



# First Baptist Church Selmer

THE QUESTIONS OF CHRISTMAS • WHO IS JESUS? • LUKE 2:22-38 • 12/7/2025

## MAIN POINT

We should recognize and receive the salvation God offers in Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Think about something you waited a long time to do, such as leave home, get married, have a baby, or get your dream job. What was your greatest expectation for that event?**

**Did the event live up to your expectations?**

Sometimes events in life greatly exceed our expectations, and other times they fail to live up to the hype. Simeon and Anna had lived with anticipation of God's promised Messiah. Jesus, whose name means "Jehovah is Salvation" (Matt. 1:21), was the One through whom salvation would be made available to all people. Recognizing Jesus as the Promised Messiah, Simeon offered praise to God. Following Simeon's example, we should recognize and receive the salvation God offers in Jesus, and make praise to God for His salvation a prominent element of our lives.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 2:22-26.

22 *"And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord* 23 *(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord')* 24 *and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.'* 25 *Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ."* (ESV)

**Why did Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to Jerusalem?**

**How would you describe Simeon, based on these verses?**

**What was Simeon waiting for? What do you think *"the consolation of Israel"* means?**

The time of *"purification"* was a Levitical requirement for all young boys within weeks of the child's circumcision (Lev. 12:2-8). This time was especially significant for the firstborn male of the family, who *"opens the womb"* as that child *"shall be called holy to the Lord."* Joseph and Mary had traveled to Jerusalem in accordance with the Jewish law to dedicate their son, Jesus, and to offer a sacrifice to the Lord.

It is important to note that Mary and Joseph's sacrifice was not a typical sacrifice of an unblemished lamb, as their offering was that of *"a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."* Mary and Joseph likely were unable to financially afford a young lamb for sacrifice, but as God would have it, they had brought forth an even greater sacrifice, the Lamb that would be provided for the sins of all humanity.

Simeon was *"righteous"*; that is, he kept God's laws and the laws of his society, behaving well toward others. He was also *"devout,"* carefully fulfilling prescribed religious duties. The combination of the words *"righteous"* and *"devout"* stresses that he thoughtfully lived out his relationship with God. In addition, Simeon was *"waiting for the consolation of Israel."* This phrase was common among devout Jews as a daily prayer of anticipation of living to see the day of the coming Messiah. Israel looked hopefully to God's plan for the redemption of the nation. More specifically, it referred to the Messiah's role in that plan. Simeon lived with the anticipation that God's promised Deliverer could come at any time.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 2:27-32.

27 "And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, 28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

29 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;  
30 for my eyes have seen your salvation  
31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.'" (ESV)

**How did Simeon recognize Jesus?**

**What is the relationship between Simeon's righteousness and devotion and his recognition of the Savior?**

What we learn from Simeon is that an intimate, personal relationship with God enables us to respond to God's leading. Simeon was walking in a right relationship with God. He was anticipating the Messiah's coming, which indicates he took God's promises seriously. In addition, he *"came in the Spirit"* (v. 27). Finally, Simeon was worshiping God in the temple. God used Simeon's worship time to communicate Jesus' identity and mission.

**When we come to church to worship God, do we come with the anticipation that God will reveal Himself to us? Why or why not?**

**What does Simeon predict about the mission of Jesus?**

**What does it mean that Jesus is *"a light for revelation to the Gentiles"*?**

The word translated *"Gentiles"* in verse 32 is from the Greek word *"ethnos"*, meaning "nations." It's the same word Jesus used in the Great Commission, *"go and make disciples of all nations"* (Matt. 28:19). The coming of Jesus was more than a fulfillment of Israel's messianic hopes. Jesus is the light revealing and providing God's way of salvation for all people. Though Israel has always had a special place in God's plan, God's plan of redemption includes both Jews and Gentiles. (See Isa. 40:5; 42:6; 49:6; 52:9-10.).

**How might knowing that Jesus' plan of redemption is for all people challenge us to invest in missions this Christmas season?**

**How can you help others recognize the Savior this week?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 2:33-38.

33 "And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.'

