**Final Wish**

**Luke 2:22-39**

Online Sermon: <http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567>

What is that one “BIG” gift that you hope to receive this Christmas? You know the over-the-top expensive item that consumes your thoughts and web browsing history! Maybe for you that is a new car, diamond ring, expensive vacation, jacuzzi or cottage by the river. And if this item happens to be on your “bucket list” then waiting for the “big day” to arrive for you has become excruciatingly painful! In the Christmas story we learn about a man named Simeon whom the Holy Spirit told would not die before having seen Jesus. God who last spoke through the prophet Malachi some 400 years ago was not only going to send the Messiah in his lifetime, but Simeon was going to hold Him in his arms! What if God sent you a text message that stated you would see Jesus on His birthday this Christmas? Would you be like Simeon and view this as best gift ever and place Jesus on your bucket list? The following sermon is going to review the song Simeon sung while holding Jesus in the hope that you might see His gifts of peace and salvation as so valuable that you will share His Good News with the world!

**Honoring the Old Testament (22-24, 39)**

**22When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took Him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), 24and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” 39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.**

In these five verses Luke presents Jesus’ family as those who were obedient to the Old Testament Law of Moses.[[1]](#footnote-1) When it came time for purification rites Mary and Joseph travelled to Jerusalem so that purification, presentation and dedication ceremonies might be performed at the temple.[[2]](#footnote-2) According to Leviticus 12:1-8 upon giving birth the mother is ceremonially unclean and must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary.[[3]](#footnote-3) When her 40 the days of A person standing in front of a building

Description automatically generatedpurification[[4]](#footnote-4) finished her “ritual cleanness was restored by making a burnt or a sin offering.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Mary did not offer a lamb but a pair of doves or young pigeons which was an acceptable and atypical offering made by the poor[[6]](#footnote-6) or middle class for such a ceremony.[[7]](#footnote-7) In accordance with Exodus 13:2 and 1 Samuel 1-2, Mary and Joseph presented and consecrated Jesus, their firstborn, to God into the Lord’s service.[[8]](#footnote-8) Luke presents the observance of these three ceremonies to demonstrate that Jesus did not grow up as a rebel against the Mosaic Law but had strong roots in pious faith[[9]](#footnote-9) and observance to its precepts! [[10]](#footnote-10)

A close up of a sign

Description automatically generated Like beliefs of the heretic Marcion of the 2nd century there are a growing number of modern-day theologians suggesting that Jesus’ ushering in the new kingdom meant the abolishment of OT teachings.[[11]](#footnote-11) Later in Luke and other New Testament writings one learns that Jesus came not only to obey but fulfill the law of Moses.[[12]](#footnote-12) Believing that the OT was dismissed upon Christ’s arrival to this earth goes against His declaration in Matthew 5:17[[13]](#footnote-13) that “fulfillment” of the law did not meant abolishment but transcendence.[[14]](#footnote-14) While Messianic laws are the end of the ceremonial and civil laws, its intent, to “bring out by word and deed” [[15]](#footnote-15) holy living, is the foundation of Jesus’ teachings. Righteousness for Christ went way beyond external, legalism[[16]](#footnote-16) to an internal thirst to obey the intended purpose of the law.[[17]](#footnote-17) For example, not hating someone created in the image of God was the intent of the OT law to not kill and not lusting after someone was the intent of the OT law to not commit adultery (Matthew 5:21-30). Even though identifying the intent of a law might seem like “the promulgation of a new law,”[[18]](#footnote-18) Luke wanted the reader to know this transcendence of the teachings of the Messiah did not mean conflict with but fulfilled the law and the prophets of the OT![[19]](#footnote-19)

**The Anticipation of Two Devout Witnesses (25-26, 36-38)**

**25Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. 36There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. u She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.**

Luke portrayed Simeon and Anna as those who personified the faithful and the best of expectant Israel,[[20]](#footnote-20) a testimony “to the central place Jesus already occupied in God’s redemptive plan.”[[21]](#footnote-21) Luke presented both of these Jewish witnesses as “prophets, aged, pious, related to the temple, and among those who await eschatological salvation.[[22]](#footnote-22) What is most impressive of both of these witnesses was their extraordinary devotion to living for A group of people in a room

Description automatically generatedGod![[23]](#footnote-23) Luke tells us that Simeon’s only wish in life was to meet the Messiah[[24]](#footnote-24) and Anna in widowhood[[25]](#footnote-25) worshipped and fasted day and night for many years without leaving the temple![[26]](#footnote-26) The story of these two witnesses can’t help but make us wonder if we as modern-day Christians are as devoted and passionate to meet Jesus on His birthday? Does “receiving just enough light to see things in a mist”[[27]](#footnote-27) rightly prepare one’s heart to appreciate “God’s gracious and salvific act” [[28]](#footnote-28) of sending His Son? Is Jesus alone number one on our bucket list or do we have idols competing for our loyalty? To help answer these questions lets review Simeon’s response to meeting Jesus.

