**THE FAITH OF SIMEON AND ANNA**

**Luke 2:21-40**

**Key Verses: 2:30-32**

**"For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have pre­pared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."**

**Study Questions:**

1. What was the meaning of circumcision to Abraham? to Jesus? (Ge 17:1-14) What is the spiritual meaning of circumcision for God's peo­ple today? (Ro 2:29) Why was Jesus, the Son of God, treated in such an ordinary way? (Heb 2:17) How does naming the baby "Je­sus" show Jesus' par­ents' faith?

2. What did they offer when they brought him to the temple after Mary's time of purification? Why? (See footnote references; Ex 23:15b) What does their offering reveal about their family? (2Co 8:9) How does Jesus make us rich?

3. What kind of man was Simeon? What kind of faith did he have? What was his hope? How did he come to have such a sure hope?

4. Read verses 29-32 (Isa 49:6). What does it mean that Jesus is salva­tion? A light to the Gentiles? Glory to Israel? Read verses 33-35. What does it mean that he will cause the falling and rising of many? (See Lk 20:17,18) That a sword will pierce Mary's soul? (Jn 19:25)

5. Who was Anna? How did she overcome her sorrowful situation? Why did she rejoice and thank God? What promise of God do you have in your heart? Why? What is your prayer topic?

**In today's passage, we learn how Jesus was circumcised and pre­sented in the temple. At the time of the presenting of the baby Jesus, two old per­sons, Simeon and Anna, appear. We learn from the two old per­sons exemplary gos­pel faith. We also learn that Jesus is salvation for all man­kind, a light for the Gentiles.**

**First, Jesus was circumcised (21-24).**

**Jesus is the Son of God. There­fore his circumcision ceremony shou­ld be extraordinary, more than the crown­ing ceremony of Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603), which required 2,000 trum­peters, army parades and dignitar­ies and royal parties. But there was nothing special about Jesus' circumci­sion. It was to become our friend and shep­herd. This was a divine glory. His parents, ac­cording to Jew­ish cus­tom, circum­cised him on the eighth day. Circumcision was the sign of being God's cove­nant people. When Abram was com­placent with Ishmael, a son from his concubine, the Lord ap­peared to him and said, "I am God Al­mighty; walk before me and be blameless" (Ge 17:1). It meant, "You should not live as an ordinary man. You should live as a chosen people and a man of covenant with God." Since then, Abram made a big leap of faith. He was no more Abram, a no­ble father with no son. He became Abraham, a father of all nations. In the New Testa­ment, cir­cum­cision is inter­preted as circumci­sion of the heart. Romans 2:29a says, "No, a man is a Jew if he is one in­wardly; and cir­cum­cision is circumci­sion of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the writ­ten code." In light of this, we must first circumcise our hearts be­fore pre­senting our­selves to God. At the time of circumcision, we must make a deci­sion of faith to be a father of all nations instead of an ordi­nary person.**

**Human beings are in conflict between becoming extraordinary or being ordinary people. One girl wants to be a medical doctor and then a medical missionary. But she does not want to miss any fun. She is a woman whose heart is not circumcised. God wants us to be circum­cised and be his chosen people. Abraham was cir­cum­cised as a sign of his change from an ordinary old man into a father of faith for all nations. This is not a matter of option, but it is a di­vine imperative.**

**After circumcision, his parents named him Jesus, the name the angel had told them (21). It wasn't easy for Joseph and Mary to name him "Jesus," because Jewish tradition demanded that they name him "Little Joseph," after his father. As we know, the name "Jesus" means "the Sav­ior of the world" (Mt 1:21). It was impossible for them to obey and name him Jesus. But they took the angel's message absolutely and named their son Jesus.**

**Second, Jesus became poor to make us rich (22-24).**

**Look at verse 22. "When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jeru­salem to present him to the Lord...." Exodus 23:15b says, "No one is to appear before me empty-handed." For the ceremony, Mary had to bring a lamb as a burnt offering. But she could not afford a lamb, so she brought a pair of pi­geons instead. It was called, "the offering of the poor." Jesus was born into a poor family. This reminds us of 2 Corinthians 8:9. It says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."**

