

## Final Wish

### Luke 2:21-39

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](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)

**<sup>22</sup> When 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 <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” <sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> When her 40 the days of

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, [\*Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)\*](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Joel B. Green, [\*The Gospel of Luke\*](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 140.

<sup>3</sup> Walter L. Liefeld, [\*“Luke,”\*](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 848.



Mosaic Law but had strong roots in pious faith<sup>9</sup> and observance to its precepts!<sup>10</sup>

**A study of The Law**  
That God Gave Through Moses  
**The Duration of The Law**

**JESUS CAME?**  
**But To Fulfill –**  
Fulfill – Thayer –  
1) to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full  
2) to render full, i.e. to complete  
2a) to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting . . .

**Matthew 5:17-20 (NKJV)**  
*17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

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purification<sup>4</sup> finished her “ritual cleanness was restored by making a burnt or a sin offering.”<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup> or middle class for such a ceremony.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> Luke presents the observance of these three ceremonies to demonstrate that Jesus did not grow up as a rebel against the

Like beliefs of the heretic Marcion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century there are a growing number of modern-day theologians suggesting that Jesus’ ushering in the new kingdom meant the abolishment of OT teachings.<sup>11</sup> Later in Luke and other New Testament writings one learns that Jesus came not only to obey but fulfill the law of Moses.<sup>12</sup> Believing that the OT was dismissed upon Christ’s arrival to this earth goes against His declaration in Matthew 5:17<sup>13</sup> that “fulfillment” of the law did not meant abolishment but

<sup>4</sup> Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 92.

<sup>5</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, [A Handbook on the Gospel of Luke](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 124–125.

<sup>6</sup> Craig A. Evans, [Luke](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 92.

<sup>8</sup> Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 92.

<sup>9</sup> Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 92.

<sup>10</sup> Walter L. Liefeld, [“Luke,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 849.

<sup>11</sup> R. T. France, [Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 119.

<sup>12</sup> D. A. Carson, [“The Gospels and Acts,”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2071.

<sup>13</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, [Matthew](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 230.

transcendence.<sup>14</sup> While Messianic laws are the end of the ceremonial and civil laws, its intent, to “bring out by word and deed”<sup>15</sup> holy living, is the foundation of Jesus’ teachings. Righteousness for Christ went way beyond external, legalism<sup>16</sup> to an internal thirst to obey the intended purpose of the law.<sup>17</sup> 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,”<sup>18</sup> 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!<sup>19</sup>

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

**<sup>25</sup> Now 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. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>36</sup> There 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, <sup>37</sup> and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. <sup>u</sup> She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. <sup>38</sup> Coming 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,<sup>20</sup> a testimony “to the central place Jesus already occupied in God’s redemptive plan.”<sup>21</sup> Luke presented both of these Jewish witnesses as “prophets, aged, pious, related to the temple, and among those who await eschatological salvation.”<sup>22</sup> What is most impressive of both of these witnesses was their extraordinary devotion to

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<sup>14</sup> R. T. France, [\*Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#), vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 119.

<sup>15</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [\*Matthew\*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 43.

<sup>16</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [\*Matthew\*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 44.

<sup>17</sup> Robert H. Mounce, [\*Matthew\*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 43.

<sup>18</sup> R. T. France, [\*Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#), vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 119–120.

<sup>19</sup> John Piper, [\*Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)\*](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Joel B. Green, [\*The Gospel of Luke\*](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 145.

<sup>21</sup> Joel B. Green, [\*The Gospel of Luke\*](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 143.

<sup>22</sup> Joel B. Green, [\*The Gospel of Luke\*](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 150.



living for God!<sup>23</sup> Luke tells us that Simeon's only wish in life was to meet the Messiah<sup>24</sup> and Anna in widowhood<sup>25</sup> worshipped and fasted day and night for many years without leaving the temple!<sup>26</sup> 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"<sup>27</sup> rightly prepare one's heart to appreciate "God's gracious and salvific act"<sup>28</sup> 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 let's 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, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: <sup>29</sup> "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. <sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: <sup>32</sup> a 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

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<sup>23</sup> Joel B. Green, [The Gospel of Luke](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 151.

