Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Testifying to Jesus: Simeon, Part 2
Scripture: Luke 2:31-35
Code: 42-30

You may open your Bible to the second chapter of Luke as we return to this incredibly important portion of Scripture which chronicles for us the arrival of the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the birth of Jesus Christ. We are looking at Luke chapter 2 and verses 21 through 39 in which Luke produces testimony to the identity of the child, testimony from His parents, Joseph and Mary, testimony from an old man named Simeon, and an old lady named Anna. And this is important for this testimony to be given because the Old Testament law required that all truth be confirmed by two or three witnesses, credible, trustworthy witnesses...and that is what Luke does in this section. He brings, as it were, into the courtroom three witnesses who can be trusted, righteous Joseph and Mary, righteous Simeon and righteous Anna, to give testimony to the fact that the child born in Bethlehem is indeed the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ and so we're looking at this testimony.

Now let me back up a little bit and sort of get you into the flow of thought here. The Old Testament is a collection of promises. It's a collection of promises from the one true and living God, the Creator, the Controller, the Consummator of the universe and the Redeemer of humanity. At the heart of all of these promises which fill the Old Testament is the primary promise that God would send His Son, the Savior, into the world, that He would come to redeem sinners from death and hell, and to establish His glorious Kingdom on earth. And in that Kingdom, all the promises of God would be fulfilled...the promises of blessing and peace and joy and prosperity and satisfaction and righteousness and salvation. And that that earthly Kingdom would then be transformed into an eternal Kingdom in which all of those promises in absolute and sinless perfection would forever come to pass.

Now all of these promises from the one true and living God are contained in the Old Testament only. There is no other holy or sacred ancient book that contains the promises of God. That Old Testament, as we call it, is the single place where God gave all the promises regarding the coming of the Christ, the Savior and the Messiah. And so there is a very narrow amount of literature, 39 books that make up the Old Testament which contain all that God has revealed about the wonders of the coming of the Savior of the world.

Not only is there a very narrow amount of material in all that's been written throughout antiquity, but that revelation itself was given to a very small group of people. The Jews make up a small nation, always have made up a small nation. They were a people who didn't ever conquer the world, didn't make some major mark on history their power or their prowess. They seem to be a smallish people,

a people of no great consequence as God unfolded this marvelous revelation to them. So one book, given to one small group of people.

Even more amazingly, among the Jews there has always been only a very small remnant who actually believed the Old Testament. Certainly not all Jews today do, nor have Jews in history accepted the Old Testament literally as it is written. There has always been but a remnant, a small remnant in the midst of Israel who took the Old Testament seriously. The same is true today. There's always been a small remnant who believed that the promises of God were actual, real, literal promises that would be fulfilled in history, that the Messiah would come and do exactly what the prophet said He would do. The Bible identifies these as "true Israel," as the true Jews, the spiritual ones. And by spiritual you don't mean somebody who's metaphysical, somebody who's mystical, somebody who thinks he has or she has spiritual connections. No, by spiritual you mean one who takes the Old Testament seriously and literally. Even today, only 30 percent of Jews belong even to a synagogue, and of those 30 percent who belong to a synagogue, very few of them belong to an orthodox synagogue. Most of them are either conservative or reformed. Only the orthodox take the Old Testament literally and seriously.

It is a small, small remnant today. Even in the land of Israel, eleven percent of the population of the nation Israel would be classified as those who are literalists in interpreting the Old Testament, who take the promises of God and the laws of God seriously.

So God sending to the world the greatest message the world has ever known, a message of salvation and redemption, puts it in one book. All the promises in one book, gives it to one small nation and in that nation but a small, small remnant even believe it and perpetuate it. It was that way at the time of the birth of Christ, just a small remnant. In fact, when the ministry of Jesus ended 33 years after His birth, and all of those in Jerusalem who had embraced the Messiah gathered together in the upper room, there were 120 of them. And on the day of Pentecost to follow there were 3,000 converted to Christ who believed, just a very small remnant of that nation.

At the time of the birth of Jesus there was a little remnant. They're defined in this text for us. Verse 25, "There were those looking for the consolation of Israel." Looking, I told you last time, for the Manacham, looking for the Consoler, looking for the great Comforter, the Messiah...that was a rabbinic name for Messiah. They are further defined down in verse 38 as looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. They were looking for the Messiah and His redemption, or salvation, that He would bring. There was a small remnant.

Among that little remnant who took the Old Testament seriously and believed it literally and really did expect God to do what He said and fulfill His promises, was an old couple. Their names were Zacharias and Elizabeth. He was a priest and shew as his wife. They were part of that believing remnant. And also a part of that very small believing remnant was a very young couple. In fact, they

hadn't even really begun their marriage, they were Joseph and Mary, just teen-agers. They were a part of that remnant as well. God chose Zacharias and Elizabeth out of that believing remnant to father John who would be the great prophet to announce the arrival of Messiah. And God chose Mary out of that remnant, just a 13- or 14-year-old girl to be the mother, the virgin in whom the Holy Spirit would plant the Messiah and He would be born out of her womb. And He chose Joseph out of that remnant, just a teen-age boy, to be the earthly adopted father of the Messiah.

