three witnesses necessary to validate truth is repeated at least four times in the New Testament. So it carries through all of Scripture. Two or three witnesses are needed to validate a claim. Well, that's true of the birth of Christ. Was this indeed God in human flesh? Was this indeed the Holy Child? Was this the Son of God? Did the Word, the eternal Word become flesh? If so, we haven't really heard personal testimony from the wise men; they come a little later.

But we don't hear any specifics from them. The shepherds, we don't hear anything from at all other than the general statement, "They were glorifying and praising God," there in verse 20. So to be faithful to His own word, the Lord needs to bring together two or three witnesses to validate this event. And that's what we find starting in verse 21. Let me read it to you, Luke 2:21.

"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. And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord'), and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the law of the Lord, 'A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.'

"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. 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. 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, and blessed God, and said, 'Now Lord, You are releasing Your slave to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a Light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.' And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. 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.'

"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, and then as a widow to the age of 84, she never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. 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.

"When they, Joseph and Mary, had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. The Child continued to grow and became strong,

increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.”

This rather unfamiliar part of the Christmas story was so important that Luke uses this story instead of the account of the wise men. He leaves that out by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and includes this. Few people really know this part of the story. Few people really understand the critical nature of this, the drama of it. But what it is essentially is three validated witnesses confirming the truth that this is God in human flesh.

These people are, you could say, vetted. They are righteous people. They are righteous. They are imminently reliable people. Their testimony is trustworthy. They provide powerful confirmation of the testimony of the angels. They are godly sources, declaring that the child is the Son of God, is the Messiah, is the Redeemer. These people are part of the Jewish remnant of true believers in Israel.

Israel, at the time, was almost exclusively apostate; and we know that because of the few people who gathered together in the upper room at the end of the life and ministry of Jesus after three years of public ministry in the southern part of Israel, only 120. And there were only 500 in Galilee that saw Him after His resurrection. The remnant was indeed small. But in the midst of apostate hypocritical legalistic Judaism, there were some real believers, some true believers. And here, we have them set down in the text of Scripture as witnesses to the incarnation, and they are witnesses to be trusted.

There are three witnesses. The first is Joseph and Mary combined, because their actions are combined actions. The second is Simeon, and the third is Anna. Again, imminently reliable people – God’s people, godly people. The features of their testimony, by the way, is very Jewish. They’re very Jewish. It’s loaded with Old Testament understanding. What I read to you is full of Old Testament quotes and references that are generally made. Not only were they very familiar with the Old Testament, they were very familiar with the book of Isaiah and all of its messianic prophecies. You could just take the passage that I read to you and go through it and find every possible reference to something in Isaiah, and you would spend hours and hours pulling those together.

These are people who knew the Old Testament. They knew the law of the Old Testament. That is, they knew the law of Moses, which was also the law of the Lord. Did you notice how many times the law of the Lord referred to? Five times in what I just read you. Three times with reference to Joseph and Mary. These are people who are Old Testament believers, who are devoted to the true God, and obedient to the true God and following His word, believing what He had revealed, and hoping for what was yet to come in the arrival of Messiah.

The first to give testimony is a couple, Joseph and Mary, verses 21 to 24. Both are declared to be righteous; they are righteous. Matthew 1:19 says, “Joseph, being a righteous man.”

What does that mean? That means what it always means. It means that God had declared him righteous. God had declared him righteous. It isn’t something he earned. Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. Joseph was a believer in the true God, a penitent believer, and it was accounted to him as righteousness. His faith was accounted as righteousness. He had received the imputed righteousness of God. He was a righteous man: 13 years old, 14 years old.

Mary, according to Luke 1:46, “Mary found favor with God,” which is another way to say she also was under the favor of God. Righteousness had been credited to her by faith. This is a very unique young

couple, just young teenagers. But they are all committed to, all in on the law of the Lord. The law of Moses, mentioned in verse 22; the law of the Lord, mentioned in verse 23; the law of the Lord, mentioned in verse 24.

