

RECEIVING THE CHRIST

So far in Luke 2, we've seen the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, who is fully human and consecrated to pay for sin, and fully divine, accredited as God come in the flesh to save His people from sin. By His divine humanity, Jesus Christ changes lives. The whole point of Christmas, the coming and birth of Christ, is to transform human existence now and forever. As you are re-born from above by the Holy Spirit, putting your trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, He makes you a new creation, and empowers you to live out His new life through yours. The consecration of Christ at the temple points to all these things.

1- JESUS - Guided by the Holy Spirit to the temple, Simeon takes the infant Jesus in his arms and says, "*Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel.*" The term "Lord" refers to one with absolute power. Simeon expresses his complete allegiance and submission to the authority of the sovereign almighty God.

Like many Jews, his expectation of the "*consolation of Israel*" by the Christ most likely envisioned a conquering king, not a child of peasants. But through the Holy Spirit, he recognized the answer to God's promises in this infant Jesus. RC Sproul observes, "Simeon didn't have to see Jesus walk on water or turn water into wine, or even expire on the cross and ascend into heaven. It was enough to simply see the One that God had promised, and he was at peace." Faith trusts in the evidence given by one who is trustworthy. Is this true of you? Or do you insist God comes to you on your terms, rather than His terms?

2- CHRIST - The song of Simeon incorporates several Old Testament echoes, the words of Isaiah who foretold the coming of Christ some 700 years before. Isaiah 42:6, "*I will give You as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations.*" Isaiah 49:6, "*I will make You as a light for the nations, that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*" Isaiah 52:10, "*the Lord has bared His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*" Isaiah 60:3, "*the Lord has made known His salvation, He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.*"

All this is the work of Jesus ("*the Lord is salvation*") the Christ, God come in the flesh. God's light brings His salvation to the darkness, revealing God's promised glory to His people. By the power of the Spirit.

3- SAVIOR - Jesus Christ is revealed as the Savior, come to deliver His people. Fully human yet fully divine, He is the unique God-man, Son of God come in the flesh. The drama of Simeon's prophesying isn't lost on Joseph and Mary as they marvel at his words. "*Behold, this child is appointed for the rise and fall of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed, and a sword will pierce your own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.*" With trusting God is great reward, but not without cost. The consolation of Israel cost Mary her son's life, when He is pierced on the cross, but God will comfort her by giving her John as her son (John 19:25). And all who humble themselves to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be raised up to salvation, now and forever.

And God had one more song to sing that day: the anthem of the aged prophetess Anna, in verse 36. She worshiped God night and day in the temple, with fasting and prayer. "*At that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.*" God was faithful to this faithful servant. Messiah was manifested that day! And may we learn from older saints who have endured much, trusting and obeying, as they waited patiently for God to fulfill His promises.

4- LORD - Jesus Christ is revealed as the only Lord come to transform your life. In Luke 1-2, we've heard from angels, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, shepherds, Simeon, and Anna. What is your response to this child who was appointed for the rise and fall of many? Is Jesus The One? Or are you looking for some other way of salvation? As though you must do something special to be saved? or to merit salvation? Simeon said, "*my eyes have seen Your salvation*" recognizing that God saves only through Jesus Christ, the Lord. "*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*"

God reveals: "*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. No one has ever seen God, but the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known.*" (John 1:14-18). Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life*" (John 8:12).

5- RECEIVE - God presents Christ. Will you receive Him? CS Lewis said, "the Son of God became a man to enable men to become the sons of God." This is the message of John 1:12, "*to all who received Him, who believed in His name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born of God from above by the Holy Spirit.*" Has the light of Jesus the Christ enlightened your life, so you receive Him as Lord and Savior? AW Tozer said, "God is looking for people through whom He can do the impossible. What a pity we plan to do only the things we can do by ourselves." Respond like Simeon and Anna: trust and obey. Only Jesus saves! Only Jesus transforms your life, by His new life lived through you! ☐