

15When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." 16So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

21And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

22And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "EVERY firstborn MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD"), 24and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS."

25And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, 28then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29"Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,

According to Your word;

30For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

31Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

*32A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,
And the glory of Your people Israel.”*

33And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. 34And 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— 35and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

I hope everyone's Christmas was wonderful and that you all got to enjoy time with your families.

We're taking a little break in our ongoing exposition of Matthew to do something just a little bit different over these 2 weeks surrounding Christmas and New Year.

Last week we considered the angelic announcement of a Saviour who is Christ, the Lord. A promise of peace on earth that is not yet fully realised.

We see peace, on an individual basis through forgiveness of sin and the indwelling Holy Spirit that is other worldly in the midst of chaos. But we said, some day the chaos will be turned to peace also, as Christ returns and sets up His rule in Jerusalem on the throne of David.

Satan will be deposed and evil will be removed. Paradise regained. On earth.

This week, I thought it might be fun to continue our look at Luke chapter 2 and consider an obscure prophecy. Next week? we'll get back to work in Matthew, and what a rich study that has been. But today, let's screw our thinking caps down and try to make some sense of an aged prophet named Simeon.

We won't spend much time in the first part of what we read today. You'll recall that the angels told the shepherds that there would be a sign

given so that they would confirm that what the angels told them was the real deal.

12"This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

People don't put babies in mangers. That's just weird. So, they ran to Bethlehem and found baby Jesus, wrapped up in linens, and lying in a manger. Just like the angel said. Prophecy given. Prophecy fulfilled. A sign. A confirmation that everything else the angels said is true. It's just like they said it would be.

So the shepherds relay all of the wonderful words of the angelic announcement to Mary and Joseph, and then they went their way rejoicing.

It says 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

Preservation and collation. Mary it says is being careful to preserve all of this information. It is treasure to her to be cared for. And she's meditating. Trying to organize all of these events. Trying to make sense of it.

She's what, 16 or 17 years old. She's had a visit by an angel. She's a virgin yet a mother. She's given birth to the Son of God. That's a lot for a young woman. And now these shepherds have come and report of an angelic announcement.

One of the commentators said whoever wrote the account had to have been very close to Mary, or perhaps Mary wrote the account. It's almost got a first person vibe. All of the little details. Baby's jumping in wombs when Mary and Elizabeth meet. All of these little details are here for us because Mary treasured them and stored them away in her heart for safe keeping.

Well, some things have to happen to Jewish babies. It's all written down in their laws. Especially first born sons.

Purifications and offerings and circumcision. His name is Jesus. Both Mary and Joseph had angelic visitors who told them to name Him Jesus. So they did.

And now we pick up the story 40 days later, and they're in the temple making their offering. Dedication of this firstborn as Holy to the Lord. And we have this obscure story of this man named Simeon. Another affirmation. Another sign. Another incident for Mary to store up and ponder. Let's look at it.

25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Simeon is special. Simeon is an old testament saint. We take the downpayment of future glory, the indwelling Holy Spirit for granted. It is what sets every believer apart.

The Holy Spirit baptizes us. He removes us from the old world of sin and hopelessness and places us In Christ. Sin is left at the cross and we, in Him, are resurrected to a new life. A new world. Every real christian. And sadly this quickening, this indwelling becomes normal for us. We don't live as amazed as we should be.

In the old testament economy, it was rare for the Holy Spirit to come upon men. Simeon is special. He is righteous toward men and he is devout toward God.

Most of the commentators immediately surmise that he is ancient, and he likely is. We get that from the next verses. The part about departing.

It says he was looking for the consolation of Israel. Consolation of Israel. That is a messianic phrase. And more. The phrase was used to describe righteous people who were waiting patiently for the Old Testament promises of deliverance and joy.

Simeon, and in a few verses, Anna. People who are sold out in their

faith that God has a plan for good, and they're waiting.

Listen to how Joseph of Arimathea is described. Mark 15:42 - 43 *When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.*

The significant thing to describe Joseph, he was waiting for the kingdom.

