

Luke 2:25-35 (G. Gardner) 71520

Bible Treasury: Volume N7, Simeon, or Christ Revealed, Possessed, and Declared

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The birth of the promised Messiah and Savior was of great moment to the world, and to the Jewish nation. When sin entered the Seed of the woman was promised. To Abram and his seed were the promises made; as also David's royal throne was pledged to David's greater Son who should sit upon his throne. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). This destined King on Zion's holy hill is meanwhile the Savior of mankind. Little wonder, therefore, that His birth should be of wonderful interest, whatever way or form it may be brought about. Unspeakably so is it to God, for He has made all blessing and salvation to hang on Christ.

The Gospels, then, are where we may look for an unerring record of Christ's remarkable advent into this our world, with its attendant circumstances. Both Matthew and Luke supply special see death accounts; one in connection with the wise men and the star; the other with the shepherds and the glory of the Lord. The "King of the Jews" was the object of the Magi's inquiry. The "Savior" born for all the people, though no less the Christ, was the One sought for by the humble shepherds. Yet in both, the interest centered in the Christ of God, and concern was awakened by the signs thus given which led to their search and final reward in seeing Him on whom all were dependent, whether in regard to the throne or the altar, to the earth or to heaven, whether as Israel's King, or as the one and only Redeemer, the Savior. Alas! Jews and Gentiles were alike asleep, only awakened by idle curiosity, or selfish interest, as Herod and the heartless Scribes proved. They were content to go on in their sin and shame, following with open hatred and murder, if God's Christ had come (as they thought) to displace them.

Notwithstanding this, there were some exercised and waiting ones, who were anxiously and prayerfully looking for consolation and redemption through the promised Seed of the woman, the Savior and King. Such was pious old Simeon, and now the long-expected moment for which he and others had waited, had come, when he should see, possess, and bear testimony to Jehovah's Anointed. Israel's redemption and consolation governed his thoughts and heart, and Simeon had learned that this could only be by the coming of the promised Messiah, the Object of His people's hope. Does this not speak to restless man to-day, with his desires for, and expectations of, a better state of things? As in Simeon's day, so in ours, there are those who believe and know that Christ alone can be, and is, the source of all blessing for the earth and for man—even He who is now the Savior, and will hereafter be manifested as King, who shall judge the world in righteousness. Not for His lowly birth in Bethlehem's manger do Christians now look, for that is past, but for His glorious appearing, when His foes shall be subdued, and His rule for God, both over Israel and all the nations of the earth, shall be established.

Returning to Simeon, his waiting attitude known to God was in due time honored. For he made known to him that he should not before he had seen the Lord's Christ. His was this unspeakable privilege, surpassing that of all the distinguished saints and prophets who had before spoken of the coming Messiah—not only to know the fact of His birth, but that He should be really seen, known, and possessed. The temple is the favored divinely ordered place where Simeon and the Messiah would meet, for had not Zechariah prophesied that He should be "a priest upon his throne" (6:12, 13)? There Joseph and Mary brought Israel's King and Savior, to do unto Him according to the law. There, by the blessed Holy Spirit, was Simeon given to know that the babe on Mary's knees was no less than Jehovah's Christ. Then, the indescribable ecstasy when he received Him into his arms, mid now possessed the everlasting Blessor and Redeemer, our Lord and Savior, and their King.

What a fact and voice for to-day, that Jesus has come, has been seen, and been possessed, by a just and pious Jew, in himself but a poor sinner needing a Savior as others, but who could say, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation"! The mere religious professor may own that Christ did indeed come, yet deny that He, and He only, is the Savior, whether for heaven or the earth; nevertheless the truth remains that there is salvation in no other name than His, the woman's Seed, the Son of God, the Holy Sin-bearer. The first fruit of possessing the Christ was to bless God in the holy and happy and grateful acknowledgment of His salvation now seen, gladdening the heart of God by the reception of His Anointed. Not only this, but Simeon declares in his song and testimony marvelous things about the Child, the Gentiles, and His people (and in this order), with the blessed effect upon himself in a satisfied heart, a peaceful spirit, and readiness to depart out of the world—an experience that is ours also, for all things are ours, whether life or death, and "to depart and be with Christ is far better" than to remain here where He now is not.