They were devoted to the Word of God. So we can say this: they were not only justified by faith, declared righteous, but they were sanctified. That is, they were separated unto God as demonstrated by obedience to the law. The whole passage, verses 21 to 24, is the Holy Spirit's revelation of the justification and sanctification of this young couple, and their devotion to demonstrating their love for God by obedience to God. They give testimony through two things. First, the circumcision and the naming of the child, verse 21; and second, the purification and the presentation of the child in verses 22 to 24. So let's begin in verse 21.

"When eight days had passed after the birth, before His circumcision." We all know that it was required on the eighth day that Jewish male children be circumcised – Genesis 17:1-4, repeated in Leviticus. Circumcision was required. There were a number of reasons for it. One was to preserve the nation Israel from diseases that were mitigated against by circumcision. It had a very positive effect, even on a physical level. But more than that, it was a symbol of the need for spiritual cleansing in the heart.

Every male child – it started with Abraham being circumcised when he was an adult by God's will, and then every Jewish boy from then on was circumcised as a sign of the covenant of God with Abraham. It was a sign of being a child of Abraham, being Jewish. But why that sign? That was God's way of reminding the people of Israel that every time a child was born, another sinner entered the world: a sinner that needed a heart that was circumcised, a sinner that needed a spiritual operation on the inside. That physical act on the eighth day reminded them that this is a sinner.

And you could say, "Well, we're sinners because of what we do. We're sinners because of what we say. We're sinners because of how we think." But the most profound evidence of our sin is our procreation, because we can only produce more sinners. That's where you see the profundity of wretchedness and sinfulness. As nice a person as you might be, you will produce sinners and nothing more. Sin is so systemic and endemic in the fallen human nature that that's the best possible way that God could say, "You are sinful, and it shows up because all you produce is more sinners." This is a reminder to every person in Israel through all their history that they are sinful, and they produce sinful people, and they need salvation, and they need a purified heart.

But you say, "Jesus wasn't sinful. Why did He need to be circumcised?" First of all, that was the sign of being a child of Abraham, a male child in the Abrahamic line. But more than that, Matthew 3:15 says, "He must fulfill all righteousness." If that's what the Old Testament required for men, for children, then He would have it done.

Another way to see it is in Galatians 4:4 where Paul says, "He was born under the law. He was born under the law." He came into this world and lived under God's law, and followed every aspect of God's law. He didn't need water baptism either because He didn't need anything that symbolized cleansing. But He did it anyway because that's what the law required of others; and He was always obedient to the law.

It's fascinating to me that even when it was impossible for Him to obey the law by His own will, His

parents obeyed the law for Him. There's no discussion between Joseph and Mary, "Well, look, this is the Son of God." Joseph knows because He's never known Mary in a fleshly way; they've never had any relationship. She's pregnant. He knows this is by the Holy Spirit, and this is the Holy Child. But there's never any discussion about, "Well, let's not have Him circumcised because there's no need to symbolize that." No, because He needed, and they needed, to follow fully the law of God.

This is a very devout couple. Not only are they righteous and that they've been declared just, they are not only justified, they are sanctified. So this occasion allows for them to demonstrate their obedience. And at the time of the circumcision, it was the custom to name the child, so that's what they did – back to verse 21. "When the

time had come for circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb."

His name was called Jesus. They named them at their circumcision. You see the same thing back in chapter 1 with regard to John the Baptist – verse 59 of chapter 1: "On the eighth day he was circumcised, and they were going to call him Zachariah, after his father. But his mother answered and said, 'No indeed; but he shall be called John.'" And they had a little discussion about that. That's when they named the child, at circumcision.

Now they didn't have any discussion about the name of this child because it says in verse 1, "The name was given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." The angel had come to Mary in Luke 1 and said He's going to be Jesus. And the angel had come to Joseph in Matthew 1 and said the same thing. And His name is Jesus; that means Jehovah saves, God saves, Jehovah Savior, Yeshua, Joshua.

This is a reminder of what the Old Testament says, that God is by nature a Savior. First Chronicles 16, verse 35, "The God of salvation." Isaiah presents God as a Savior over and over again, and the Messiah as a Savior as well. So they knew what they were to name Him because they were told by the angel.