Luke also tells us about some shepherds. Shepherds who also must have been among the remnant waiting for the Messiah who were given the special privilege of the angelic announcement that He had been born and hurry immediately to Bethlehem to see the child.

Now whether you look at the shepherds who were at the lowest level of the socio-economic ladder, or whether you look at Joseph and Mary, Joseph and Mary just teen-aged kids, Joseph at best would be nothing more than an apprentice in a carpenter shop, or you look at old Zacharias and Elizabeth who really were the commonest of the common, there were thousands of priests in the land of Israel at that time and he was a very obscure one, somewhere out in the hill country of Judea in a small little village area, they were the nobodies, the non-descript people. They had nothing to do with the mainstream of Jewish thought, education or religion. Shepherds were really outcasts. Priests only had two weeks a year, really, a couple times a year when they came down to the temple and did their service. The rest of the time they just resided in a little village in obscurity and so it was with Zacharias and Elizabeth. And what could be said about two teen-aged kids 13 and 14 years old who hadn't made a mark on anything? But they were all a part of that remnant and so they were chosen for monumental service at the time of the birth of the Messiah.

And this sort of suits the Lord, to pick the commonest of the common and the lowliest of the low. Zacharias and Elizabeth were from the sticks, out of town. And Joseph and Mary, from all places, the non-descript and lowly and despised place called Nazareth of whom it was said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" But this fits because the gospel predominantly comes to the lowly, the not many noble, the not many mighty, the base and the lowly things God has chosen to confound the wise and the mighty. It doesn't mean that the wealthy were utterly excluded. After all, there were wise men, magi, king makers, the literate, the nobles of Persia...they were there, too. But predominantly it was the common people.

Now in our text we meet a few more of them. Beyond the shepherds and beyond Zacharias and Elizabeth and beyond Joseph and Mary we meet Simeon and Anna, old people. But Simeon was in the remnant because he was looking for the Menacham, he was looking for the consolation, the Messiah of Israel. And Anna was part of the remnant. She was among those looking for the redemption, the salvation Messiah would bring. God doesn't need the famous, He doesn't need the mainstream people and education or politics, the power brokers, doesn't need the religious leaders, He just chose the simplest and the common folks.

Now we know, of course, the story of Zacharias and Elizabeth already, and Joseph and Mary and the shepherds. But now we come to these rather obscure people, sad to say, Simeon and Anna. Their stories are included by Luke because he wants some eyewitnesses to attest to who this child is. There wasn't any halos surrounding Jesus, there wasn't anything visible to indicate that this was the Son of God. So testimony needs to be corroborated. And so, Luke selects three witnesses. First the parents, then Simeon, then Anna to give really unimpeachable testimony to the identity of the child.

First of all, in verses 21 to 24, the testimony of the parents, the testimony of Joseph and Mary. We've already covered that, we won't go into that again. They are the first witnesses that were called into the court to affirm the identity of the child. And the second is Simeon. And we started to look at him last week, and we'll finish it this morning. Simeon is a remarkable man. His part comes in verse 25 to 35. And, first of all, as we saw last time, it is important to establish his credibility as a witness. That was true with Joseph and Mary also. There's no question about Joseph as to his credibility because the Bible tells us he was a righteous man. There's no question about the righteous character of Mary either, that is evident from the Magnificat of Mary back in chapter 1 verse 46 and following. They were righteous, they were right before God, they were godly young people. Their testimony had integrity, it's unimpeachable. That's important to establish.

And the same would be true of the next witness, the next eyewitness to the Messiah, Simeon. And so no one is mistaken about his character, this man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon was righteous. That is he was right with God, he was a converted man, he was a justified man. He was devout. I told you the word means cautious or careful in obedience to God's law which means he was not only a justified man but a sanctified man. He was looking for the Manacham, the consolation, the consoler, the Messiah and the Holy Spirit was upon him. You can't ask for more than that. Here his credibility is established.

In fact, verse 26 says, "Even divine revelation had come to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Amazing, amazing revelation came to this man that he would be alive until Messiah arrived and he would see the Messiah.

Well, it all came to pass in verse 27. The Holy Spirit draws him down to the temple where, no doubt, he spent a lot of time and there he met the parents, Joseph and Mary, who had brought in the child Jesus to carry out for him the custom of the law. Remember we talked about the fact that after 40 days of the woman who had given birth to a male child had to come and offer sacrifice, and she had come to do that, and also to pay the five silver shekels to redeem the firstborn child, according to the Old Testament law. And they had come to the temple for that. And God providentially worked out a meeting. As I said, it would be fascinating to know what happened. It doesn't say. But in verse 28 it says that Simeon took him into his arms. Well at that point Simeon must have known who the child was. And how did that happen? Well between verses 27 and 28 there must have been a rather long

conversation.

