

Session 5

January 2, 2022

THE LIGHT AND GLORY OF GOD

Luke 2:25-35

The role of *prophet* in the Bible is one of speaking for God. In practice, two aspects are evident. In some cases—particularly in the Old Testament—prophets like Daniel and Isaiah *foretold* events that God had revealed and would bring about in the future. But in other cases, prophets acted more directly, acting as mouthpieces of God, sharing His truth by correction or instruction. I have always said that John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets, fulfilling the prophetic role of Elijah (see Mal. 4:4ff). But thirty years earlier, two other prophets appeared (Simeon and Anna) marking the transition from Old Testament prophet to New. In this week's lesson, we see the story of Simeon. Three key words stand out.

Simeon (vv. 25-27). We begin with a description. Simeon was in the Holy City. *Righteous* speaks of his character. *Devout* speaks of his practice. The old word means *scrupulous, careful, and disciplined* in spiritual things. He was obviously well-known, wise, and respected. He was educated in things of the past but looking to the future; anxiously awaiting “Israel’s consolation.” This word shares the same root with *paraclete*, the Comforter Jesus promised in John 14:16. Here, it has overtones of deliverance, guidance, and peace. There is no doubt that Simeon is a prophet of God, for “the Holy Spirit was on him” (v. 25). Notice the Spirit is mentioned three times in these three verses. The Spirit was not only *present* with him, but *revealed* truth to him, and *guided* him to his encounter with the Lord. For reflection: *What truths can we glean about the Holy Spirit’s role in the Old Testament? The New? Is there a difference?*

Savior (vv. 27-32). God’s promise to Simeon was finally being fulfilled (v. 26). The encounter occurred when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple to fulfill their religious obligations (v. 27). Leviticus 12:6-8 required mothers to offer a simple sacrifice after giving birth, and Exodus 13:2 required dedication of the firstborn to God. Simeon’s actions are both tender and profound. Without human explanation, the Holy Spirit prompted Simeon to approach His parents and take baby Jesus gently in his arms. While he rocked the infant in his arms, his eyes looked again to heaven and acknowledged the fulfillment of God’s personal promise to him as well as His sovereign plan for the ages. Notice the prayer is not about Simeon’s *fulfillment*, but all about God’s *faithfulness*. Six times the words “You” or “Your” used. The movement of His prayer is significant as well: from personal (vv. 29-30) to all people (v. 31) to His people (v. 32). For reflection: *The theme of these verses is salvation. What do you think Simeon meant when He called Jesus “Your salvation?”*

Sign (vv. 33-35). While Mary and Joseph marveled at the glory of salvation prophesied through their son, Simeon continued with a harsh reality. First, Christ’s advent would cause a turning point in history. For some, He would indeed be the consolation of Israel so longed for. But for others, He would be their downfall (v. 34). In addition, He would be a sign from God (as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14); yet as such would be rejected! (v. 34; see Is. 8:14; Is. 53:3; John 1:11). While His passion and death some thirty years later would break Mary’s heart (v. 35), it would be a necessary thing; for how one responds to Christ’s confrontation with sin and the grave ultimately indicates the true intentions of his heart. For reflection: *How did Christ become*

responsible for the rise and fall of many in His day? Does that principle still apply today? In what ways?