

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

## An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 2- Luke 2:21-40** 26- The Four Witnesses- Part 3

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April 19, 2009

### **Luke 2:21-40**

#### **The Old Era Has Passed Away**

Now over the last three weeks- I have been showing you how that Luke gives us four separate eye witnesses who back up the fantastic claims that Luke has made so far in this Story of Salvation. And we have already met the first eyewitness- the parents of Jesus- Joseph and Mary.

So now this morning we meet the second and third eyewitness- an old man named Simeon and an old woman named Anna. And if you believe, as I do, that **Ephesians 1:11** is true, and that God “**works all things after the counsel of His will,**” then there are no such things as accidents in the absolute sense of that word. So while there may well be some events that are not willed by any human (and in *that* sense they *are* accidents)- nevertheless- there are no events that are not willed in some sense by God- Who absolutely controls all things.

And that means that there is a Divine Meaning in all the events of life- if only we could see that Meaning, and if only we could believe it. But we usually *can't* see and we usually *won't* believe since now we see through a glass darkly. But sometimes, in unusual cases and with the illumination of the Holy Spirit and with the aid of God's Word- we are able to penetrate through events to see and believe and comprehend God's Meaning.

And there is such a time like that here in **Luke 1** and **2**. Why is it that Elizabeth and Zechariah (John the Baptist's parents) and Simeon and Anna are all *very old*? Why did God ordain that the parents of the greatest and last Old Testament prophet be aged and that the parents of the Messiah be young? And why are the two witnesses- Simeon and

Anna- in the last days of their natural lives when they finally see Jesus and testify about Him? And keep in mind that this question arises not just out of incidental curiosity- but because Luke himself seems to stress their age and makes it explicit in each case (**Luke 1:7; 2:29, 36f.**).

Now there are two clues that suggest a reason for why this is important. First, in all four cases these old people are pictured as being very devout and godly saints. In the case of Elizabeth and Zechariah, the good doctor stressed in **Luke 1:16** that both of them walked in all the commandments of the Law and were righteous before God. And here, in the case of Simeon and Anna, Luke stressed that they were devout temple-goers and cherished the hope of the OT prophets. In **Luke 2:25**- the writer says that Simeon is "**looking for the consolation of Israel**" and in **Luke 2:38**- Luke says that Anna is "**looking for the redemption of Jerusalem**".

Now keep in mind that most Jews of the first century were *not* looking for either the consolation of Israel nor the redemption of Jerusalem. Most Jews were looking for God to raise up a warrior who would gather the nation together and who would vanquish the Roman Army militarily, and then march triumphantly into Jerusalem and sit down on the throne of King David and rule the world with a rod of iron. And that action is what the Jew understood as being "Salvation".

The average Jew of the First Century never dreamed in a million years that God was going to do a new thing and was going to usher in a Messiah Who was not comely, a Deliverer Who was not violent, a sinless Rabbi Who would utterly fulfill the Law, a Savior Who was God Himself in human flesh, and Who would not rescue them from the brutality of the Roman Army- but who would forever rescue them from the tyranny of their own sin. A Redeemer Who was infinitely more concerned with them being holy than He was in them being happy, Who was infinitely more concerned with them being faithful than He was in them being financially blessed, Who was much more concerned with them being obedient to God than He was in them being physically healthy, and was not going to restore the glory of David's Israel- but was going to bring with Him another Kingdom that would far surpass David's Israel- which was not of this world.

But Simeon and Anna were not like most of their contemporaries of the first century. Luke tells us that Simeon was earnestly desiring that Israel be consoled by God, or in other words- that Israel repent of

her backsliding and return to serve the one true living God. Anna was passionate about Jerusalem once again being the "Habitation of Peace" that it was named after and that it be redeemed from her sin and her filth and her abominations.