Simeon didn't know he was looking for Joseph and Mary. Simeon didn't come looking for the Messiah. They weren't looking for Simeon, but God brought them together and somehow at the right moment the Spirit of God prompted a conversation in the melee of thousands of people milling around in the temple court. And they began to talk and Joseph and Mary began to unfold the amazing story of how Gabriel had come to Mary and how an angel had come to Joseph in a dream and told them what was going on, that she would conceive and bear the Messiah, the Son of the Most High God, the Son of David who would have a Kingdom that would last forever and ever and He would be named Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. The whole story about how the barren Zacharias and Elizabeth in their 70's or 80's were able to conceive a son who would be the prophecy...the prophet of the Messiah and a whole story unfolded. And the angels in the field telling the shepherds and the shepherds reporting to them and all of this and Simeon heard it, believed it.

Somebody would say, "Well why would he believe it?" And the answer would be, because he was being led by the Spirit. It tells us in verse 25 the Holy Spirit was upon him. Verse 26, it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit he wouldn't die until he saw the Lord, Messiah. And verse 27, he came in the Spirit to the temple. I mean, the imprint of the Holy Spirit is all over this man and certainly the confirmation of the Holy Spirit came when he heard the story, the miraculous conception without a male father, the planting of this Messiah in the womb of this young girl, all of this wondrous story was told to Simeon. And in verse 28 he took Him into his arms, picked up that little baby and blessed God. And you can only imagine what all was in that blessing. He launches into his blessing in verses 29 down to verse 32 and it's called the nunc dimittis, Latin for the first two words, "Now Lord." They...the Latin terms are used to identify also the Benedictus of Zacharias, that's what that great praise at the end of chapter 1 is called, and the Magnificat of Mary earlier in the chapter.

Nothing about the child was visibly different. But he knew who the child was. The Spirit of God confirming the testimony of these parents. He was allowed by God to have this incredible moment, the great moment when the Manacham, the Savior, the King, the Messiah of the world was in his arms. And as I said last time, he pressed his face and kissed the face of God. Here was the one who was the fulfillment of all God's promises, here was the one who fulfilled all the Old Testament and here was a man, Simeon, who believed the promises, who believed what the Old Testament said, believed it literally, was faithful to those promises and waited for God to fulfill them. And God did.

Here was an old man. We don't know how long he had know the Messiah would come in his life time and he would see Him. We don't know how long he had hoped. But certainly this is what drove his life. This was the passion of his whole life. And from the time he got the revelation that he would see the Messiah before he died, he must have gone into every single day wondering...is this the day?...is this the day?...is this the day? He believed the promises that God had given to Abraham and he

believed the promises of blessing that God had given to Moses. And he believed the promises that god had given to David, and that God had reiterated through all the prophets. He believed all of that. He believed the promises that are captured in the majesty of the Psalms which he no doubt had recited and sung since a child. He believed God would keep His word and make good on His promises.

We don't know what he expected. I mean, maybe he was looking for a king. Maybe he was looking for a...maybe he was looking for a heavenly king. Maybe he was looking to the skies some days when he looked at the open courtyard of the temple and saw a sort of a darkened sky and somewhere a crack in the cloud appeared and a sunbeam came through and maybe he thought that might be the sunbeam on which the King would ride. Maybe he thought one day the clouds would part. Or maybe he thought one night in the midst of the darkness a great light would shine and down would come the great King. There were certainly people among his remnant who had that thought. Or maybe he thought that the Messiah would come as a great soldier, a great conqueror, a great warrior and he wouldn't come out of the sky, he'd come through the Eastern Gate, as the prophet had said with great conquering power to shatter the Romans and establish the promise of Abraham.

We don't know what he thought, but we do know what he got. What he got was a little tiny baby that looked like any other baby, held in the arms of a little couple that was so poor they couldn't buy a lamb for the purification sacrifice, they had to use a bird, a little family that came from that lowly and despised place called Nazareth that was always being crisscrossed by Gentiles and was so far away from temple influence as to be on the borders of paganism. Simeon took Him into his arms..if I can read Simeon's mind, he was thrilled to embrace the child but maybe more thrilled to know that the child would embrace him. That was really all he needed. He had seen the Messiah come and so he says, verse 29, "Now, Lord, Thou doest let Thy bondservant depart in peace according to Thy word." You told me I'd live until I saw the Messiah, I've seen Him, let me die...I have nothing left to live for. My hope is fulfilled. My joy is complete. My heart is at peace. I'm ready to go.

So this dear Simeon serves as a crucial divinely inspired faithful righteous witness to the identity of this little baby. He was waiting for the Messiah. When he heard the story, the Spirit of God confirmed in his heart and he gives testimony that he can die...that's how sure he was. If this is what he had waited for all his life, the coming of Messiah as part of the remnant, if this is what he waited for, even more intensely when the Spirit of God revealed that he would actually see Him, then believe me, he wouldn't say "I can die" unless he was convinced this was the Messiah.

His task, though brief, just this little picture in Scripture, this task though brief was very much like John's, John the Baptist because both of them gave testimony to the Messiah and then died. As far as we can tell, Simeon...the Lord just took him and John the Baptist had his head cut off. But Simeon God used as a powerful, powerful witness to point to the reality that this was the Messiah.