Again, you see the demonstration of their complete obedience. They have both separately been given the name. They obediently give it to the baby boy who is from heaven. Typically, they would connect him to his father's name. In this case, they did that. His Father was heavenly. This is testimony to their full belief in the angelic message. They believed that they really were being given the privilege of parenting the Son of God.

Testimony to their full belief in the angelic command and the virgin birth. Mary has already acknowledged this in her Magnificat earlier in chapter 1. She knew who this child was. So you see their righteous character in their behavior at the circumcision and the naming of the child.

Then in verse 22 and following, again, you see their righteous character in the purification and the presentation of the child. This is quite fascinating, verse 22: "When the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord."

Now, this is a very, very important point you need to understand. I want to go back to Leviticus,

chapter 12, and let you know what the law of God required when the child was born. “And the Lord spoke to Moses - ” Leviticus 12:1 “ – said, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel saying: “When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean. On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall remain in the blood of her purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation; and she shall remain in the blood of her purification for 66 days.”’” Just very, very interesting.

Now keep this in mind; now we’re looking at the Mosaic law in Leviticus, the Mosaic law. And what was the Mosaic law designed to do? Not to save, because no one can keep the law. So by the deeds of the law, no one is justified. What the Mosaic law was designed to do was to point out sin; and it pointed out sin not only by the moral law, but it pointed out sin by the ceremonial law. So parents needed to realize that they had just brought a sinner into the world. They had just brought a sinner into the world. They had just passed on the fallenness of their own nature.

Now in general, the people of Israel, under the Mosaic law, were given all kinds of sacrifices that they were to engage in; and they were sacrifices for sin. They were called sin offerings. So the Mosaic law had moral standards that people couldn’t live up to, and so from a moral standpoint, it demonstrated their sin. It also had ceremonial ordinances, ceremonial activities that they were to engage in that particularly spoke to the issue of their sin: sin offerings, trespass offerings. This is one of those. This is part of recognizing the sinfulness of man.

So when a male child is born, the parents, recognizing they have just brought a sinner into the world, go through a period of time in which the mother is ceremonial unclean. Doesn’t mean she was actually unclean or sinful, it’s simply a ceremony. She can’t go to the temple, she can’t touch anything sacred for forty days. This is to give her, again, the full awareness that she has just brought another sinner into the world.

You say, “Well, what about the girl?” A girl can’t be circumcised. For the boy, it was two things: circumcision and the forty days, which ended with a sacrifice, a sin offering. But since there was no circumcision for a girl, the time was doubled to make the emphasis clear. The uncleanness was ceremonial for forty days, a symbol of the birth of a sinner. For the boy, it was circumcision and forty days. For the girl, there’s no circumcision at all, so the time was doubled – this by God’s law.

Go back to verse 23, “As it is written in the law of the Lord.” Exodus 13:2, Exodus 13:12, “Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.” This young couple, engaged, about to have this child, were justified, sanctified, and knowledgeable in the law of the Lord, and they understood that they came to the point of circumcision. They also came to the point of purification at the end of the forty days.

But then they did the next thing. They knew this was their firstborn child – back to chapter 2, verse 7 – their firstborn child, and so He belonged to the Lord. Not as a priest; the priests were Levites. But the firstborn of every family belonged to the Lord. It was like dedicating the next generation to the Lord. This is what God required, Exodus 13: “Every firstborn belonged to the Lord.”

You have an illustration of that with Hannah taking Samuel, her firstborn, to the temple, and

dedicating him to the Lord. This is to say, “I offer my child in dedication to the Lord,” not to be a priest – that’s a different tribe – but to serve the Lord. And along with it came a five shekels – five shekels of silver – as a gift. That’s many days wages by the way, many days wages. They would offer that in order to help support the priestly service of the temple.

Again, we see their devotion to the law of the Lord. They’re following it step by step by step. They are justified, they are sanctified, and they are testifying now to their adherence to the Word of God. And verse 24: “They offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the law of the Lord, ‘A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.’” If you go back to Leviticus 12 that I read a little bit ago, we pick it up at verse 6.