It's no different for us. We're waiting for the consolation of Israel. Waiting for Jesus to appear.

It's like we're fish out of water. We're out of our habitat. Between two worlds. Peter says we are strangers and aliens. 1Pet. 2:11 We've left Satan's kingdom behind, and we read about the Kingdom of God, and we long for it, and we wait. For the consolation of Israel. God has always had his remnant. Simeon. Anna. Joseph of Arimathea. Paul. Listen to Paul in some of his last recorded words;

2Tim. 4:7 - 8 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to **all who have loved His appearing.***

It's like we're paroled and we've walked out of the prison gate and we're waiting for the bus. We are those who love His appearing. We're waiting to see Him face to face. The Holy Spirit is our down payment, we're waiting for the consummation.

Let me show you the consolation of Israel;

Is. 25:8 - 9 *He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. 9 And it will be*

said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation."

*Is. 35:1 - 4 The wilderness and the desert will be glad,
And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom;
Like the crocus*

*2It will blossom profusely
And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
The majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They will see the glory of the LORD,
The majesty of our God.*

3Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.

*4Say to those with anxious heart,
"Take courage, fear not.
Behold, your God will come with vengeance;
The recompense of God will come,
But He will save you."*

Simeon was one of these. Waiting. Righteous. Devout. With the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit had told him, your eyes will see Him. Before you leave this world, your eyes will behold the consolation of Israel. Messiah.

26And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, 28then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

*29"Now Lord, You are releasing Your slave to depart in peace,
According to Your word;*

30For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

*32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,
And the glory of Your people Israel.”*

This is a song. And Simeon quotes the prophet Isaiah. Listen to Isaiah 49:5 - 6 *And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,*

To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him

*(For I am honored in the sight of the LORD,
And My God is My strength),*

*6 He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;*

*I will also make You a light of the nations
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

How remarkable to think what it must have been like for Mary, hearing all of these things. How do you process it all. And Joseph. He has to be thinking what have I gotten myself in for. That's kind of what Luke says next;

33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.

D'ya think! This little baby is the consolation of Israel. The Glory of Israel. The Salvation of Israel, and that salvation will reach to the ends of the earth.

This tiny baby is not only the salvation of Israel, the consolation of Israel, He is also the destruction of Israel. Consolation. Decimation.

How? How?! How can one child be both things. Listen carefully to the prophecy of this ancient saint who has the baby Jesus in his arms. It's quite amazing.

I know, it's new years eve and I'm supposed to be giving you 20 minutes of feel good. Not the deep things. Sorry. Listen for a few more minutes. The depths of truth here are phenomenal.

34And 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— 35and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Some scholars think Mary wrote these things down, or had them written, so that the church would have them. Who else would know? Where else would this come from. Joseph plays a supporting role. He keeps the family safe, and covered. We learn he was a construction worker. A carpenter. A builder. In Nazareth, but he's gone when Jesus begins His ministry.

A blessing, then this prophecy.

"Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—

The words here are full of depth and finality. I want to look at the word fall. *this Child is appointed for the fall*

ptosis - an utter fall. Finality. Crash. Totaled. Irreparable.

The fall, used 2 times. Here and in Mt. 7:27. Means to crash. To **collapse**. Humpty Dumpty had a great **fall** What? Humpty Dumpty isn't in the bible?? I'll have to check that out.

It's only used 2 times in this form, although the root form is all over the new testament and I want to look at one of those uses.

Listen to Matthew 7:26 - 27 *"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27"The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell-- and great was its **fall**."*

Utter fall. The tidal wave slams against it and it collapses. Same word.

This Child is appointed for the fall . . of many utter fall.

What does Jesus say over and over in His ministry? Blessed is he who does not stumble, over me.

I was meditating on these things, and I got about half way through this study I'm giving this morning, and stalled. Nothing. No more ideas. Then, tuesday morning, I was listening to John Piper giving a seminar on Romans chapter 9. One of the most difficult chapters in all the Bible, and I thought, that's IT. Same word. Same idea.