**Before knowing Jesus personally, no one is rich. Money does not make a person rich. Rather, it makes him stingy and selfish. But when we have God in our hearts we become as rich as God. Before conversion, Andrew Carnegie was a de­mon in self­ishness. He made his employees work hard and gave only survival expenses, not proper salaries. He was a rich man. But in reality, he was a very poor man because he did not believe in God. After conver­sion, Carnegie paid proper salaries to his work­ers. He also gave away 99% of his income to the church and for social welfare. Still, he was the rich­est person in this country. We remember seven beauti­ful woman mis­sion­aries who first came to Evanston. They had no regular income. They could not cook for them­selves regu­larly, for they had no money. But they were always ready to serve Northwestern students. They served North­west­ern stu­dents through Bible study. They had nothing to treat students with. But miraculously, they could treat them prop­er­ly. They were poor, but they were very rich in God.**

**Behind these ceremonies there was a conviction of faith in the par­ents that their children were not their own, but were the children of God. They circumcised their children as a sign of dedicating their children to God. They taught their children the Law of God. In this incident, we also learn that Jesus became like our brother. Jesus was born of a woman. He was born under the Law and had to un­der­go circumcision and purification. This was a great humiliation to Jesus, who is the Son of God. But he took upon himself the impurity of his peo­ple, so as to save us from our sin and guilt. Hebrews 2:17a says, "For this reason he had to be made like his broth­ers in every way...."**

**Third, Simeon, a man of faith and hope (25-28).**

**To people's eyes, Si­meon was no more than an old man who sor­rowed over his fatality, thinking that he would die soon. As we know well, when the world is dark and evil, the most ominous character­istic of the world is that peo­ple do not believe in God. When people do not believe in God, they become fearful and restless. When people do not believe in God, they live according to their feelings and become very immoral and vio­lent. At that time, the world was dark and full of despair. But there was a man called Simeon. What kind of person was he? Look at verse 25. "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righ­teous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him." Simeon was a warrior of faith. At that time, ev­erybody was sorrowful. But Sime­on was not sorrowful, be­cause he had faith in God. What kind of faith did Sime­on have? Sim­eon had faith that God's promises were true. Simeon had faith that he would see the Savior of the world with his own eyes before his death. In that dark world, most people were nihilistic due to the law­less worldly situa­tion. They lived on a day-to-day basis; if they were well after a day's hard work they sighed deeply, saying, "Today was lucky." Yet they worried about to­morrow during the night. But Simeon was differ­ent. As Noah whole­heartedly built the ark, work­ing day and night, Simeon studied the Law of God with all his heart. Through Bible study, he heard the word of God. He found the promise of God that he would send the Savior of the world. In Jesus, Simeon found salvation for all man­kind; they would be saved from their sins through the Son.**

**Simeon reminds us of a Korean grandfather named Young Kim. Most people in his town, young and old, were distressed and sorrowful under the Japanese rule. No one knew what to do. But this grandfa­ther knew what he was doing. He was quiet and joyful all the time. On weekends he would come to the children's playground and hook the children's necks with his cane, several, one by one. Then he would tell them Bible stories in such an interesting way that many of them were moved to tears. During weekdays he taught his three sons the Bible, English and piano. After World War II, his children became inter­nation­al figures. Everyone thought he was a dummy who did not know how to organize his leisure time. But he was a man who had a person­al faith in God in his heart.**

**Nationally speaking, the tragic situ­ation of Israel in those times was simply appalling. Un­der the Ro­man rule they were hungry and angry. There was no hope in men's hearts. For the past 1,000 years, so many prophets and devout people had wanted to see the coming of the Mes­siah. This hope had sus­tained their faith. But all of them failed to see it and died. So the hope of waiting for the promised Messiah vanished away. Here we learn Simeon's hope. Verse 25b says, "He was waiting for the consolation of Israel...." Simeon had hope be­cause he had faith in God in his heart. He believed that the Messiah would come soon. In addition, Simeon had faith that he would not die before he saw the Messiah with his own eyes. In the midst of despair, he be­lieved God's promise that the Messiah would come and comfort and redeem his suffering people.**