Why is he content to die? He knows that. Verse 30 he says it, "For my eyes have seen Thy salvation." Don't ever think for a moment that God is not a saving God. "God, our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth," 1 Timothy 4. Three times in the book of Titus "God our Savior, God our Savior, God our Savior." He is a saving God. God who is the Savior of all men, 1 Timothy 4:10. It is God who is the Savior. It is God's salvation that he sees in the Messiah. God has sent His salvation because God has sent, as Zacharias called Him, the horn of salvation who is the Messiah.

When the Messiah comes who is the Savior, salvation comes. "And neither is there salvation in any other" says Acts 4:12. So his praise flows because God's salvation has come because God's Savior has come.

Now he had a full understanding of salvation. He understood that salvation was the word for deliverance and it could mean deliverance from your enemies and those who oppress you. Zacharias in his Benedictus in chapter 1 affirmed that and discussed that, talked about that. That's part of the Davidic Covenant, temporal, earthy deliverance from earthly enemies and invaders and oppressors.

But it didn't end at that. It wasn't just deliverance from other nations in time and space. It wasn't just the extension of the borders to fit the original covenant of God with Abraham. Zacharias, the high priest, knew, Mary knew that this child would not just extend the borders of Israel, would not just bring sovereignty back to Israel over all its enemies, but would bring forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation with it. That's all embodied in that word because when Jesus was named, Jesus, it was not because He would save His people from their enemies, it was because He would save His people from their sins. Yes there will be a national deliverance through the Messiah, the Kingdom will be established in Israel, the Messiah will rule over Israel. They will be a sovereign state ruled by the sovereign Lord. And they will not only have a sovereign Lord ruling them, but they will be the sovereign nation ruling the world as Messiah mediates His rule through Israel. There will be sovereignty. All their enemies and oppressors will be destroyed and broken. And there will be an earthly extension of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, but even more than that, there will be eternal salvation in the forgiveness of sins. Messiah will save His people from their sins.

And so here is this man, one of the small, small remnant. Even after Jesus' ministry is complete, there's only 130 in the upper room in Jerusalem who identify with Jesus Christ and are tarrying, waiting for the Holy Spirit. Small little group, but he has seen all he needs to see, the salvation of God has arrived because the Savior has arrived. And he knows in his heart that this means all messianic promise, all covenant promise, all the promises of the Old Testament are going to be fulfilled because, as Paul said, all the promises of the Old Testament are in Christ, yes and amen! All Old Testament promises are ultimately fulfilled in Christ, all of them. Simeon knew that and believed it. He was a literalist. He interpreted the Old Testament literally and accurately and believed in the

promises of God. And as I said earlier, that has always been the small minority view in Israel and it is today...even among Jews in our own country it is. Very few take the Old Testament seriously and really believe its promises. He was one.

But you know what? He said some shocking things. If he had ended everything there, it wouldn't have advanced the amazing story of the Messiah any further than Joseph and Mary had already heard and the readers had already heard because Mary talked about God, our Savior. And Zacharias talked about how God would save His people through the Messiah. But there's something here added that is really shattering, the standard belief of the Israelites. Look at it in verse 31.

He says, "My eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel." This is astonishing. The Jews believed that the Messiah would come and be their Messiah and establish their Kingdom and with the establishment of that Kingdom they would rule over the infidel Gentile world. But this says God has brought a Savior and prepared salvation in the presence of all peoples to be a light of revelation to the Gentiles as well as the glory of Israel. This is shocking information.

You know, even the remnant of Israel, even the serious students of the Old Testament, the believers, had animosity toward Gentiles. I don't mean by that they had animosity toward and individual Gentile, but they hated what Gentile stood for...anti-God, anti-Scripture, desecration of the true and living God, violation of the first and great commandment to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, violators of the first commandment to have any other gods, violators of making images, making no images commandment. They were...they saw them as violators of God's commands. They saw them as blasphemers. They resented them for their idols and the purer the remnant was the more that resentment grew.

Because what happened? If you go back in the history of Israel, what do you see? Gentile nations bringing idols in and corrupting Israel. It was the invasion of Gentile idols, you remember, that ultimately ended in the deportation of the northern kingdom, Israel. It was the importation of idols, it was the desecration of the worship of God that ultimately ended in the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom Judah. All idolatry, all Gentile religion, Gentile viewpoint had ever done was corrupt and attack and assault and kill and destroy. That's all they knew. And so there was this...this understandable resentment because they were this very small little group of people who had been hammered and battered and attacked and killed and massacred and taken into captivity. And behind all of that were idolatrous nations doing it all, perpetrating it all against them. I mean, and that's even gone on through history today. They can go back, they can, and they can identify a Gentile Germany, and a Gentile Russia and they can see horrible, horrible massacre of people and even those who are righteous remnant Jews in the midst have a reasonable antipathy toward what Gentile nations have done to their people by way of physical attack and by way of religious corruption.