<sup>24</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, ["Simeon's Swan Song."](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 39 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1893), 50.

<sup>25</sup> Joel B. Green, [The Gospel of Luke](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 151.

<sup>26</sup> Craig A. Evans, [Luke](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 41.

<sup>27</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, ["Simeon's Swan Song."](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 39 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1893), 51.

<sup>28</sup> Joel B. Green, [The Gospel of Luke](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 152.

as he sang a hymn<sup>29</sup> called “Nunc Dimittis” which meant “now dismiss.”<sup>30</sup> Simeon had devoted



his life to “the expectation of the Messianic salvation”<sup>31</sup> 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.”<sup>32</sup> 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.”<sup>33</sup> When the meeting place of the divine and the human<sup>34</sup> 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!”<sup>35</sup> The best way 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.”<sup>36</sup> For those who are “tied, bound,

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<sup>29</sup> Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 93.

<sup>30</sup> D. A. Carson, [“The Gospels and Acts,”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2072.

<sup>31</sup> J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, [A Handbook on the Gospel of Luke](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 134.

<sup>32</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Simeon’s Swan Song,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 39 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1893), 50.

<sup>33</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Simeon’s Swan Song,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 39 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1893), 49–50.

<sup>34</sup> Joel B. Green, [The Gospel of Luke](#), *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 146.

<sup>35</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Simeon’s Swan Song,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 39 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1893), 49.

<sup>36</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Simeon’s Swan Song,”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 39 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1893), 50.

hampered and hindered”<sup>37</sup> 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.”<sup>38</sup> 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!<sup>39</sup> For those who believe in Christ on the cross, in the tomb, raised from the dead and at the right hand of God,<sup>40</sup> they are no longer enslaved by worldly desires but have been freed from the liability of their sins<sup>41</sup> and as such do not fear the “tremendous judgement-seat which will be set in the clouds of heaven”<sup>42</sup> but will rejoice in Christ who has made a joyful appropriation of them!<sup>43</sup>

In the most sacred locale of the Jewish temple,<sup>44</sup> Simeon boldly stated a new era of divine consolation had come,<sup>45</sup> 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"<sup>46</sup> has come to the Gentiles to not only offer them a new covenant but to make Israel jealous.<sup>47</sup> While Gentile salvation can trace its "roots to the promises given to Abraham"<sup>48</sup> it is truly a blessing to be grafted into the vine under a new covenant in Christ's blood.<sup>49</sup> The extension of salvation to all nations does not mean Israel's preeminence is lost<sup>50</sup> but when

they "see" Jesus as the Son of God their role of being a light unto the nations will reach its full realization<sup>51</sup> because all "eyes will be drawn to what her Messiah achieves."<sup>52</sup> Whether one is a

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>39</sup> Ibide, 51.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 51–52.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>44</sup> Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 93.

<sup>45</sup> Joel B. Green, [The Gospel of Luke](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 148.

<sup>46</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>47</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>48</sup> Craig A. Evans, [Luke](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 39.

<sup>49</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> Craig A. Evans, [Luke](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 39.

<sup>51</sup> Leon Morris, [Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 105.

<sup>52</sup> Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 93.

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)

**<sup>33</sup> The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about Him.  
<sup>34</sup> Then 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,<sup>35</sup> so 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.<sup>53</sup> Simeon warned Mary that the Gospel message would result in intense opposition<sup>54</sup> and sorrow from the people of Israel,<sup>55</sup> especially when they put her Son on a cross!<sup>56</sup> 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,"<sup>57</sup> I want to leave you with this final note of encouragement from Charles Spurgeon.

<sup>53</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1980–1989\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Joel B. Green, [The Gospel of Luke](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 150.

<sup>55</sup> Craig A. Evans, [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 55.

<sup>56</sup> Craig A. Evans, [Luke](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 40.

<sup>57</sup> Darrell L. Bock, [Luke](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 94.

**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.”<sup>58</sup>**

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<sup>58</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [“Simeon’s Swan Song.”](#) in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 39 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1893), 54.