

# THE PROMISED MESSIAH

Jesus is the promised **Messiah**, the One who provides **salvation** to all who trust Him.

## FIRST THOUGHTS

When we think about the birth of Jesus, we usually think about angels, shepherds, wise men, and a baby in a manger. People knew Jesus was the Messiah because angels appeared to them. The angels announced Jesus was the Messiah.

Forty days after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph went to the Temple in **Jerusalem** to offer a **sacrifice** and to dedicate Jesus to the Lord. While they were there two other important people welcomed Him as the **Savior**.

Simeon and Anna were there. They were waiting to see the Savior. How did they know Jesus was the Savior? The Holy Spirit led them to know Jesus was the promised Messiah.

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The Roman **emperor**, Caesar Augustus, sent an order that all people must go to their own towns to be registered. This was a census used for taxes.

Joseph left **Nazareth** and went to Bethlehem. Bethlehem was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of

David. Mary was from the family of David, also. Joseph registered with Mary. While they were in Bethlehem, she gave birth to her first son.

When the baby was eight days old, Jesus was circumcised. Then when it was time for Mary to offer the sacrifice required of Jewish women, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. They met Simeon and Anna at the temple.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT (LUKE 2:25-38)

### 1. Simeon's Praise (Luke 2:25-32)

#### VERSE 25

*<sup>25</sup> In Jerusalem lived a man named Simeon who was a good man and godly. He was waiting for the time when God would take away Israel's sorrow, and the Holy Spirit was in him.*

Bible teachers do not know a lot about Simeon. He was probably an old man. This verse says he was good and godly. He obeyed the laws of God. He trusted in God and expected the **Messiah** to come. He was looking forward to the Savior. Some translations use the word anticipation. Anticipation means “to be excited for something wonderful to happen.”

Rome ruled Israel at that time. The Jewish people were like slaves to Rome. They were not allowed to govern themselves. They were forced to accept Roman law. This verse calls it Israel's sorrow. Most Jews thought the Messiah would be an earthly king. They hoped He would free them from Rome.

It is not clear what Simeon thought. The Holy Spirit was in him, so he probably knew the Messiah would be the Savior of souls.

#### VERSE 26

*<sup>26</sup> Simeon had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he saw the Christ promised by the Lord.*

We do not know if Simeon was a priest or not. He seems to be a **prophet**. The Lord promised him he would not die until he saw the Christ. For Simeon to hear God's specific promise, he had to have a close relationship with Him. He lived with that great expectation. We do not know what Simeon expected when he met the Christ. The important fact is Simeon believed God's promise to him and recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

## VERSES 27-28

<sup>27</sup> *The Spirit led Simeon to the Temple. When Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple to do what the law said they must do,*

<sup>28</sup> *Simeon took the baby in his arms and thanked God:*

The Holy Spirit led Simeon to go to the Temple at the same time Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the Temple. So, Simeon was there when they came. It was not an accident that they were there at the same time. When Simeon saw the baby Jesus, he knew He was the Christ. He knew the Lord's promise to him was true. It was a very emotional time for Simeon. It was a time of great joy for him.

Can you imagine how Simeon felt? He knew he was holding the **Savior** of the world in his arms. He immediately started thanking and praising God.

## VERSE 29

<sup>29</sup> *"Now, Lord, you can let me, your servant, die in peace as You said."*

When Simeon said the Lord could let him die, he was not sad. He was happy and relieved. He was peaceful. He knew God's promise to him was complete. In Jewish history, there were other people who believed God's promises even though their earthly life ended before they saw the promise fulfilled with their eyes. They believed God's promise with eyes of **faith** (Hebrews 11).

Simeon knew when he died he would be with his Lord. All the troubles of his life would be over.

## VERSES 30-31

<sup>30</sup> *"With my own eyes I have seen your salvation,*

<sup>31</sup> *which you prepared before all people."*

Why was Simeon ready to die? He knew the goal of his life was reached. His goal was to see God's **salvation**. He saw the Savior with his own eyes.

Jesus was only a baby. How did Simeon know He was the Savior? How did he know the little baby would grow up and **save** people from their sins? He knew because God told him.

Jesus did not come only for Israel. He came for any person from any nation in the world that accepted Him. God wanted all nations to hear the good news about salvation through Jesus. God sent Jesus to save people in every nation from their sins. He saves all who believe in Him.

VERSE 32

<sup>32</sup> “It is a light for the non-Jewish people to see and an honor for your people, the Israelites.”

