

In the Shadows

Simeon

Luke 2:21-35

December 17, 2023

HDBC

This is number three in a four-part series called ***In the Shadows***. It's a look at some of the lesser-known characters in the story of the birth of Jesus. They were not headliners like Mary and Joseph. They were not even second-tier like the shepherds and the wisemen. They were out on the fringes, in the shadows. Yet they played important roles. **Everyone can't be the star of the show.**

Nancy Scarbrough sent me a video a few weeks ago that I just had to share with you guys. You'll have to listen carefully. Thankfully, the words are added so you can read them as well. It's a video of a little guy who had received his part in the nativity program. Check this out. **Show Video**

Don't you just love that little guy. He was so excited about being a door opener. Man, I wish we could all be just as excited about our roles even when we are in the shadows. This morning we'll consider another one of those characters.

His name was Simeon. Luke introduces him soon after the birth of Jesus. He makes one appearance in the Bible but is immortalized because of his place in the Christmas story. We learn five things about him in Luke 2:21-35.

1. **He witnessed a common ceremony** (21-24)

There were three things Mary and Joseph would need to do after the birth of Jesus, and all would take place in the temple area.

Circumcision. It was the covenant sign between the people and God. It was a recognition that they belonged to God and were in a relationship with Him. This was done on the eighth day after his birth, as the law prescribed. It is worth noting the number of times the law is mentioned in this short section.

According to the law of Moses (22)

As it is written in the law of the Lord (23)

According to what was said in the law of the Lord (24)

To carry out for Him the custom of the Law (27)

He was Jewish and thus was subject to the law. His parents fulfilled each thing prescribed, starting with his circumcision. **I want to say this to those who are ambiguous about the current wave of antisemitism that is sweeping our world. If you are antisemitic, you are anti-Jesus. Jesus was a Jew.**

Naming. The second thing was the official declaration of the child's name. They named him Jesus. It means **God Saves**.

Offering. This was the third part of the ceremony. The law declared that every firstborn male belonged to God. Clearly God was not asking for a human sacrifice. The offering presented was a redemption offering for their son. It was offered in his place. Normally a lamb, but if you were poor a couple of pigeons or doves would suffice. Simeon was a witness to these things. Notice a second thing.

2. **He anticipated the coming Messiah (25-26)**

Looking for the consolation of Israel was simply a Hebrew way of saying he was looking for the coming of the Messiah. He lived with an expectation that the Messiah would come soon. And rightfully so. The Lord had revealed to him that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. WOW! What a promise. So, day after day, Simeon came to the temple, praying, waiting, watching, anticipating.

Expectation is a powerful thing. It can be either good or not-so-good. Anyone remember the story of **Alice Pike? She was arrested for trying to make a purchase at Walmart with a one-million-dollar bill. Of course, the U. S. Treasury does not make a one-million-dollar bill. What was she thinking?**

She had \$1,675 worth of merchandise and gave the checker this fake million-dollar bill. Now, this woman had a certain expectation of what was going to happen. I suppose she expected to get change.

Math is not my strong suit, but by my calculation, that's a lot of change. Was Alice really expecting that the cashier would hand over \$998,325.00? I can hear it now. We need 10's and 20's at register 5.

Some expectations are unrealistic, and some are just foolish.

Before the birth of Jesus, there were those who had expectations. The nation of Israel had for generations expected and anticipated the coming of the Messiah. They were looking for a deliverer, a savior, a king. For most, their expectations were misplaced. They wanted a political, financial, national savior. They wanted someone who save them from the tyranny of living under another's power. They wanted to be free and independent. It was legitimate but shortsighted.

However, there were some who had the right expectations. They understood the real significance of the coming Messiah. Simeon was such a man.

3. He recognized Jesus as Savior (27-30)

When he left his house for the temple that day, I wonder if he had any idea that it would be the day when his expectation became reality. God had revealed that he would see the Messiah before death, but we have no reason to think God had told him the specific day.

He took baby Jesus into his arms as he probably had done many times before, wondering if the child was the one who had been promised. Time and time again in the past the Lord had said no. Day after day, waiting and wondering. Then on this day, as he looked into the eyes of Jesus, **God must have whispered *Simeon, meet my Son***. His heart rate must have rapidly increased as he realized the gravity of that revelation.

The God who had promised salvation to Israel was the God who was now acting. The God who had promised this special blessing for Simeon was the God who was now keeping His promise.

God had entered humanity in the form of a baby. And that's what Christmas is all about. Take away all of the warm fuzzies, all of the presents, all of the moments when families and friends come together, and the true significance of Christmas doesn't change. Here it is in a nutshell: It is God taking on human flesh to bring deliverance to those who would put their faith in Him. Christmas is about God coming to save you and me. Simeon understood this and must surely have savored that moment.

4. He announced the universal offer of salvation (31-32)

Simeon understood what most Jews did not.

Salvation would not only be offered to Jews, but to Gentiles. 700 years before the time of Simeon, the prophet Isaiah heard God speaking about the coming Messiah: Isaiah 49:6.

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.

Jesus did not simply come for the Jews. He came for all people. The expectation was the people within Israel and outside Israel would see the light of revelation. And that has happened. People have been saved from all over the globe: Gentile as well as Jew.

What does this tell us about Christmas? It is a time for salvation to be presented to all people. Probably no other time of the year better offers us an opportunity to share Jesus.

Through Christmas, the light of revelation makes its way even to those who are not saved. Simeon expected the light of God's love to be shown to unbelievers. Shouldn't we have the same expectation at Christmas? Shouldn't we have the desire to see this happen? Look for opportunities to share the Gospel with family, friends, co-workers, and others this season.

5. He shared a prophetic word with Mary (33-35)

After speaking about Jesus, he turned his attention specifically to Mary. He had a prophetic word for her. These were words she would remember and revisit at different times in her life.

He will determine the spiritual destiny of all.

He would cause some to fall, those who reject Him.

He would cause others to rise, those who trusted Him.

He would be the key to a person's eternal destiny.

What a person did with Jesus would determine his eternal future.

What will you do with Jesus? You must decide how to respond to Him.

He would be opposed by many.

Jesus would not be loved by all. Some would resist Him.

Others would oppose Him. Ultimately, they would kill Him. He wanted Mary to understand that the road ahead would not be easy for Jesus. He would be a polarizing figure in Israel and ultimately in the world. He was and He is.

This one who was born in Bethlehem's stable would cause people to choose for or against Him. His birth, life, death and resurrection would demand a decision. At Christmas, there is an expectation of decision. **The shepherds. The wise men. King Herod. They all made decisions for or against.**

You (Mary) will experience deep pain.

As she would witness the opposition to her Son, her mother's heart would be broken. She would be a witness to the pain and suffering He would endure, and she would feel some of it simply by watching and knowing she could do nothing to stop it.

No one can know when a baby is born, just what impact he or she will make on the world.

The year was 1809. The international scene was frightful. Napoleon was sweeping through Austria; blood was flowing freely. The world hardly noticed the birth of a baby boy in a rugged log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky.

Most people believed the destiny of the world was being shaped on an Austrian battlefield. But history was actually being shaped more by the obscure birth of Abraham Lincoln, than on the battlefield of Napoleon.

2000 years ago, in Israel, the big news was the Roman census. But a young Jewish woman cradled the biggest news of all: the birth of the one who would change the world.