Listen carefully, and give your full attention because Romans 9 is a tough nut. I'm not about to approach it, except to illustrate what we're talking about this morning. Not sure if I'll ever be up to trying to actually teach that chapter.

Paul is going to say the same thing Simeon has just said, except, this is ground zero for Paul, and he approaches it with the utmost sensitivity.

Note also that Paul is saying these things 60 years on the other side of this prophecy . . and it's already happened.

Ro. 9:1 - 3 I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

Paul's method is to broach this subject with the utmost sympathy and sensitivity. He says, I wish I could trade places with you. I wish it were me, and not you. Such is my love for my brethren.

I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, accursed. separated from Christ. That was the condition of Israel and Paul says I wish I could trade places with you. So you wouldn't be accursed.

Seperated from Christ.

Now listen to the legacy of the provinance of the accursed . . .

4who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

This is a wake up call for christians in the 21st century that base their safety on all the history and provenance of God on the legacy of their forbears. Read through that list again. All of that was Israels, and they were accursed. Seperated from Christ!

And here's our word; vs. *6But it is not as though the word of God has failed.* Same root word as Simeon's use of the word fall. Israel fell. Just like the prophecy said. It took less than 60 years. Total collapse. And within 10 or 12 more years, Rome will come down and do the final burial. Gone. Vanished. Scattered like the sticks of an old desert cabin that a whirlwind comes along one day and picks every board up and scatters them all over the desert.

When Paul says, *6But it is not as though the word of God has failed.* the antecedent is Israel which DID fail.

OK, back to Simeon; again: *“Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall **and rise** of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—*

Looking back with 20-20 hindsight. Most fell, but some rise.

And the word here, is the word for resurrection. Anastasis always; resurrection, save here. anastasis: a standing up, i.e. a resurrection, a raising up, rising Do you know anyone named Anastasia? Like a beautiful flower that springs from a dead seed in the earth.

There's no easy transitions here. Jesus is a brick wall. You either stumble over Him and collapse in a heap, or you smash into Him and He

raises you up again, in newness of life. Nobody gets to the end of this deal, standing, on their own! That's Jesus. The little helpless babe in Simeon's arms. Phenomenal words!

and rise of many in Israel We're in there. You can read Romans 11 and learn how we are grafted in. We're branches grafted onto this tree called Israel, that produced the Messiah, then stumbled and fell, and was set aside. Temporarily. God isn't finished with them. But we are part of this prophecy. We're included in this "many in Israel"!

Then Simeon says . . . *Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed*— and for a sign. Miracle. An authenticating miracle.

Jesus did thousands of signs. Miracle after miracle after miracle. And Israel was blind and deaf. No recognition. And then the final miracle. They murdered Him. He rose from the dead. He rose up from the dead.

No surprise that Israel who was blind and deaf to the miracles when He was alive, are just as blind and deaf to someone coming out of the grave.

Go to Israel today and ask those folks. What about Jesus??! And they'll tell you, our elders, who had first hand knowledge and witnessed Him, rejected Him. They were there! That's all the evidence we need. They rejected Him.

The word *opposed* is argued against. It has a sense of belligerence. Not a quiet thoughtful argument. They stand opposed to the sign of the resurrection. They don't believe it. They're blind. Deaf.

And then Simeon says some final words to Mary; *35and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.*”

You think Mary gets a pass? Because she's Mary??

No. Mary's heart will be broken. That's her son up on that cross. Pierced with nails through His hands and His feet, for her sins.

She has to hit that same brick wall we all do, and be resurrected, raised up in newness of life.

Mary's heart gets broken, so our hearts may rejoice. That's the final thought here.

Another prophet, the writer of Hebrews says something similar.

Hebrews 4:12 - 13. We'll finish with this. *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*

How could this little helpless baby in Simeon's arms be all these things? Because His mother is Mary, and His father is God. That's how.

He is the living word. He is that sword that opens every soul and reveals the thoughts and intents of every heart. We either stumble over Him and are decimated, or He resurrects us from that fall, and re-makes us, gives us new life. No one goes away untouched though.