Even when Jesus was a baby, wise people knew He came into the world for all people. He came for people who were not Jews. Simeon says Jesus was the light for non-Jewish people. Simeon may have been remembering words from the **prophet** Isaiah when he said, “The LORD will show his holy power to all the nations. Then everyone on earth will see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10).

Simeon said Jewish people must be honored because the Savior came to them as a **Jew**. God still cared for His chosen people, the people of Israel. He promised the **Messiah** would come from a Jewish family, the family of David. God fulfilled His promise. Jewish people should be honored.

Simeon held the baby Jesus and knew He was the Savior for the world. He praised God for the promised Messiah.

How do you know Jesus is the Savior? \_\_\_\_\_

What does it mean to have faith like Simeon?

What are some things that help you have faith that Jesus is the Son of God? Name a few things: \_\_\_\_\_

BIBLE SKILL: *Finding Words that Describe Someone*

Jesus is the light.

Draw a line from the words on the left to the verses on the right that contain those exact words (NCV).

The true Light	John 12:36
I am the light	John 1:9
The Lamb is the city’s lamp	2 Cor. 4:6b
Believe in the light	John 8:12
That is in the face of Christ	Revelation 21:23

## 2. A Future Sadness (Luke 2:33-35)

### VERSE 33

<sup>33</sup> *Jesus' father and mother were amazed at what Simeon had said about Him.*

Mary and Joseph already knew about the things Simeon said about Jesus. It surprised them that Simeon knew these things. He came to the temple at the exact time when they came to the temple. Maybe they knew the Lord sent Simeon. In the next verse Simeon spoke to Mary about Jesus' future.

### VERSE 34

<sup>34</sup> *Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, "God has chosen this child to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God that many people will not accept,*

Simeon blessed Joseph and Mary. His blessing included a prophecy about Jesus. He said Jesus would cause a great division among people. He said Jesus would cause people to **oppose** each other.

Even today people are either for Jesus or against Him. They must choose. There will be people who will not accept Him. Jesus will become like a rock people stumble over. People that do not accept the **Savior** have no hope for **salvation**.

**Read verse 34 again. What were the two things Simeon said about Jesus?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Why do you think Simeon said those things?**

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### VERSE 35

<sup>35</sup> *"so that the thoughts of many will be made known. And the things that will happen will make your heart sad, too."*

Jesus showed people what God is like. Many people refused to believe in Him as God. They became His enemies. Their actions showed the things they were thinking. Their actions were against Jesus. They hurt Him in many ways.

Simeon spoke to Mary. He told her the things that would happen to Jesus would make her heart sad. Mary saw Jesus die (John 19:25). She felt terrible. It was like a sword that cut through her heart. The saddest thing in her life would be to feel the pain of His death.

## KEY DOCTRINE: *Jesus*

Christ is always God's Son. He came to earth as Jesus. He was born of the Virgin Mary with the help of the Holy Spirit. He became a real person.

### 3. Anna's Beliefs (Luke 2:36-38)

#### VERSE 36

<sup>36</sup> *There was a prophetess, Anna, from the family of Phanuel in the tribe of Asher. Anna was very old. She had once been married for seven years.*

Anna's name means **grace**. Luke often emphasized the place of women in the life of Jesus.

Anna belonged to the **tribe** of Asher. Asher was one of the ten tribes of Israel that Assyria took away from Israel. Some people from those tribes stayed in Israel. Many people from these tribes joined with Judah during the rule of Hezekiah. The tribe of Asher came back to **Jerusalem** and joined with the tribe of Judah. A large group of people from the tribe of Asher lived in Jerusalem at that time. They continued to worship the one true God.

#### VERSE 37

<sup>37</sup> *Then her husband died, and she was a widow for eighty-four years. Anna never left the Temple but worshiped God, going without food and praying day and night.*

Bible teachers do not know exactly how old Anna was. If Anna was married for seven years and was a widow for eighty-four years, that means she would be more than one hundred years old.

Another translation from the **Greek** language says "she was a widow until she was eighty four years old." They both mean she was a very old woman.

She **devoted** herself to fasting and prayer. This verse says she went without food. It probably meant she did not join in meals with other people. She ate only enough to keep her strength.

Have you ever heard the phrase “staying in the attitude of prayer”? It means a person’s thoughts are always focused on God. They focus on praising Him with thanksgiving. That describes the life of Anna.