And so, Simeon and probably Joseph and Mary just had a sort of normal view that Gentiles were the enemy. They were outside the pail of God's provision and Simeon says, "No, God has brought with the Messiah a salvation that has been prepared in the presence of all peoples and the Messiah is called a light of revelation to the Gentiles." And that is an amazing statement...amazing.

But you know something? Shouldn't be shocked because that's what the Old Testament promised. And I'm sure when Simeon said it, he realized it was right out of the Old Testament. Salvation has been prepared by God but it's been prepared for the whole world because God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. And that message rings throughout all the Scripture. The Great Commission...Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. God is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance.

The plan of redemption when it reaches its culmination in the book of Revelation has people from every tongue and tribe and people and nation. Salvation is for the whole world and yet when it all started out they heard...the shepherds heard this from the angels, the angels even said, "There has been born for YOU this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord," and "for you" to them would mean for us who are a part of Israel.

And when Mary heard and Joseph heard "name Him Jesus for He will save His people from their sins," His people to them would mean Israel. And then Simeon says this, that God has prepared a salvation through the Messiah in the presence of all peoples? Laos, all the peoples. And the Messiah is a light of revelation to the Gentiles? But that's what Isaiah said. Back in Isaiah 9 verse 2...well, verse 1 talks about when the Messiah comes...He's going to go to the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. Now this is such a direct prophecy and Jesus did do that, He went to the other side of the Jordan, other side of the Dead Sea...of the Galilee Sea to the Galilee of the Gentiles, He did that. And he says, "He's going to go to the Galilee of the Gentiles," Isaiah 9:2, "the people who walk in darkness," that's the Gentiles, "will see a great light." And that's where...that's where Simeon is drawing that statement, "He's a light of revelation to the Gentiles," right out of Isaiah 9:2. The Gentiles are going to...the Gentiles, the peoples, simply the Gentiles, who walk in darkness will see a great light. Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.

So Isaiah told them the Messiah is going to be for the nations as well. You know, the Jews didn't like that. I mean, look at Jonah, he's the class illustration, right? God says, "Jonah, go to Ninevah and preach repentance." And in Jonah's mind he's saying, "You know, if there's anything I can't stomach it's Gentile conversion...I can't stomach...I can't tolerate that. They have done everything all along to blaspheme God, to assault Israel, to dishonor God. They are oppressive, etc., etc. I just can't deal with that. I'm not going to do it, God." And so he heads for Tarshish. He gets on a boat and through a detour through the belly of a great fish and finally getting vomited out on the shore, he comes to his

senses and says, "Okay, God, if You're going to deal with me like this, I'll do it. I mean, what do You want me to do?"

He goes to Ninevah. He preaches and has the greatest revival in the Old Testament. The whole city repents. And what does he do? He goes out of town, he gets real morose. He's peeved to the core. He's really mad at God. And he says, "Kill me, God, I cannot stand this...Gentile repentance. Take my life, it's more than I can bear."

Now that was a pervasive attitude. And yet Isaiah says in Isaiah 42, "I am the Lord...verse 6...I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, I will appoint you as a covenant to the people and a light to the nations." He's talking to the Messiah, that's a conversation between God the Father and God the Son. And God the Father says to the Son who is called the servant in this chapter, "I will appoint you as a light to the nations." That too is where Simeon could have drawn this, "To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison." Again, the Messiah is going to be a light to the nations, a light to the Gentiles. Chapter 49 of Isaiah, it's not as if this is obscure, it's not. Isaiah 49 verse 6, again He's talking to His servant, the Messiah, He says, "I'm going to raise up the tribes of Jacob...verse 6...and restore the preserved ones of Israel. I will also make You a light of the nations." There's that same statement used by Simeon for the third time, "That My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." To the end of the earth.

Chapter 51 verse 4, "Pay attention to me, O My people, and give ear to Me, O My nation, for a law will go forth from Me and I will set My justice for a light of the peoples, for a light of the nations." Same phrase again, a light of the nations, that's the fourth time we've heard it.

Chapter 52 verse 10, "The Lord has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God." There it is again. And that, too, was behind the statement of Simeon.

And then wonderful passage in chapter 60, "Arise, shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you, for behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples, or nations, but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you and nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising." He's talking to the Messiah. "Arise, Messiah, shine, Messiah, and the nations will come to Your light."

Well go back to Luke. That's all behind that statement. That's...that's that rich part of Isaiah. So Simeon in his praise extending the saving work of Messiah to the ends of the earth. Gentiles participate in salvation as equals. They participate in the Millennial Kingdom as equals. They participate in eternal glory as equals. Not to the exclusion of Israel, look at the end of verse 32, "And the glory of Thy people, Israel." And you've heard me read several times that Israel, of course, is

going to be saved, but two passages, just note this, Isaiah...you don't have to turn to them, you can write them down if you care to...Isaiah 46:13, "I bring near My righteousness, it's not far off, and My salvation will not delay. I will grant salvation in Zion and My glory for Israel," Isaiah 46:13, you could also include 45:25 it says essentially the same thing.

