



SESSION 5

SIMEON'S PROCLAMATION

▶ **The Point**

We have a sure hope when we trust in Jesus.

▶ **The Passage**

Luke 2:25-35

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

More and more people are buying 3D printers. Far beyond the way old-school printers reproduce words on paper using ink, 3D printers create objects in myriad shapes from various materials. But what if a 3D printer could be used to reproduce, say, a human liver? Researchers are already looking into the possibility. Instead of stacking successive layers of some material to create an object, a “bioprinter” would use a person’s own cell tissue to construct living tissue. In the future, you could receive a transplantable organ with no risk of rejection.² Far-fetched? Just think how far-fetched a 3D printer once sounded. Or walking around with a hand-held device with a camera, phone, and more computing power than NASA had for the moon landings. We have seen these amazing things in our own lifetimes. The Jewish people had waited for centuries for the Messiah. God had promised He was coming through the prophets, but would it happen in their lifetime? One man in the Bible knew the answer. We don’t know a lot about him, but we know this one thing: he knew he would see the Messiah before he died.

▶ **The Setting**

After the birth of Jesus, shepherds came to worship Him, and Mary pondered all that had happened since the angel first visited her. She made preparations with Joseph for a special day in the life of her child. Eight days after birth the child would be circumcised and named (see Luke 2:21-24), and they would make an offering for Mary’s purification rite from childbirth. These events would have been great in themselves, but a surprise awaited them.

What does the Bible say?

Israel's consolation (2:25)—
Another way to refer to the
coming of the Messiah.

Luke 2:25-35

25 There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him.

26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah.

27 Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law,

28 Simeon took him up in his arms, praised God, and said,

29 Now, Master,

you can dismiss your servant in peace,

as you promised.

30 For my eyes have seen your salvation.

31 You have prepared it

in the presence of all peoples—

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles

and glory to your people Israel.

33 His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.

34 Then Simeon blessed them and told his mother Mary: "Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed—

35 and a sword will pierce your own soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

Notes



ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, prepare a whiteboard or hang a large sheet of paper at the front of the room. As group members arrive, direct them to the board or paper where you have printed the word “HOPE.” Provide markers and instruct group members to write some things they are hoping for in the New Year.



DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 49 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): “What’s

something you never thought you’d see happen in your lifetime?” Allow time for each person to respond.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 50 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of looking to Jesus for hope by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 50 of the PSG: “We have a sure hope when we trust in Jesus.”

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Refer to the whiteboard group members wrote on earlier. Read the responses aloud and ask for more information or clarification if needed.

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item 3**, the “Map” poster, to refer to the setting for this particular session.

PRAY: Transition into the study by thanking God for the sure hope we have in Christ. Ask Him to help us understand how we can help bring that hope to others.



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STUDY THE BIBLE

NOTES

Luke 2:25-27

²⁵ There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking forward to Israel’s consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law,

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Luke 2:25-27 on page 51 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Commentary on the next page of this Leader Guide to help group members understand the Holy Spirit’s work in Simeon’s life.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 51 of the PSG: **“What are some ways the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives?”**

SUMMARIZE: The Scripture gives no hint to Simeon’s age, but Luke did note three revealing characteristics. Highlight the main points from pages 51-52 of the PSG.

- ▶ **He was righteous and devout.** The word *righteous* simply means right living. Most people let sin run their lives; Simeon’s life, however, was defined by doing the right thing. *Devout* means reverent and faithful. It implies that Simeon lived with great respect for God in all he did.
- ▶ **Looking for the Messiah.** This righteous and devout man was “looking forward to Israel’s consolation.” Israel’s consolation centered in a hope for a Messiah who would bring comfort to the weary souls of Israel.
- ▶ **Full of the Holy Spirit.** Prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit on all believers in Acts 2, people experienced the Holy Spirit’s work in different ways. Luke had already told us that Simeon sought to live right and was wholly devoted to God, so his heart would have been receptive to the Spirit’s work in him.