And this is the cry of all true saints of God- even in our day. You see, genuine believers know that Jesus has promised us that we will suffer in this life- that we will be persecuted and hated of all men- and that trials and afflictions will be our portion on this earth and in this life. So since that is true- then it is not the *absence* of those things that makes life to be wonderful- because Jesus said that our life would *not* be spared those things- so life is not wonderful- life is not abundant because we do not suffer at all- but that when we *do* suffer- Jesus is our comfort, Jesus is our solace, Jesus is our refuge where we run and hide in Him until the storm passes by.

So because that is true- genuine Blood washed saints of God know that the most pressing matter about us is *not* our physical health, nor our financial prosperity, nor is it even in our safety and our success. But we who are saved know that the single most pressing matter in this life and on this earth is not whether people like us are always safe or in how much stuff we can accumulate- but what is ever in the hearts and minds of God's people is sin- that we hate our sin and that we weep over our sin and that we are broken over our sin and that we struggle so that we do not sin against our God and that we do a whole lot to minimize our sin and that when we do get weak and we sin- that our sin may be quickly confessed and that we quickly agree with God that our sin is wicked and evil and that it offends God and that our sin is our fault and not the fault of somebody else. That our sin is not the devil's fault or God's fault or because we have a chemical imbalance in our brains or because of what somebody else did to us- but genuine saints take personal *ownership* of the condition of our own hearts and that we take ownership of what we think and that we take ownership of what comes out of our own mouths. And true saints don't white wash our sins and we don't make excuses for our sins- but we acknowledge that we are guilty and we confess our sins as being sinful and we repent of our sin and we beg for the tender Mercy of God- that we do not deserve to come to our aide once again and we ask God to look at Jesus Who paid for all of our sins and for His great Name's sakes- we are forgiven!

Simeon and Anna remembered the words of Isaiah who said in **Isaiah 59:2:**

**But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.**

So Simeon and Anna were like this. And while the majority of Jews of the first century were being taught that the most important thing that Messiah was coming to do was to destroy the Roman Army- these two old saints held on to two concepts that were lost to most people - consolation and redemption.

In other words, both Simeon and Anna were model OT saints who kept the *Law* of Moses and looked with eagerness toward the hope of the *prophets*- and they did this under a pagan Government Who was not one bit sympathetic to their cause.

The second clue for why it's old people who welcome Jesus into the world comes from **Luke 16:16**, where Jesus says, **“The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached.”** Now it is interesting to note that Luke is the only Gospel writer that records this particular saying of Jesus, so we can see that this was significant for Luke. So up until John the Baptist's coming- the Word and the Rule of God had been proclaimed through the Law and the Prophets, but now with the arrival of Jesus the King and His forerunner John- the Word and Rule of God is proclaimed and encountered in a new way- the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

You see, Jesus *is* the Word, Jesus *is* the King- and the long awaited Kingdom has now arrived (at least partially). And for those who believe in Jesus- a tremendous shift occurs- because no longer do we live merely in the era of *Promise* with the Law and the Prophets awaiting the consolation of Israel- but now we live in the era of the *Fulfillment* of those Promises- when the Kingdom of God is preached as being both present and powerful- even though it is not yet consummated.

So with those two clues as my guide, I would suggest that Dr. Luke is illustrating two things by showing us these four aged OT saints. First, I think he wants us to see that one era or dispensation is drawing to a close- the era or dispensation of the Law and the Prophets. And Luke shows us this by depicting the best representatives of that era as

aged and at the point of death. They are passing away just like the dispensation of the Law and the Prophets is passing away. And like natural life- many times going from one era or dispensation to the other is painful and most people have a hard time adjusting. God's people had been under the Word and Rule of the Law and Prophets now for many, many centuries, and now it was all coming to a close. But the reason that it was coming to a close is because it was finished- and all that God wanted done through the Law and the Prophets was going to be done in and by and through Jesus Christ.

And so what is interesting is that the second thing that Luke wants to illustrate is that there is absolutely *no conflict* between the Law and the Prophets and the new era or the new dispensation that the Messiah is bringing with Him. And Luke shows us this by illustrating for us that the most devout people who lived their whole long lives under the old era of the Law and Prophets as being the most receptive to the new era of the Messiah.