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, 37 and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem." (ESV)

The coming of Jesus is not just a heart-warming, feel-good story. Jesus was destined to cause the fall and rise of many. This prophecy asserted two opposite reactions to Jesus. Division would result from His life and ministry as some would fall in judgment while others would rise in salvation. Some of Jesus' own people would reject Him. Jesus would cause division and opposition even as He went about bringing reconciliation, redemption, and salvation.

**How is Jesus still the cause of the rising and falling of people today? Why are some people threatened by Jesus?**

**How can anticipating opposition help you deal with it?**

The truth of Christ's coming, while welcomed by some, is threatening to others. We need to remember that the salvation we have received in Christ is completely undeserved. We did nothing to earn it--it is by grace alone, the result of the unmerited kindness of God being showered freely on us. There may have even been a time in our lives when we openly opposed the gospel. Knowing that we are going to face opposition and that we, too, once opposed the gospel, will help us be prepared to face our opponents with grace and point them to Christ even in the face of their opposition.

**How does Luke describe Anna? How was she anticipating the Messiah?**

**Why do you think Luke included Anna in this account of Jesus' purification at the temple?**

Ancient Israel and Rome were male-dominated cultures, and yet, Luke included this episode of a female prophet, Anna. Anna was one of twelve widows mentioned in Scripture and was praised for her devotion to prayer and service to the Lord. The inclusion of women in this story would not have impressed anyone in Luke's day. Luke, in

particular, spoke 43x about women in his gospel account. This further illustrates the truth of verses 29-32, that Jesus has come to be Savior to all people. In addition to race, Anna's inclusion reminds us that Jesus' sacrifice is for all, regardless of sex or social status. Anna shines as an example of what it means to worship the Lord and share that joy with others.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How has the discussion today challenged you to keep your focus on Jesus?**

**In what ways are you making praise to God for His salvation in Jesus a prominent part of your lifestyle? What could you do to make it more prominent?**

**Jesus is God's salvation made available for all people. What is our church doing to help spread the news around the world? How can you personally join that mission as well?**

## PRAYER

Close in prayer, praising God for the opportunity of salvation for all people, initiated by Jesus' birth. Ask God to help us become more aware of opportunities to share His message of salvation with our world.

## COMMENTARY

| LUKE 2:22-38

2:22-24. The *"time for their purification"* lasted another 33 days after the child's circumcision (Lev 12:2-8). *"To present Him to the Lord"* was what was done with *"every male who first opens the womb"* in Israel (Ex 13:2,12).

2:25. Among the many people in Jerusalem at the time, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to an exceptional, extraordinary man. Simeon was *"righteous"*; that is, he kept God's laws and the laws of his society, behaving well toward others. He was also *"devout,"* carefully fulfilling prescribed religious duties. Simeon was pious in the deepest and best sense of the word. The combination of the words *"righteous"* and *"devout"* stresses that he was conscientious in living out his relationship with God. In addition, Simeon was *"waiting for*

*the consolation of Israel.*” This referred to the hope Israel had in regard to God’s plan for the nation. More specifically, it referred to the Messiah’s role in that plan. Simeon lived with the anticipation that God’s promised Deliverer could come at any time.

Significantly, the Holy Spirit was on Simeon continuously. This marked him as someone special and qualified him as a credible witness concerning Jesus’ messiahship. Simeon represented genuine, godly piety among God’s people—the highest quality of Old Testament faith.

2:26. In some manner, the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would live to see the Lord’s Messiah. God honored Simeon’s fervent anticipation of seeing with his own eyes the long-awaited Deliverer. Some interpreters view the promise that Simeon *“would not die before”* the fulfillment of his hope as evidence that he was elderly, but he may or may not have been old. Whatever Simeon’s age, he held fast to God’s promise to see God’s Anointed One. Simeon fervently believed Israel’s covenant God would make good on that promise. God would send His Deliverer.

2:27. The Spirit prompted Simeon to enter the temple complex. For the third time in three verses, Luke stressed the Holy Spirit’s activity in this incident in Jesus’ life. Behind the scenes, God was orchestrating His unfolding redemptive purpose. The word *“temple”* probably referred to the court of the women, an outer court of the temple beyond which women could not go. Jesus’ parents brought Him there to fulfill the law’s requirements. As was customary under the law, they consecrated their Son to God (see Ex. 13:2,12,15; Num. 3:13; 18:15-16; Deut. 21:15-17).