TRANSITION: In the next verses we see that because of Jesus, not only can we look forward in hope, but we can also know salvation.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:
In what ways is Simeon an example for us?

Luke 2:25-27 Commentary

[Verse 25] Mary and Joseph arrived at the temple to circumcise and name their baby. The text introduces **a man in Jerusalem**. It does not associate him with a religious party or call him a priest. Simeon was his name. Apart from this text, we know nothing else about him. The text describes Simeon with two character qualities. First, he was **righteous**. This was the same characteristic that described Zechariah and Elizabeth (see Luke 1:6) and Joseph. (See Matt. 1:19.) Simeon was committed to the ways of God. Second, Simeon was **devout**. This word was only used by Luke in the New Testament. (See Acts 2:5; 8:2; 22:12.) Simeon was looking forward to **Israel's consolation**. This referred to the peace the coming Messiah would bring. Simeon knew prophecies of the coming Messiah, and he waited in expectation that they would be fulfilled in his lifetime. One final characteristic of Simeon was that the **Holy Spirit was on him**. Prior to Pentecost the Holy Spirit would come upon a few selected people to fulfill a task. (See Num. 24:2; 1 Sam. 10:10; 16:13.) After Pentecost the Holy Spirit would fill every believer. (See Eph. 1:13-14.) The Holy Spirit was on Simeon.

[Verse 26] The Holy Spirit had delivered a message to Simeon. **He would not see death before he saw the Lord's Messiah**. Though many imagine Simeon as an old man, his age is not given. He did state he could die in peace after seeing the infant Jesus. (See Luke 2:29.) Seeing Jesus was important, but the most important part was that when he saw Jesus he was called to prophesy about the child. (See vv. 29-32.) **Lord's Messiah** literally refers to the Anointed One of the Lord. This was the Messianic figure God promised would come and bring hope to Israel. The hope Jesus brought fueled Simon's expectations and desires to see Him.

[Verse 27] Since the Holy Spirit was on Simeon (see v. 25), and since the Spirit had revealed to him that he would remain alive until the Messiah came, it should be no surprise Simeon was guided by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit had Simeon at the right place at the right time to encounter Jesus the Messiah. How many people passed Jesus and His parents that day with no recognition? The Holy Spirit made the difference in recognizing Jesus. He guided Simeon as he entered the temple. Mary and Joseph had gone to make their offering of purification for Mary after her childbirth. (See vv. 22-24.) Luke referred to both Mary and Joseph as Jesus' **parents**. Joseph had determined to marry his betrothed wife and raise her child as his own, a task that began with naming and dedicating the child in the temple. The **temple** would refer to the temple court, not the inner sanctuary where the holy place was located. It was the outer court where the couple could conduct the customary sacrifice. Two offerings would have been made for Mary after childbirth (see Lev. 12:6-8), a burnt offering and a sin offering. Normally the offering would have been a lamb and a dove, but Joseph and Mary obviously came from a humble state and offered either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. (See Luke 2:24.)

Luke 2:28-32 Commentary

[Verse 28] Simeon's response upon seeing Jesus was that he **took him up in his arms**. Simeon rejoiced that God had kept His promise to allow him to see Jesus with his own eyes. Like a priest, he took the child in his arms and began to pronounce a blessing over Him. Simeon also **praised God**. The Greek word is made up of two parts. The first part means *good*, and the second part means *word*. Put together, it means *to speak a good word*. Simeon's blessing of Jesus was an act of worship on his part. It also turned out to be a prophetic word about Him.

[Verse 29] The song or blessing begins with a word of relief—**now**. Simeon had awaited the coming of the Messiah, and it had finally happened. He addressed God with the term **Master** from the Greek word for *despot*. Unlike in English, this word did not carry connotations of an evil ruler. Rather, it emphasized the servant-master relationship. Like a servant longing for release from his servitude, Simeon had felt the release of Messianic expectations. Simeon proclaimed that his Master could dismiss His servant in peace. To dismiss Simeon was to release him to death. He had fulfilled his purpose and now had nothing holding him back from meeting the Lord. He could die knowing God had done as He promised by keeping him alive until the coming of the Messiah. God had given him a specific word about seeing the Messiah. That word came to pass in the temple courtyard. He was ready to die because he had seen the salvation of the Lord.