Luke shows us that Elizabeth and Zechariah and Simeon and Anna do not become resentful or angry or bitter that the Messiah has come to bring an end to the Law and Prophets- and through what he writes here- we see that these old saints don't try to hang on to the past as though the Law and Prophets were meant to go forever- no, they don't even get upset that Jesus is going to extend His Mercy past the Jew and past the Nation of Israel and actually be the Light of the whole world- even to save the pagan Gentiles.

But these four old people- who had never known anything else but the Law and the Prophets- rejoice that they have seen with their eyes that the new dispensation has come through Jesus.

So Luke prepares us in this way for important issues to come: with Jesus comes a new dispensation and a new message among the Jewish people—the old dispensation of the Law and the Prophets is passing away, and behold the new era has come. And those who are the most devout among all the people of God see this and they rejoice over it and they see no problem at all in totally abandoning the Old Covenant to fully embrace the New.

Nevertheless it is vital that we understand that Jesus did not come to *abolish* the Law and the Prophets but to *complete* them, to *fulfill* everything they had promised by purchasing the eternal Redemption that the Law and the Prophets offered and by living the life

that they commanded and that up to the time of His Birth- no one had ever done.

Therefore, all the *true* saints of the Old Testament Faith will welcome Jesus with open arms because He fits perfectly as the Goal or the Climax of their Old Testament Faith because everything in the Old Testament points to Jesus. But as true as that is- it is also true that while true Old Testament saints will fully embrace Jesus as the final and completed Revelation of God to Man- the hypocrites will reject and persecute this same Jesus to try to not only discredit Him but to destroy Him.

Now Luke knew that both of these things were important for Theophilus to understand. And as a Roman official- Theophilus knew that the spreading religion of the Christians was causing disruption in every synagogue and to every part of the Roman Empire. Riots broke out and there were beatings and many disputes. Therefore, what could Theophilus conclude but that the Christians were just another religious cult which was distorting the ancient and respected Jewish religion which had the sanction and protection of the Roman government?

So Luke had to get across to Theophilus that the tumult caused by the Christian Message among the Jews in every city was *not* because it distorted or rejected the true Faith of the Old Covenant. On the contrary, Luke shows here that the best and most godly of the Jewish saints rejoiced at its coming. So by writing this- Luke proved to Theophilus that there were *other* reasons- which become clear as the Gospel progresses-as to why Jesus was rejected and His people persecuted by the Jews.

So Luke is very eager to dispel the notion from Theophilus' head that Christianity is disruptive to peace and order. And this may be part of the answer to a question that arises in **Luke 2:39**, where it says,

**When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.**

So the question that could now be asked is, *"Why does Luke omit the slaughter of the babies in Bethlehem by Herod and the flight to Egypt by Mary and Joseph and Jesus before returning to Nazareth? Why are those two huge events not in Luke's account?"* And that is a very good question and there are three possible answers.

1. *One* is that Luke never heard of those events. But I find that explanation hard to believe since Luke knows so much about all the events surrounding the birth of Jesus and seems to have gotten some of his information from having personal contact with Mary.
2. A *second* answer is that the point of the sentence in v. 39 is not that they went back to Galilee right away, but that they fulfilled all the requirements of the Law before leaving Jerusalem. Luke may or may not have known about these events, but they were beside the point.
3. And a *third* answer, which fits with what we have just seen about Luke's concern not to let Christianity be seen as violent or revolutionary, is that Luke knew about the slaughter and the flight to Egypt, but purposely omitted them because they might have created the *false* impression for Theophilus that this religion has been properly rejected by the authorities ever since the start and therefore should be resisted not followed.