The Lord has changed His place and position. No longer the Babe of the temple, He is seated at the right hand of God, in all the value of an accomplished redemption, and because He lives we shall live also. And He is coming to receive us to Him self, that where He is, we may be also. Simeon, then, having blessed God, expresses his desire to depart in peace according to Jehovah's word, because his eyes had beheld His salvation. Precious testimony with its all sufficiency then! How much more for to-day, when the Holy Spirit has come, the witness to the shed blood of Calvary, to the One now exalted in heaven, "a light for revelation of Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel." This is what the faith of Simeon declared, that the whole range and extent of blessing and glory depended upon the Babe he was leaving behind. Yea, if eighteen centuries have since rolled away, yet shall Jew, Gentile, and the earth be blessed in and by Him, who is "King of kings and Lord of lords." Then Israel and the nations shall own and call Him blessed. He who was the wondrous Babe of Bethlehem is the Lion of Judah's tribe, and He who "emptied Himself" shall sit on the throne of His glory. In that day "shall the righteous flourish and abundance of peace," with deliverance from sinful oppression and poverty now baffling man's wisdom and resources. Kings and subjects will alike find their center and restful satisfaction in Christ, the King of Israel and of the nations. "His name shall endure forever" (Psalm 72), and all shall flourish in the abundance of His resources in established world-wide peace. Men, then happy and content, will render the worship of gladdened hearts, freed from all envy and rivalry, in blessing His glorious Name, from the temple at Jerusalem to the ends of the earth now filled with His glory. Well

may we re-echo the conclusion of this Psalm, and say likewise, "Amen and Amen."

Such assuredly, with much more, was the happy confession of Simeon in the presence of the Babe. And with a further testimony as to what would be prior to all this, he who had blessed God now blesses Joseph and the mother, telling Mary that the child was "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that should be spoken against; yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also."

In these few but weighty words we have, foretold, His rejection and cross at the hands of man, with solemn results yet unseen, and an experience awaiting the crisis when, in answer to Pilate's question, "What, then, shall I do with Jesus, which is called Christ?" they all say, "Let him be crucified." "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother. . . When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith to his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" Here then we have the fact of the stricken heart of Mary, who having heard the wonderful words of the throne and kingdom, pledged by the angel Gabriel concerning her promised son, now sees the fulfillment of that part of Simeon's prophecy as touching herself, and the crucified One a sign to be spoken against. Christ's rejection and cross still tell their tale as to this earth with its scene of sorrow and woe, where man's rule and resources fail to meet the conflicting clamor and unrest existing in all lands, plainly declaring that the full accomplishment of Simeon's song awaits another day, when Christ shall be confessed as the only Savior and rightful King (Ezekiel 21:27). Yet man refuses to learn that the blessing of both heaven and earth depends absolutely upon Christ and His work on the cross.

Thank God, there are souls now who by the grace and Spirit of God know and confess, not only that Christ was born into this world, that He lived, and died on the cross for our sins that we might know redemption through His blood, but that He is coming into the air to receive us to Himself, that where He now is we may be also who shall in due time be manifested as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Then will follow the "rising again of many in Israel," to be blessed in Immanuel's land, as we meanwhile, during their "fall," are called to heavenly glory. For Him who is our Life and our Hope, we wait now whilst strangers here, so soon to be manifested in glory with Him when He shall return to this earth to reign, filling the universe with blessing and glory. Be it so, Lord Jesus, Thou all worthy Christ of God! "He, who with hands unlifted Went from this earth below, Shall come again all gifted His blessing to bestow." Amen, Come, Lord Jesus.

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