“When the days of her purification are completed, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the doorway of the tent of meeting – ” that’s the tabernacle then, became the temple – “ a one-year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering.” Both of those were transgression offerings – a lamb and a turtledove. “He shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her – ” the priest shall “ – and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, whether a male or a female. But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.” So at the end of the forty days, you go to the temple and you make this offering.

Now, what did she offer? Verse 24, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. This is a young couple. This is a young couple, probably just up to this very time living in their own parents’ homes. They haven’t established their own life. Certainly, Joseph would grow up in the family business. Jesus would grow up in the family business as one who was a builder.

But they don’t have much. They don’t have enough for a lamb, so they do what the alternative allows for: a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. What this tells you is this: the wise men hadn’t come yet. That scenario is yet to come; because if the wise men had come, they would have been flush. They would have had gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and they could have bought a lamb.

The sacrifice of birds meant that they recognized their sinfulness. This is a beautiful picture. It’s amazing to think of 13 and 14-year-old young people with this kind of grasp. They had been justified, sanctified. They were devout in their adherence and obedience to the Word of God. There was a penitence, a beautiful penitence in their heart that acknowledged their need for cleansing from sin, and they brought a sin offering.

By the way, Mary knew that she needed a Savior when she exalted the Lord back in Luke 1:46. She said, “My soul exalts the Lord. My spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior; God my Savior.” She knew she wasn’t sinless, she needed a Savior. Here, she offers two birds as a sin offering and a burnt offering.

These are penitent, honest, confessing young believers in the true God, who have been justified, sanctified, and even edified by the knowledge of Scripture. They then are giving testimony that this child is exactly who the angel said He is. This is their testimony. They know who this child is. That’s clear when they name Him Jesus, the one who saves His people from their sins – Jehovah saves. There you have the testimony of devout people. These aren’t charlatans. These aren’t marginal

people. This is explicit testimony from people who clearly by divine testimony are just, righteous, sanctified, edified, obedient, and penitent; true believers – part of the remnant of Israel.

The second testimony of the three that are given here is from Simeon. At this very moment in a temple area that's just crowded with tens of thousands of people milling around, the Lord sets up a meeting, verse 25. "There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout." Now here we have him vetted like Joseph and Mary. This is Simeon. He was righteous and devout. This is another righteous person, another person who had been deemed righteous, justified.

By the way, back in chapter 1, verse 6, it speaks of Zachariah and Elizabeth, and it says in verse 6, "They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord." This is the remnant community: Zachariah, Elizabeth, Joseph, Mary. And here comes this man Simeon, part of that small, small remnant. He is justified; he is sanctified. He is looking hopefully for the arrival of Messiah. He calls it, "Looking – " Luke does " – for the consolation of Israel."

What is the word "consolation"? The rabbis called Messiah *Menachem*, *Menachem* – comforter, the Comforter, the one who would comfort Israel. That goes back to Isaiah: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people." That, again, is a reference to Messiah from Isaiah. These are people looking for the Messiah. The consolation of Israel is the Messiah, the Comforter of Israel, the *Menachem*, the one who would fulfill all the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, Davidic covenant, and even the terms of the new covenant in Jeremiah in 31, who would bring personal salvation and national salvation.

So Simeon is justified, sanctified, and edified. He knows about what the Old Testament says regarding Messiah. Messiah would comfort Israel by ending her woes, destroying her enemies, removing her distresses, fulfilling all her promises, bringing about salvation, inaugurating the kingdom. The hope for *Menachem* was born in the text of Isaiah again. It's in chapters 25, 40, 49, 51, 57, chapter 66. The Messiah would be the Comforter. This all establishes Simeon's credibility. He is justified, sanctified, edified, and he's looking to the future arrival of Messiah. He has true hope in his heart. He believes God's promises.

And then verse 25 ends with, "And the Holy Spirit was upon him." Well, the Holy Spirit would have to have been with him or he couldn't have been justified, couldn't be sanctified, and couldn't be illuminated to understand the Scripture and have the hope of Messiah. So there's a sense in which that's sort of obvious. That was true in the Old Testament as well. Anybody justified, sanctified, edified was under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But it's more than that. The Holy Spirit was upon him in a unique way, verse 26, "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, the Lord's Messiah."

