

Christ: The Fall and Rise of Many

Luke 2:21-38

1. Introduction.

- a. Luke writes as a historian.
- b. He wants to back up his history with credible testimony.
 - i. According to Jewish Law, facts must be confirmed on the basis of two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15).
 - ii. Simeon and Anna are functioning as two eye-witness testimonies that Jesus is the Christ.
- c. The function of the passage within Luke's narrative is to give credible testimony to the person of Jesus.
 - i. Luke want us to understand Jesus is the Christ.
 - ii. He wants us to understand Jesus is also Savior.
 - iii. The Gospels are designed to provoke the question: Who is Jesus?
- d. Structure.
 - i. Context (21-24).
 - ii. Testimony of Simeon (25-35).
 - iii. Testimony of Anna (36-38).

2. Context (21-24).

- a. The point of the section is to show that Christ came under Mosaic Law (c.f., Gal. 4:4-5).
- b. If Christ was to function as a true substitute for sin, He also needed to be a perfect substitute for keeping the Law.

3. Simeon (25-35).

- a. Mary and Joseph travel to the Temple to perform the Law of purification (Lev. 12:2-8) and are intercepted by Simeon.
 - i. Simeon is described as righteous. He's waiting for the consolation of Israel (c.f., Isa. 40 – Messianic prophecy speaking of Israel's comfort).
 - ii. Simeon is a simple man of faith. He has little importance in terms of Jewish life.

- b. The Spirit of God was upon Simeon.
 - i. We don't know what this means other than it's a typical Old Testament description of the Spirit's work.
 - ii. The Spirit didn't yet indwell people, but He came "upon" people for certain tasks.
 - iii. In some way the Spirit indicates to him that he won't see death until he sees the Lord's Christ.
 - 1. The Spirit leads him into the Temple in an act of providence – this was a divine appointment.
 - 2. He sees Jesus, recognizes Him as the true Messiah, and praises God.
 - iv. The point of Simeon's response to show that the consolation of Israel was upon them. The Messiah had come.

- c. Simeon's praise (28-32).
 - i. Christ would function as a revelation to Gentiles who sit in darkness.
 - 1. The Gentiles previously had no knowledge of the true God, nor any knowledge they needed salvation, yet the Messiah would become this very light.
 - 2. Verse 32 is prophetic fulfillment of Isa. 60.
 - a. The Messiah would be God's glory, and He would come up out of Israel.

- b. This is a global salvation—Jesus would be the Messiah for both Jew and Gentile alike.
 - ii. This becomes good news to Gentiles. They now have a hope of salvation.
- d. Mary and Joseph wonder at Simeon’s words (33).
 - i. It’s clear they don’t yet know the fullness of Jesus’ role.
 - ii. The same term for “wonder” is used in 2:18 to speak of wonderment over the shepherds’ message.
 - iii. Mary and Joseph keep receiving news of Jesus’ role from seeming random people. They know Jesus is special, but they’re learning more of what He is to be through these providential appointments (e.g., shepherds, Simeon, etc.).
- e. Simeon’s prophecy (34-35).
 - i. Simeon gives the first negative news in the Gospel.
 - ii. He prophesies the Messiah would be a sign of opposition (34).
 - 1. Simply put, people would recognize him to be the Messiah by the very opposition He garners.
 - 2. His ministry would be marked by hardship.
 - 3. He would be the “fall and rise of many in Israel.”
 - a. Christ would split Israel.
 - b. He would be the source of salvation for many, but also the source of stumbling for many (c.f., 1Pet. 2:4 – Christ would be a rock of offense to many Israelites).
 - 4. This is instructive for what every Christian should experience when they preach Christ. People should either rise or fall at your message, but one thing they can’t be, if you’re preaching rightly, is neutral. No one should just shrug at your words. They should respond in joy and thanksgiving, or opposition.
 - 5. People become offended when you preach Christ as Lord.

6. The Gospel is designed to confront. People will oppose it because it opposes them.
 - a. Jesus must be preached *as Lord*.
 - b. He must be preached as Master. We are calling people to slavery. We are calling them out of enslavement to sin, and enslavement to Christ.
 - iii. This would cause great hardship for Mary (35). No mother would want to see their son be the source of national opposition. Yet this was His predetermined ministry.
 - iv. At the preaching of Christ all hearts are revealed.
 1. When Christ is rightly presented, people will accept Him or reject Him.
 2. This is what Christ does—He brings division. Christians have to accept this when they call Him Lord. If they faithfully walk in His steps, their life will also be a source of opposition.
 - v. All people are enslaved to something. It's either sin or Christ, but one thing they can never be is Lord.
4. Anna (36-38).
- a. Anna is a model of true discipleship.
 - b. At the hearing of Jesus as the true Christ, she responds in two ways:
 - i. Thanksgiving to God.
 - ii. Continual speaking of Jesus.
5. Conclusion.
- a. Many will reject Christ. He will be their fall.
 - b. Yet many will receive Him. He will be their rise.
 - c. All of us need a Savior.

- i. God has been faithful.
- ii. A Savior has come. Our job is to recognize Him for Who He is—Lord.

Small Group Question

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What is the role of Simeon and Anna in the Gospel narrative?
3. How should we preach Christ? What are the implications for faithful preaching of Christ?
4. Are there ways in which your speaking of Christ falls short?
5. Who are you praying for so that you might speak the Gospel? When is the right time to speak with them?