Glory is another word for light. In fact, in the Old Testament God reveals Himself as light and He calls it His Shekinah glory. So light to the Gentiles means the Messiah who is the light of salvation to the Gentiles. Glory to Israel means the glory of Messiah who is salvation to Israel. What is going to happen then, Israel is going to be saved and Gentiles are going to be saved from the ends of the earth. The word "glory" is a special word to the Jew, a special meaning. In the Old Testament God appeared in the Garden in His glory, shone His glory which is called the Shekinah. God showed His glory to Moses on the mount. He showed it in the sky through the pillar of cloud and fire. He showed His glory at the building of the tabernacle. He showed it at the building of the temple. The glory of God was synonymous with the radiating light of God's saving, leading, guiding, protecting power. And the Gentiles are going to see the light of salvation and Israel is going to see the glory of salvation.

The promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, the promises of the Davidic Covenant, the promises of the New Covenant are for Israel but beyond they're going to touch the whole world. And when all Abrahamic Covenant promises are fulfilled in the earthly Millennium, we'll be there enjoying them. And when all Davidic promises are fulfilled in the earthly Millennium, we'll be there enjoying them. And we are already enjoying the pledges and promises of the New Covenant which is in Christ Jesus. Salvation is for Israel but not just Israel, it's for the whole world.

Wow, what...this is new. And look at verse 33, the reaction, "The father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him." I mean, they're standing there in the temple ground, they're already so full of wonder, they've got this little baby that looks like any other little baby. I'm sure this little baby functioned like any little baby, like a normal human baby. They were dealing with it as parents would normally deal with a little baby. Looking into the face of this little baby, they realized they've got the Son of the Most High God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world and this expands through the words of Simeon and it's beyond their comprehension. Two teen-agers, non-descript, not prominent, not well-known, and God has put in their hands the redemption of the world.

The amazement must just have continued and continued to explode on their frail, human understanding. They knew their child was the virgin-born Son of God. They knew He was the Son of David. They knew He would reign on David's throne forever and ever. They knew He was the Son of Abraham who would fulfill all of the promises to Abraham. They knew He was Israel's Savior who would fulfill all the covenants and all testament promises. They knew He would bring the Kingdom of God on earth with peace and joy and righteousness. They knew He would be a child for the redemption of His people and a horn of salvation for them for the whole world. This was way beyond

their understanding. The whole thing was just beyond their grasp.

Their perceptions now are enlarged as they think of the influence of this silent, nursing, little, 40-day-old boy. Yeah, they knew the Savior had been born for them, but for the world? They're amazed, astounded. And it's in the euphoria of that moment as Zacharias ends his hymn of praise that something shocking is said. Verses 34 and 35, "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 the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.'" And Simeon is gone.

Now wait a minute. Fall? Opposed? Sword? We've never heard anything like that. It's all been fulfillment of all the promises of God, it's all been covenantal fulfillment, it's all been hope and peace and joy and salvation and righteousness and glory and what is this?

This is the first negative note in Luke's gospel. The marvelous, miraculous glorious birth of the Messiah, Savior, wonderful full of all the anticipated joy. But that's not all. There's going to be fall, opposition and piercing. What does all this mean?

Well, it was important that they hear this, particularly for Mary, that nothing would surprise her when the hostility began. Look at verse 34, "And Simon (meant Simeon) blessed them," simply means that he...he affirmed that the favor of God was on them. I mean, the favor of God was more on that young couple than it had ever been on anyone. The goodness of God on them was unique. And so he affirms that you have been blessed, you have been favored by God like no one ever.

But he doesn't stop there. He turns to Mary and, "He said to Mary, His mother," now why? The reason is because what he is describing there Joseph wouldn't experience. You know why? Very likely he wasn't alive. After the age of 12 and Joseph and Mary had left Jesus in the temple, Joseph disappears. And when Jesus starts His ministry, he never is around. When Mary appears, she's without Joseph. Sometimes it's Mary and her children, never Joseph. And when it comes to the cross and Jesus is dying, He didn't say much on the cross but what He did say was critical. And one of the things He said was He saw His mother and He saw the Apostle John and He said to His mother, "This is your son," and He said to John, "This is your mother." What He was doing was handing over the care of His mother to John which was necessary because He had done that up to then and it's obvious that there was no Joseph to care for her or that would have been unnecessary. There's nothing to say to Joseph because Joseph died somewhere along the way, perhaps even before Jesus began His ministry, for Joseph would have been a life of watching this miracle grow in wisdom, stature and favor with God and man, it would all be positive and wonderful, encouraging, blessed, joyous, perfect. Not Mary. She would be there when the rejection started.

And so, Simeon says to her, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel." The first word I want you to mark in your mind...separation...separation. Trouble is going to come, Mary, down the way, and suffering, and conflict and pain. And the first thing to describe is separation. Jesus is going to be a dividing line, He's going to be a point of demarcation. Jesus is going to be a turning point. And based upon how people respond to Him, some are going to rise and some are going to fall, but He's going to be the determiner of destiny. In fact, the word "appointed" is the word "destined." This child is destined to determine the fall and rise of many in Israel and many really can be extensive. It can mean everyone.