Oh my. You know, everybody up to here in this unfolding Christmas story was under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Back to chapter 1, verse 15, the angel says to Zachariah that "you're going to have a son named John, and he's going to be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." In verse 41 of chapter 1, when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary is surely filled with the Holy Spirit when she pours out the revelation in her Magnificat starting in verse 46.



Zachariah, chapter 1, verse 67, is filled with the Holy Spirit when he speaks his Benedictus. The Holy Spirit is everywhere in this event. And here, the Holy Spirit has revealed to this man a personal revelation. It was a personal revelation to Elizabeth and Zachariah and Mary. Here's a personal revelation to this man: "You will not die until you see the Messiah."

I don't know how long before he had had that revelation, but can you imagine the hope in his heart that he would see the Messiah, the Lord's Christ that the remnant had been waiting for for so long. So here we have the confirming testimony of Simeon, a justified, sanctified, edified, spirit-filled man, a righteous man. "And he – " verse 27 " – providentially came in the Spirit into the temple."

What does it mean, he came in the Spirit? The Spirit had him there at the right place at the right time. Tens of thousands of people: how are you going to find one little couple and one tiny baby? There's no halo. Sorry. God's providence. He comes led by the Holy Spirit, and he comes into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to carry out for Him the custom of the law, to do the purification, make the offering: they meet. The little Lamb of God has come to the temple. Thirty-three years later, thirty-three years later, at the Passover, He would be slaughtered as the true Lamb of God. But now He comes as the little Lamb of God in the arms of His mother, and they meet Simeon. By the way, Simeon means "God has heard, God has heard."

I love verse 28. "Simeon took Him into his arms." That must have been an amazing moment, right? Simeon took Him into his arms and looked into the human face of the eternal God. It's a wonder what he thought when he looked into that little face. It must have been as perfect a face as ever could be.

"He held Him in his arms – " close to his heart; he knew exactly who He was, " – and blessed God, blessed God." Another song of praise. Add it to Mary's. Add it to the one by Zachariah. Add it to the one by Elizabeth. Add it to the one by the angels, another song of praise. It's called *Nunc Dimittis* in Latin.

What does that mean? It means what verse 29 says: "Now Lord," *Nunc Dimittis*. It's given its name from the first two words. He said, "Now Lord, now." I love the word "now." Right now, this is it. This is the precise time when salvation has come to Israel and the world. This is the moment in redemptive history.

"Now Lord, You are releasing Your slave to depart in peace, according to Your word. I can die. I can die now, at this moment, Lord, *despotēs*, Master." Not *kurios*, *despotēs*. Strong word for master, a slave word. "Your slave can depart in peace, according to Your word. You fulfilled what You promised. You promised I would see the Messiah. I've seen Him; I can depart in peace."

What does that mean? Die. But only for believers do they depart in peace – mark that. He has seen the Messiah. He has held the Messiah in his own arms, the Savior of the world. He is content to go to glory. It's kind of a "How can you top this?" moment. "It'll all be downhill the rest of my life."

We don't know anything about Simeon leading up to this. We don't know anything about Simeon past this. But if you only know him for one thing, how about this. Would that be good enough? What a moment. A righteous, justified, sanctified, edified, believing, hopeful, trusting man, giving testimony that he had seen the Messiah. "My eyes – " verse 30 " – have seen Your salvation. I have seen the Savior. I've seen Him. Nothing else is left."

The angel in chapter 2, verse 11, said to the shepherds, “There has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” The remnant always understood that the Messiah was a Savior, which means that the remnant always understood they were sinful. That’s what the apostate nation of Israel didn’t understand, that He was the Savior. Simeon understood from the Old Testament what few did understand, that the Holy One, the Messiah, was a Savior. And he understood even beyond that – not only a Savior for Israel, but for the world. Look at verse 31. He says, “Which You, God, have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a Light of revelation to the nations, and the glory of Your people Israel.” So Simeon understood the Old Testament well enough to know that a light had come to the nations.