2:28. First, Joseph and Mary were obviously poor, yet Simeon recognized the baby they held as the Messiah. Second, they allowed a stranger to hold their child. As Simeon held the infant Jesus, he praised God. Literally, he *“blessed God.”* Our word *“eulogy”* comes from the Greek word that is translated by the ESV as *“blessed.”* Customarily, the Jews’ prayers of thanksgiving began with praising God and acknowledging His glory. As Simeon held Jesus, he prayed. His prayer is in the form of a beautiful hymn comparable to the finest Old Testament psalms.

2:29. Simeon acknowledged God as his Master. The words *“letting your servant depart in peace”* are a way of saying *“let me die”* (see Gen. 15:15). Nevertheless, this should not be seen so much as expressing a desire to die than as an affirmation that God had kept His promise to Simeon. *“Now”* emphasizes that Simeon was marking the precise point in time when God had done what He had promised to do. One senses that once Simeon saw Jesus, held the baby in his arms, praised Him, and knew that Jesus was the Savior of the

world, Simeon's life was fulfilled. Simeon has been described as a watchman who could leave his assigned post because that for which he had been watching had come.

2:30. Simeon understood that God's salvation was not a goal to be achieved by great effort. His salvation was a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. As the man of faith looked at Jesus, he knew that his eyes beheld the salvation God had provided. To see Jesus was/is to see salvation.

2:31. God provided this salvation for all people, not just for the Jews. The humble birth of Jesus illustrates clearly that He came to provide salvation for any who would receive Him. All the people of the world could relate to a baby born in meager surroundings, but not all of them could have related to one born in wealth. Barriers such as class and race collapse in a stable. All the wealthy and prestigious as well as all of the poor and forgotten people of the world, regardless of infirmities or handicaps, can gather at the stable and identify with the Christ child born there.

2:32. Simeon clarified the inclusiveness of the redemption God made available in Jesus. Jesus is as a *"light ... to the Gentiles"* (nations) and a *"glory"* to God's *"people Israel."* Jesus was the light who could dispel the spiritual and moral darkness of the Gentiles. Jesus was also the shining glory to Israel, fulfilling the revelation that had already been given to them. Certainly, one of the appropriate ways to observe Christmas is to praise God in prayer and song for the salvation He has so graciously provided for us in Jesus Christ.

2:33. After Joseph and Mary heard Simeon declare the praises of their Son, they *"were amazed."* It was a natural reaction to God's divine revelation. Simeon specified Jesus' mission to both Gentiles and Jews, details lacking in the messages Mary and Joseph had received earlier. An angel had visited each of them separately before Jesus' birth.

2:34-35. Then Simeon made a further pronouncement to Jesus' mother, Mary. Why just Mary? Perhaps Simeon had insight into Joseph's death (as it is believed) before Jesus would begin His public ministry. Regardless, Simeon's prophecy may have been troubling and startling to Mary. Her Son would be the source of national division, personal opposition, and her own pain. Jesus was destined to cause the fall and rise of many. This prophecy asserted two opposite reactions to Jesus. Division would result from His life and ministry as some would fall in judgment while others would rise in salvation. Simeon's prophetic message made it clear that Jesus' ministry would not be met with wholehearted acceptance from all of those He came to deliver. Some of Jesus' own people would reject Him. This is made clear at the start of the gospel story, not part of a surprise ending. Jesus

would cause division and opposition even as He went about bringing reconciliation, redemption, and salvation.

2:36-38. The immediate shift of focus from Simeon, a male who prophesied, to Anna, the prophetess, fits with Luke's emphasis on women. The other prophetesses mentioned in the NT are Philip's daughters (Ac 21:8-9). Anna had been married for seven years and a widow until she was 84. Besides being a prophetess, Anna's other ministry included devotion to prayer. Since Jerusalem was the Jewish capital, *"the redemption of Jerusalem"* means the redemption of all the people of Israel.