What is being introduced here is that they're going to be some people who are not going to rise to the glories of salvation, are not going to rise to the realities of Kingdom blessing, they're not going to rise to joy and peace and prosperity and righteousness. They're going to fall. And that's new. This...this...not only are Gentiles going to be saved, but Jews are going to be lost. That adds a whole new perspective. And he, meaning Simeon, knew Isaiah, this is right out of Isaiah chapter 8, the prophet had said so. Listen to what he wrote, Isaiah 8:14, "He...Messiah...shall become a sanctuary but to both the houses of Israel a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and many will stumble over them, then they will fall be broken. They will even be snared and caught." Wow, the prophet Isaiah said...right there in Jerusalem, right among the people of Israel there's going to be...there's going to be a stumbling and a falling. The Messiah will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense and many shall stumble and fall and be broken or shattered. The prophet said it would happen. John put it this way, "He would come unto His own and His own will...what?...receive Him not." This is new.

You mean, the Messiah is going to come and all the Old Testament hope is going to be brought to fulfillment and all the promises of the Old Testament are going to come together and He's going to be the Savior and He's here and I hold Him in my arms and the first shock is that He's going to be the Savior of Gentiles and the second shock is that...that Israel is going to be divided over Him? And many are going to fall? Few are going to rise?

Irretrievable fall is intended here, a fall away from salvation into judgment and damnation. The language of Scripture is so vivid here. And that's exactly what happened. If you follow the career of Jesus Christ and what happens? The whole nation turns against Him and conspires with the Romans to have Him executed and only a small little group believed. Only that little faithful remnant would arise and the rest would fall over the rock of offense and the stone of stumbling.

Not only will there be separation but they'll be opposition. It isn't just that people will be divided over Him. It's not that they'll sort of just categorically line up on one side or another in a sort of moderately indifferent way, not at all. There not only will be separation, there will be opposition. In fact, look at the end of verse 34, "This child will be a sign to be opposed." He will represent, He will signify what people hate. Wow. What do they hate? They hate righteousness. Men don't love the light, they

love...what?...darkness. To be opposed is the Greek verb antilegomenon(?) which means to contest. There's going to be...it's not going to go smooth, Mary. His life is going to be held up and they're going to contest it. It's going to come from insults. It will start out with indifference. It will be insults, mockery, abuse, hatred, venomous vilification, plotting, physical torture and execution.

This...this is hard enough for us to believe today that this could happen in Israel, but for Mary, all she knew was her heart was overwhelmed with the joy of the arrival of Messiah. And now, all of a sudden, this. They're going to reject Him. They're going to oppose Him violently. Amazing. The long-awaited salvation of God, the long-awaited fulfillment of Abrahamic, Davidic promise, the long-awaited New Covenant ratified salvation, the long-awaited fulfillment of every Old Testament promise in the Messiah and you're telling me, first of all, the nation is going to be divided over the Messiah? Yes, and if she only knew at that time, divided, the tiny little group would rise, the mass would cry for His blood and fall into perdition. And opposition against the Messiah? Not from the Gentiles but from His own people? Unthinkable.

I'm in the process of putting a book together called The Murder of Jesus. It's a fairly provocative title, be out at the first of the year. There's a lot of interesting courts and trials today, sentences, even executions. The greatest travesty of justice in the history of the human race occurred in the city of Jerusalem against Jesus. Never did a more perfect individual live. It was the most trumped up trial ever. It was the greatest miscarriage of justice to find Him guilty and to execute Him ever. That's how He was opposed.

Wonderfully behind it all was God with His sovereign, redemptive purpose which in no way lessons the culpability of those who rejected and cried for His blood. Even a remnant Jew, even a true-believing Jew would have wondered about Isaiah 53, "He was bruised for our iniquities." They would have wondered about there being no comeliness that we should desire Him and wondered how the Messiah could be considered as not beautiful and not desirable and how He could actually die. And here they're hearing it will be the opposition of His own people. He will divide these people like with a sword that He Himself said. And He will generate opposition to Himself against His Messiahship, His salvation and His Kingdom. So much so that His Kingdom has been postponed and it still hasn't come. But this is all very confirming testimony because this is exactly what Isaiah 53 says would happen.

There's another word, affliction...separation, opposition, affliction. He turns from talking to the nations to talking to Mary personally. And I think the translators knew that, they set it apart with little dashes. But this phrase in verse 35, "A sword will pierce even your own soul." Mary, it's going to be real personal. Mary has been called in the Latin through the years of the church MaterDeloroso, mother of sorrows. We can't imagine a mother loving a child more than she loved Jesus. Can't imagine how hard it was when Jesus began to push her away on the human level. At twelve years of age He had to be about His Father's business, and in a sense He pushed her aside. Later when He was doing

His first miracle in Cana He didn't call her "mother," He called her "woman." When she came to visit Him with His half-brothers and sisters on occasion, He was told that His mother and His brothers and sisters were outside and He said, "Who is My mother, who is My brothers except those who believe in Me." And He was moving Mary from being His mother to needing Him as a Savior. That would be something for her to deal with as He distanced Himself and yet she would love Him for His perfections.