Where did He get that? That is all over Isaiah again. There’s six passages in Isaiah that say that all throughout Isaiah. He knew the Messiah would come as a Savior of the nations – check out chapter 9, check out chapter 60. “And to the glory of Your people Israel, the Light of salvation to Israel, the Light of salvation to the nations.” Light and glory are the same thing. A Light of revelation to Gentiles, the glory of Your people Israel – the same thing: the glory of God is the Light. God’s glory even manifests itself in the Old Testament in blazing Shekinah Light.

Simeon then is used as a faithful witness, a justified man, a sanctified man, an edified man, a man full of hope, a man whose heart belonged to God, a man who lived for one purpose and that was to see the Savior come. And when He comes, the man is fully satisfied, and this man declares, “This is the Savior of the world.”

Well, verse 33 says, “Joseph and Mary were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.” They knew that He was Jehovah saves – that’s His name. They knew that He was the Holy One of God. They knew that He was the Holy Child. They knew that He was the product of the Holy Spirit in her. They knew that He was the Son of David. They knew that He was an everlasting King whose kingdom would never end. They knew all of that.

And it wasn’t as if Simeon was giving them information they didn’t know. But this is really the first time that that has come to them from outside from any other than an angelic source. This is a confirming revelation from a man who is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the very one who conceived the Child in the womb of Mary. And Simeon enlarges their understanding to encompass the world. So Simeon holds in His arms the silent little baby boy who is the most glorious, influential, powerful person the world has ever seen – divine majesty in a tiny bundle. That’s all so wonderful.

But it wouldn’t be fair to leave Joseph and Mary with just that, so the Holy Spirit speaks some more words through Simeon, verse 34: “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.’”

This is the first time the whole scene’s turned negative. This is the part that they didn’t want to hear, but they needed to hear. They needed to hear this. They needed to hear it from a Spirit-inspired source. They needed to know this so they wouldn’t think the plan went bad when things began to hurt.

“This Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many, the fall and rise of many.” That also comes right

out of the 8th chapter of Isaiah. For some, Isaiah writes, "He will be a sanctuary." They will be lifted up to heaven, lifted up to God. For others, "He will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense," Isaiah 8. Isaiah 8 also says, "Immanuel is coming, Immanuel is coming – God with us."

And for some, again, a sanctuary; and for others, a crushing stone. "This Child will be for the rise and fall of many." John understood that. "He was in the world, the world was made through Him, the world didn't know Him. He came to His own, those who were His own did not receive Him. But to as many as received Him, He gave the right to become children of God."

That's being lifted. That's rising. He's a child of destiny, and because of Him, many will fall. Fall? What do you mean? Irrecoverable disaster, judgment, perdition, everlasting punishment, hell. Rise? What do you mean? Salvation, eternal life, blessing, joy, peace. This person is the divider, that's why the end of verse 35 says "that the thoughts from many hearts will be revealed." He is the point at which a heart can be revealed.

Here's how simple it is. What do you believe about Jesus Christ? Whatever your answer is reveals your heart. If you say, "I do not acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord," your heart is revealed. "I know the condition of your heart. I know the eternal destiny of your soul."

That's the only question I need to ask. I don't need to ask about philosophy; I don't need to ask about religion. I need to ask a simple question: "Have you confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior?" because that reveals your soul, and that determines your eternal destiny.

And He was assigned to be opposed. Do you see it there? Assigned to be opposed. Oh. Also hopeful, angelic messages, angelic choirs, great hymns of praise. Holy Spirit's doing this miracle. It's also wondrous. Now to be opposed, literally contested – violently opposed, violently contested. And that's how His life was – rejected, rejected, rejected, rejected, and even executed.

And throughout all of history, it's been the same; He's still rejected. And personally for Mary, "A sword shall pierce even your own soul." What's that? I think maybe we can understand that in the most complete way. Before chapter 2 is through, Jesus had said to His mother and father, "Why are you looking for Me? Don't you know that I must be about My Father's business?" pushing her away. "You're not in charge of Me."