**When Simeon believed in the promise of God in that dark gener­a­tion, something great happened in his life. The Holy Spirit came upon him and convinced him that he would not die before see­ing the Lord's Mes­­­siah. Look at verse 26. "It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spi­rit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Simeon was old. Be­cause of his absolute faith in God, God blessed his faith and gave him the conviction that he would not die. God also gave him the conviction that he would see the promised Messiah (Lord's Christ). May God give us the con­­viction that we would not die before seeing 10,000 Ameri­can Bible tea­ch­ers. Look at verses 27,28. "Moved by the Spirit, he went into the tem­­ple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God...." He had waited for the coming of the Messiah for a long time. Fi­nally, his long-awaited hope was realized.**

**Fourth, Jesus is salvation (29-31).**

**Look at verse 29. "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dis­miss your servant in peace." This verse is Simeon's testimony. Simeon was a faithful shep­herd of God's sheep all his lifetime. He could not do any­­thing for him­self. He could not even die because of God's flock under his care. Simeon had to keep watch over God's flock of sheep, suffering many long, weary nights. Now the promised Messi­ah had come to save his peo­­ple. Now Simeon is indeed happy to die. Look at verse 30. "For my eyes have seen your sal­vation." Simeon saw in the baby Jesus salva­tion for all mankind.**

**Fifth, Jesus is a light for the Gentiles (32).**

**This idea is derived from the prophecy of Isaiah (49:6). God chose Isra­el as his firstborn son, to raise them as a Bible teachers' na­tion and as a light for the Gentiles. God gave his people a glori­ous mis­sion. But they did not realize God's deep love for them. They did not obey God's com­mands. The chosen people Israel did not want to pro­claim the gospel to the Gentiles. Most of the Jews thought that the Gentiles were animals. But Simeon thought that the Gen­tiles were also precious chil­dren of God and Je­sus was a light for the Gentiles. God revealed to them that he want­ed to use his chosen people in or­der to save the Gentile people. Yet his people dis­obeyed. But Jesus obey­ed God's will for world salva­tion. Therefore, Jesus is glory to his people Israel (32b).**

**Sixth, Jesus is the cause (33-35).**

**Look at verse 34b. "This child is des­tined to cause the falling and ris­ing of many in Israel...." There are many kinds of people with different views of man and the world. But they are all wrong. Despite many ideas concerning human destiny, all men's desti­ny depends on how they see Jesus. Those who believe in him will be saved. Those who do not believe will be smash­ed into pieces before being led to eternal condemnation (Lk 20:17,18). Jesus is also a sign that evil men will speak against (34). Look at verse 35b. "And a sword will pierce your own soul too." Simeon foresaw the suffering of the baby Jesus' mother. The whole life of Jesus would cause pain to his mother; especially, his death on the cross would cause her pain like a sword piercing her soul (Jn 19:25). How costly it was to be the mother of Jesus! May God raise many little mothers of Jesus among young American women.**

**Seventh, Anna's prayer (36-40).**

**At that time, men had no proper re­spect for women. But Luke the his­torian gave proper respect and posi­tion to women. Among many wo­men there was Anna, a pro­phet­ess, a daughter of the tribe of Asher, a beloved wife to her hus­band. One day her husband died all of a sud­den. She had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a wid­ow until she was 84 (36,37). When she lost her husband, she could have spent her life as a sor­rowful widow. But to her, married life was the same, even though her young and handsome husband died. To her, the best married life was to make a decision of faith to live in the house of God among God's peo­ple, serving them as a mother of pray­er. Her pray­er topic was the re­demption of Jerusa­lem. Jerusalem refers to Is­ra­el. She gave her life as a woman of prayer. She prayed for the redemption of Jeru­sa­­lem. The moment she saw the baby Jesus, the Messiah, she thank­­ed God, for the prom­ise of the re­demption of Jerusalem had been fulfilled.**

**We should not despair. Like Sime­on and Anna, we must have faith in the promises of God. We also must have a clear prayer topic so that God can hear and answer our prayers.**