[Verses 30-31] Simeon also saw the deeper plan of God—he had seen **your salvation**. His own Master was working for his release or redemption. He called this release salvation. To see Jesus is to see salvation that He embodies in His person and work. After declaring he had seen the salvation of the Lord, Simeon declared God had **prepared** that salvation for everyone. This word demonstrated God's carefully orchestrated plan, perfect in scope and timing. (See Gal. 4:4.) God's sovereignty had orchestrated all the events surrounding the Messiah's coming to provide salvation to His people. God had prepared salvation **in the presence of all peoples**. This expression was not new to Luke. Both Isaiah and the psalmist made similar statements: "The LORD has displayed his holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10); "He has remembered his love and faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen our God's victory" (Ps. 98:3). What God did was not in secret.

[Verse 32] The coming salvation through the Messiah had two audiences. First, He is **a light for revelation to the Gentiles**. Salvation was more than a nationalistic hope for Israel. It was a light of revelation. The second audience was God's **people Israel**. The **glory** of Israel was not their notion they were chosen to be better than other nations but that through Israel the Messiah would come into the world to drive away the darkness.

Luke 2:33-35 Commentary

[Verses 33-34] Mary and Joseph **were amazed** at what was said about Jesus. Certainly Simeon said some things worthy of amazement. But his words became even more astonishing. The previous verses had described who Jesus was. The next pronouncement would describe what He came to do. Simeon **blessed** the parents as well as Jesus with his words. He had blessed the child; now he extended that blessing to the whole family. However, it doesn't look like a blessing at first glance. It contained some difficult words of prophecy, especially to Mary. One might wonder why he turned to her and omitted any specific words for Joseph. While some have argued this was because of Mary's special relationship with Jesus as His mother, others have suggested it is because Joseph's death would occur before the crucifixion. Simeon's first specific word to Mary was that Jesus was **destined** for an important assignment. He explained Jesus would cause **the fall and rise of many in Israel**. This passage could have two interpretations and both would be legitimate. First, it could be referring to one group that falls (humbles itself) then rises. However, the second interpretation seems more likely. In this case, Jesus would be the watershed mark or fall line for all of Israel. Those who embraced Him and His teaching would rise. This is the usual word for resurrection. Those who rejected Him would fall over their own pride and ambition. No person would be able to take a neutral position toward Jesus—they align themselves either with Him or against Him. This seems to fit better with the next statement in the verse. Simeon called Jesus a **sign that will be opposed**. Using a word so common to John's Gospel, the **sign** was meant to save the lost, but others would reject the visible affirmation of God's love and mercy. Jesus was the watershed between salvation and perishing. Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but those who do not believe in Him are condemned already. (See John 3:17-18.) Some experience salvation through Jesus and others stumble and fall.

[Verse 35] While Simeon was addressing Mary, he emphasized that a sword would pierce her own soul as well. Greek had a word for a small dagger and one for a large sword. It is the latter that Simeon used. A large sword of sorrow would pierce Mary's heart at the cross. In fact, the church has sometimes referred to Mary as the mother of sorrows for this reason, and she is often depicted in sadness in many paintings. Mary had to watch her own Son experience rejection and crucifixion. This would have certainly pierced her heart. Simeon ended his words with the revelation that the **thoughts of many hearts may be revealed**. Only God sees the secret thoughts of people. However through the coming of Jesus, those thoughts would be revealed as a division is made between those who serve Him and those who oppose Him. Jesus would not only divide the way time is kept on the calendar, but He would also divide the world into those who believe in Him and those who reject Him.

A previous *Biblical Illustrator* article "Salvation: A Word Study" (Winter 2006-2007) relates to this lesson and can be found on the DVD in the Leader Pack or can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator. Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.