## VERSE 38

*<sup>38</sup> Standing there at that time, she thanked God and spoke about Jesus to all who were waiting for God to free Jerusalem.*

When Mary and Joseph came into the temple, Anna went to them. Maybe she was there when Simeon took Jesus in his arms. She saw the baby Jesus. She knew that He was the **Messiah**. The Holy Spirit let her know Jesus was the Messiah. She praised God. She spoke about Jesus to those people who waited for God to send the **Savior**.

**Anna’s devotion to prayer was very strong. How can Christians devote themselves to prayer?**

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**How often should we pray?**

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**What are some of the things that prevent Christians from staying in the attitude of prayer?**

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**What can we do to have a more active prayer life?**

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## IN MY CONTEXT

In this session we learned that Jesus is the promised Messiah. During the time Jesus lived, people had different ideas of what the Messiah would be like. They had different thoughts about what the Messiah would do. Some people were surprised. Some people were disappointed. And others were filled with joy and praised God.

**How did Simeon and Anna know the baby Jesus was the Messiah?**

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**Even today, people have different ideas about Jesus as the Messiah. Do you believe Jesus is the Savior? Yes or No**

**Why do you believe that? Write a few words about your belief.**

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**Simeon and Anna knew Jesus had a reason for coming to earth. What do you think that full purpose was?**

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**What are some things you can do to help people understand that purpose and accept Jesus?**

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Like the world in Simeon's time, our world is filled with problems and sorrow. Simeon and Anna praised God during that time. They saw God's **salvation**.

**Write a short poem of praise to God for sending Jesus to save us.**

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## MEMORY VERSE

*And she gave birth to her first son. Because there were no rooms left in the inn, she wrapped the baby with pieces of cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough.*

—Luke 2:7



## THE PROMISED MESSIAH

### LUKE 2:25-28

#### PLAN AHEAD

- Pray for group members. Pray that Jesus' birth will be special and meaningful to them this Christmas.
- Review the first two sections in the *Introduction to the Book of Acts*. Luke wrote the **Gospel** of Luke and the Book of Acts.
- Make the session come alive! Practice signing the story from Luke 2:25-38. Prepare so you will not need to look at the text while you sign the story. This will help group members with understanding and discussion.
- Review the *In Your Context* section of the *Personal Study Guide*. Create a poem of praise to share with the group. Do not worry about making it perfect. The point is to praise God from your heart. It will encourage members to develop their poems of praise.

#### FOCUS ATTENTION

Using information from the Introduction to the Book of Acts, remind the group who Luke was and why he wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Ask group members to share parts of the Christmas story they remember. For example: Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem; there were no rooms for them; the shepherds visited; and so forth. Explain the events in today's session happened forty days later, after Jesus was born.

Guide members to find Luke 2:22-24 in their Bibles. Ask a volunteer to sign the verses. Encourage members to watch for the law mentioned in the verses (there are three places). Even while Jesus was a baby, He fulfilled the law of the Lord.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### 1. Simeon's Praise (Luke 2:25-32)

Sign the story from Luke 2:25-38. Ask members to watch for the Spirit as you sign verses 25-32 again. It is interesting to note the Holy Spirit is mentioned three times in this passage right after the law was mentioned three times.

**Ask:** What did the Spirit do in these verses? (The Spirit was in Simeon, told Simeon he would see the **Savior**/Christ, and led him to the Temple.)

**Discuss:** When Simeon saw Jesus, how did he respond? How can we know God is working in our lives? How should we respond when God works in our lives?

### 2. A Future Sadness (Luke 2:33-35)

Sign this part of the story again. Discuss the meaning of “rise and fall” in verse 34. **Ask:** What happens to people who believe in Jesus? What happens to people that **reject** Him?

The Spirit spoke through Simeon about the sadness Mary would face.

**Ask:** What could that sadness be? (Mary would see her own son, Jesus, die on the cross.)

### 3. Anna's Beliefs (Luke 2:36-38)

Sign this part of the story again. **Ask:** When Anna saw Jesus, how did she respond? (She thanked God and talked about Jesus.)

**Discuss:** Both Simeon and Anna watched for the **Messiah** to come. They knew God would send a Savior. Isaiah wrote about the coming Messiah 700 years earlier. Simeon and Anna knew the prophecy, and the Spirit confirmed Jesus was the Messiah. They thanked God.

## IN MY CONTEXT

When God works in our lives we should respond with praise. Ask members to share some of God's characteristics (i.e. He has all power, He knows everything, He is everywhere, He is love). We can praise God for who He is. Share your poem of praise with the group. Then divide the group into smaller groups of three or four. Ask them to create a poem of praise together, then share the poems with the larger group.

Pray together. Ask God to encourage each member to be thankful and share the good news of the Savior.