Now there is one other theme in our text that fits in here with Luke's concern to present Christianity as a law-abiding religion which does not reject the Jewish faith. Four times in this passage Luke draws attention to how the parents of Jesus did everything according to the Old Testament Law. According to verse 23, they presented him "**as it is written in the law of the Lord.**" In verse 24, they offer a sacrifice "**according to what is said in the law of the Lord.**" In verse 27, "**when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law.**" And in verse 39, they leave Jerusalem only after "**they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord.**"

So this was a message for Theophilus- that this Child did not grow up in a hot bed of sectarianism or violent terrorism, but in a poor and deeply devout Jewish household where He was taught all things according to the Law of the Lord.

So Luke wants Theophilus and us to know that while it is true that the era of the Law and the Prophets is passing away- it is not true

that Jesus is in any way *opposing* the Law and the Prophets- but only that He *fulfills* them.

And by giving us insight into the personal character and godly integrity of Jesus' parents- Luke is providing credibility to the miraculous claims that he has made in Chapter 1 and so far in Chapter 2.

Now there is one other part of this passage that I should mention before we look at Simeon's prophecy. And I feel I would do Luke an injustice if I did not gather up his references to the Holy Spirit and say something about them.

Luke has referred to the Holy Spirit ten times so far (from the beginning of his Story of Salvation all the way to **Luke 2:40**). And that in itself shows how important the Spirit is for Luke. But *what* he says about the Spirit is even more significant. Here in our text- Luke writes in **Luke 2:25** that the Holy Ghost *was upon* Simeon. And in **Luke 2:26**- Luke writes that the Holy Ghost *reveals* that Simeon will not see death until he physically sees the Messiah. And then in **Luke 2:27**, Luke says that *the Spirit moves Simeon* to enter the temple at just the right moment to see Jesus. (Which incidentally is a beautiful illustration of how the Spirit Sovereignly works to fulfill what the Spirit promises.)

Now if that is all Luke said about the Spirit's work, I suppose we would conclude, as many have, that before Pentecost the Spirit was *upon* people, but afterwards he is *in* people. And that is a common view- and one which I personally held for many years- until I realized that nobody gets saved in either the Old or the New Testaments until the Holy Spirit Sovereignly abides within them first. I was wrong about that- and I beg your forgiveness for teaching something that was not true.

You see dear friends, unless the Holy Ghost comes to a lost individual and fills that individual or empowers that individual *before* he is saved, and Sovereignly gives him eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to believe- nobody on his own and in his own willpower or volition would ever voluntarily turn to the Lord. It is that barrier of both will and ability that makes up just what it means to be fallen and lost. And God, and God alone, shatters that barrier for His elect.

In other words- Sovereign Regeneration *precedes* Justification- or to put it in Alabama English- we were all taught that a person has to believe so that he can be born again. But that is not true because the



Bible clearly teaches that all people are fallen and spiritually dead, and, therefore, they are *unable* to believe on their own- so what has to actually happen is that we must be born again so that we may believe- or in other words- God has to Sovereignly regenerate an individual or give them second birth so that they may have both the will and the ability to hear and believe and repent and be saved, or else nobody would ever come to Christ for Salvation. That is the devastating effects that the fall had on mankind. In our natural and normal lost condition we neither want to be saved nor do we have the power to be saved.

And, of course, that makes lost Man unable and unwilling to be saved in his natural fallen condition which, of course, makes Salvation to be a Sovereign act of God, and it gives God all the Glory for Salvation and give no glory to Man, and it makes Grace to be magnificent!

So I no longer accept that the Old Testament saints only had the Spirit *upon* them while the New Testament saints had the Holy Spirit *within* them. In three places in chapter 1, Luke describes persons as being "*filled*" with the Holy Spirit- all before Jesus was even born. For example- In **Luke 1:15**, *John the Baptist* will be "filled" with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. In **Luke 1:41**, *Elizabeth* was "filled" with the Holy Ghost and exclaimed with a loud cry to Mary, "Blessed are you among women." And in **Luke 1:67**, *Zechariah* was "filled" with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.

Now the remarkable thing about this is that the very same Greek phrase that was used *before* Pentecost to describe an infilling or an empowerment of the Holy Spirit is used for what happened *at* Pentecost and often thereafter.