**Simeon’s Song (27-32)**

**Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 29“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. 30For my eyes have seen your salvation,31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: 32a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”**

For Simeon there was no greater honor or item in his bucket list than to meet the Messiah! When he held Jesus in his arms one can almost see tears of joy rolling down his face as he sung a hymn[[29]](#footnote-29) called “Nunc Dimittis” which meant “now dismiss.”[[30]](#footnote-30) Simeon had devoted his life to “the expectation of the A picture containing text, book

Description automatically generatedMessianic salvation”[[31]](#footnote-31) and now that the promise the Spirit had made to him had been fulfilled he could depart in peace and even die that very day for “there was nothing more for him to desire upon earth.”[[32]](#footnote-32) Likewise, since we are “justified by grace by faith, we have peace with God; we have joy and peace in believing; and, as we live in peace, we shall also die in peace.”[[33]](#footnote-33) When the meeting place of the divine and the human[[34]](#footnote-34) is within a submissive heart that only desires to faithfully obey God, one does not fear death or see it as a cessation of one’s calling but instead sees it as a joyful stepping stone to be eternally in His presence and an invitation to “do yet higher and more perfect work in the nearer presence of our Master!”[[35]](#footnote-35) The best A group of clouds in the sky

Description automatically generatedway to meet Jesus not just at Christmas but every day of the year is to make Him the sovereign ruler of one’s heart’s desires and the only thing that truly matters on one’s bucket list!

It was not just seeing and holding Jesus in his arms that made Simeon overwhelmed with joy it was the salvation he saw in Christ with the “inward perceptions of his spirit.”[[36]](#footnote-36) For those who are “tied, bound, hampered and hindered” [[37]](#footnote-37) by their insatiable desire to gratify their sinful longings they fear death for it is like a “chain dragging them down to the unutterable darkness of the pit.”[[38]](#footnote-38) Through prophecy and the Spirit Simeon had great hope for in Christ he saw one who would pay the price for humanity’s freedom from the bondage and consequences of their sins so that they might have an abundant life as God’s adopted children! [[39]](#footnote-39) For those who believe in Christ on the cross, in the tomb, raised from the dead and at the right hand of God,[[40]](#footnote-40) they are no longer enslaved by worldly desires but have been freed from the liability of their sins[[41]](#footnote-41) and as such do not fear the “tremendous judgement-seat which will be set in the clouds of heaven” [[42]](#footnote-42) but will rejoice in Christ who has made a joyful appropriation of them! [[43]](#footnote-43)

 In the most sacred locale of the Jewish temple, [[44]](#footnote-44) Simeon boldly stated a new era of divine consolation had come,[[45]](#footnote-45) salvation in Christ was meant for all nations. Being a Gentile I can’t help but leap for joy that God revealed a new way to be reconciled unto Him. Through Israel’s rejection of the Messiah “a tidal wave of grace”[[46]](#footnote-46) has come to the Gentiles to not only offer them a new covenant but to make Israel jealous.[[47]](#footnote-47) While Gentile salvation can trace its “roots to the promises given to Abraham”[[48]](#footnote-48) it is truly a blessing to be grafted into the vine under a new covenant in Christ’s blood.[[49]](#footnote-49) The extension of salvation to all nations does not mean Israel’s preeminence is lost[[50]](#footnote-50) but when they “see” Jesus as the Son of God their role of being a light unto the nations will reach its full realization[[51]](#footnote-51) because all “eyes will be drawn to what her Messiah achieves.”[[52]](#footnote-52) Whether one is a Jew or Gentile surely such an amazing gift of inclusion, love, grace and mercy has made the very top of your bucket list!

**Simeon’s Blessing (33-35)**

**33The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about Him. 34Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This Child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”**

 When accepting and professing salvation in Christ is in one’s bucket list this will invite intense persecution. It would be naive to think that the Messiah brings only joy and prosperity to the world.[[53]](#footnote-53) Simeon warned Mary that the Gospel message would result in intense opposition[[54]](#footnote-54) and sorrow from the people of Israel,[[55]](#footnote-55) especially when they put her Son on a cross![[56]](#footnote-56) For the last couple of sermons I have been encouraging myself and all of you to tell the world about the saving grace of Jesus on His birthday. This God-given request should not be taken lightly for to invite people to decide concerning their Savior will invite both persecution and great joy. For those who reject God’s gracious gift they will hate, ridicule and persecute the messenger but for those who accept Jesus into their hearts their eternal Christmas’ will forever be changed. Since “sometimes our most productive years in spiritual service for God come after our most productive years of earthly toil,”[[57]](#footnote-57) I want to leave you with this final note of encouragement from Charles Spurgeon.

**If you would have a courage of the truest kind, that needs no stimulus of drink, and no excitement of the noise of trumpet and of drum, the calm courage that can suffer pain, that can bear rebuke, that can endure slander, that can stand alone, that could stand foot to foot with the infernal fiend himself, and yet not be afraid—if you would have such courage as that, you must get Christ in your arms; for then shall you say with Simeon, “Lord, come what may, I have nothing to fear, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.[[58]](#footnote-58)**

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39. Ibide, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid, 51–52. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ibid, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
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