I can't imagine any loving anyone more than she would love Him. No child would be more lovable, obviously. And when it came time for Him to be hated and ridiculed and mocked and pierced and executed, according to John 19:25, there she is standing at the foot of the cross watching the whole scenario unfold in front of her and certainly that would have rammed a sword through her mother's heart.

The distancing would have been hard to bear. The suffering of her Son, unimaginable torture for this woman who by then was in her forties and had grown not only to love Jesus as a Son, but Savior. But there was even more than that, I think. Mary was, of all things, a believing Jew who loved the Messiah and the promises of God and would have been pierced through the heart to see her nation reject her Son, to see the people turn against Him, to see the people of Israel forfeit the salvation of God and the Kingdom that had been promised to them. So much grief, so much affliction. She was an ordinary woman of flesh and blood like all of us, bearing enormous strain just being the mother of the Son of God, certainly from time to time bewildered and certainly cut to the heart with pain.

So, we're introduced to separation, opposition and affliction and then finally, revelation. The end of verse 35, and we'll close with this, going past the parenthesis, "This is a sign to be opposed...skip the parenthesis...to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." When Jesus stands up, He's going to be a sign and people are going to oppose Him. And in opposing Him, there's going to be a revelation.

I remember reading years ago about a guy who took a friend on a tour through Paris, took him to the Louvre and showed him all the pictures. Took him to a concert hall in Paris that night to hear a great symphony. At the end of the day he said, "What do you think?" And he said, "I wasn't that impressed." To which his friend said, "If it's any consolation to you, the museum and its art were not on trial and neither was the symphony. You were on trial. History has already judged the greatness of those works of art and the greatness of that music. All that is revealed by your attitude is the smallness of your own appreciation."

Jesus isn't on trial but every soul is. And what happens is, He's raised up as a sign and by opposing Him, the wickedness of the heart is surfaced. Somebody might think, "You know, when the Messiah comes, they're going to throw lilies at His feet and when the Messiah comes there's going to be hearts and flowers, there's going to be peace and joy and happiness everywhere. When the Messiah

comes, you know, Jesus was really a good man, He would come into the world and there would be goodness trailing out of Him and everyone would feel happy and He'd be just a person who engendered happiness and joy and peace."

You know what happened when the Messiah came? He engendered hostility. And what came to the surface was bitterness and anger and hatred and venom and death because when the Messiah comes His holiness confronts wickedness and produces the revelation of apostasy. It reveals...what Jesus did was reveal the apostate nature of the religion of Judaism, didn't He? He literally revealed the hypocrisy of it all, the shallowness of it all, the legalism of it all, the self-righteousness of it all. And they hated Him for that exposure.

Let me tell you something. To be saved by Jesus, to enter into Jesus' Kingdom, your sin has to be exposed. If you acknowledge that and embrace that exposure and come to Him for forgiveness, you'll be saved and enter His Kingdom. If you hate that exposure and resent Jesus for doing it, you'll go to hell in your sins. So, His life was a revelation. How people responded reveals the condition of their heart.

Jesus isn't on trial but you are. And I'm sure that Mary, and many of the remnant must have thought, you know, when the Messiah comes it's all going to be wonderful and everybody will fall in love with Him. He'll be irresistible. He'll be so wonderful and so gentle and so meek and so mild.

And that's the Jesus people would like. But the fact of the matter is, He walked in to their apostasy, called it what it was, brought their sin to the fore, condemned them for their sin and they hated Him for it and it surfaced the wretched condition of their hearts. For some of them, they fell on their faces and repented, believed and were saved. For most of them, they cursed Jesus and put Him on a cross.

It says the thoughts, the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. The word "thoughts" here is dialogismos, it's beliefs, it's used eight times in the New Testament, always negatively. It always has a bad connotation. You're going to bring up the filth. You cannot have a ministry like Jesus and make everybody feel good. Even Jesus didn't do that. He created such hostility they killed Him. You see, when you come with the truth of holiness, you expose the evil of the heart. And that's what Jesus did.

Messiah came and found a people full of sin, who loved their sin. They loved darkness rather than...what?...light. So, Simeon the righteous man is content that Jesus is born the Messiah. And with Him the hope of Israel and the world is fulfilled and salvation has come and He can die. That doesn't mean it's all going to go the way you think. Many will receive Him, but His life is going to unmask those who love their sin and hate God. And so they'll be separation, opposition, affliction and the revelation of the wickedness of the human heart. That is a tremendous unfolding of the picture of what we'll see when we go through Luke and watch separation, opposition, affliction and the

revelation of the wickedness of the human heart unfold until the climax of the crucifixion.

Father, we thank You for the insight in to this great text. Thank You for giving us time to go over it this morning. Thank You that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom we are foremost. Save sinners even today, Lord, by Your mercy, even now who are hearing this message, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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