The first miracle He ever did, He did at a wedding in Cana, a family wedding with people they knew and probably related to. And His mother comes to Him and asks Him a favor, and He says, "What do I have to do with you woman?" and pushes her away. And another occasion, the disciples come and they say, "We need to see Jesus." So somebody comes to Jesus and says, "Your mother and your brothers are looking for you," and He says, "Who's my mother?" Again.

But that's not even close to the sword that pierced her in John 19:25 as she stood at the foot of the cross; and while her Son was being pierced, she was being pierced. I think she suffered pain through His whole life, realizing even in His youth – those must have been wonderful years before there was any conflict – what He was, but knowing kind of where it was headed. But I don't think she fully understood the pain of this kind of piercing until He began His public ministry; and they just fought Him all the way, all the way to the cross. She will suffer pain and grief and hurt – deep, escalating at her Son's rejection and murder.

She rejoiced in chapter 1, verse 46 and following. But there's going to be anguish too. So Mary has been prepared for the birth of the Child by Gabriel. Her faith has been strengthened by Elizabeth. She is now prepared, for the rejection of her Son, by Simeon.

But also there's one more to give testimony, a lady named Anna, and her role is to give the third and final word of testimony, and to speak of the hope in spite of the rejection. There was a prophetess, a teacher, by the name of Anna. That's Hannah in the Old Testament. It means grace, a form of grace. The daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher.

A lot of people say the ten tribes in the northern kingdom were all lost. They weren't. She knew her tribe 700 years after the captivity – tribe of Asher. "She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage." If she got married at 13 or 14, by 20 her husband dies.

Verse 37: "Then as a widow to the age of 84." That would make her, on first reading a widow for 64 years. But it is also possible in the original text – and some favor this reading – that it is saying she had been a widow for 84 years. If that was the case, she's now 104. So one thing we can agree on, she was advanced in years, verse 36.

Now, she never left the temple. What does that tell you about her? She never left the temple. She's been a widow either 64 or 84 years and she never left the temple. What did she devote her life to when her husband died at the age of 20? She devoted her life to God. And there were apartments surrounding the temple courtyard where people could go and live and serve in the temple, come alongside the Levites and the priests; and she was just a consummate worshiper. She never left church you could say. And she wasn't just fussing around, because she was serving night and day. But along with it, she was doing what? Fasting and praying.

What a precious lady – character, credibility, spirituality. Here's another justified, sanctified, edified saint, living on the Old Testament temple ground. "At the very moment –" verse 38 " – she came up." Again, orchestrated providence by God. Massive courtyard, thousands of people milling around; she finds the couple and Simeon, and began giving thanks to God. Her praises added to that of the angels, the shepherds, Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, and Simeon. This is the final person to praise God for the birth of Christ in the narrative – giving thanks to God. "And then she continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."

That's the remnant. They were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem, which means they were looking for the Redeemer. They were anticipating salvation. They were the true Jews who knew they needed a Savior—godly remnant. Testimony from Joseph and Mary, a godly couple; testimony from a godly man, Simeon; testimony from a godly woman, Anna.

And there's a final word of testimony to end the passage, verse 39: "When they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord –" that's Joseph and Mary " – they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom." And here's the final testimony from God: "And the grace of God was upon Him."

Favor of God. He doesn't need grace in the sense that He needs to have His sins overlooked; He has no sins. The favor of God is upon Him. It is God's testimony that is the greatest testimony: "This

is My beloved Son, in whom I'm well pleased. This is My beloved Son; listen to Him." So there you have it – righteous testimony to the Child.

What child is this? This is the Word made flesh: Christ, Son of the living God, the Holy Child, the Holy One of God, God incarnate.

Father, we thank You for the opportunity to hear again Your Word speak to honor Christ. Thank You, Lord. Thank You for this testimony. And may we be so bold as was dear Anna, to go everywhere and speak to everyone about Him. May we be like the shepherds, telling everyone, with wonder, of the birth of the Son of God. Use us even in these days, to that end we pray. Amen.

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