For example- in **The Acts 2:3&4**, Pentecost morning is described like this:

**3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.**

**4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.**

Then in **The Acts 4:8**, Peter is "filled" with the Holy Spirit and speaks to the rulers. And, of course, this fact shatters the Pentecostal myth that being "filled" or "baptized" with the Holy Ghost is something that happens one time *after* Salvation. The Bible clearly teaches that

the Apostle Peter was "filled" in **The Acts 2:3** and Peter was "filled" again in **The Acts 4:8**. So being "filled" with the Holy Spirit is not something that happens *subsequent* to Salvation- the Theology of the so-called "second blessing" is not true- whether it is making Jesus the Lord of your life or being baptized with the Holy Ghost- but being filled or baptized in the Holy Ghost is nothing more nor less than a sinful human being- being empowered or enabled by the Holy Spirit and that is something that is ongoing and it is something that begins *before* a person is saved and continues on all the way to his entry into Heaven.

In **The Acts 4:31**, again, the disciples again "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness." In **The Acts 9:17**, Ananias is sent to Paul that he may regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Then, finally in **The Acts 13:9**, Paul again is filled with the Holy Spirit to denounce the magician Elymas.

And Paul (using a slightly different Greek verb) says to all Christians in **Ephesians 5:18**:

**And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,**

... which is an amazing parallel to **Luke 1:15** where the angel says of John the Baptist, "... **he will drink no wine ... and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.**"

So since the very *same* phrase is used by the same author both *before* and *after* Pentecost- it would be unwarranted to say that radically different experiences are meant. What we *should* conclude from this is that what Christians experience as the fullness of the Spirit today was also experienced by people before Pentecost, too. Now just what *is* distinctively new in our experience of the Spirit under the New Covenant- I will save for another time. But in the meantime let's not oversimplify and assume that all the saints prior to Pentecost were somehow spiritually *inferior* because they could not enjoy the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

So now we turn briefly to Simeon's farewell to the world. So let's read **Luke 2:25-35**:

**25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking 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.**

**27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,**

**28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,**

**29 "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word;**

**30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,**

**31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,**

**32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel."**

**33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.**

**34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—**

**35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."**

Now with the shepherds- the angel had said, "**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom God is pleased.**" And now here- Simeon- a man of great faith in God's consolation, sees Jesus and is ready to die in peace. And his peace is not because he has a naïve notion that the Messiah will bring only joy and prosperity to His people. No, from what Luke wrote here- we see that Simeon knows full well that Jesus will be spoken against and that some will fall because of Him. Simeon's peace is in the assurance that God keeps His Word because here in verse 29 Simeon has seen the Messiah "**According to Your word**", and somehow beyond all the conflict that is coming upon the face of the earth- God's Salvation will prevail.

Now most of what Simeon says here about Jesus is an application to Him of prophecies from the prophet Isaiah- which was written many hundreds of years earlier. For example- **Isaiah 52:10** says,

**The LORD has bared His holy arm In the sight of all the nations, That all the ends of the earth may see The salvation of our God.**

And referring to that ancient prophecy- in **Luke 2:30&31** Simeon says,

**30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,**

**31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,**

What was only hinted at in the song of Zechariah—namely, that the beneficiaries of God's Salvation are not only Jews- but would also be the Gentiles- this hint from Zechariah now become quite clear in Simeon's Song.

Jesus is the Jewish Messiah- *Who* comes to bring Glory to Israel, but the Mercy shown to Israel over swells the banks of Israel and brings Revelation and ultimately Salvation to all the nations of the world.

And the prophet Isaiah described the mission of the Messiah like this from **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.**

So Isaiah implies that it would be a dishonor to God's Servant, Messiah, if He did not give him more to do than simply restore the Glory of an oppressed and sinful nation of Israel. That would be too small a thing- the Lord said through Isaiah.

So Simeon, following Isaiah, assigns two tasks to Jesus (this little baby!). As the *light* of the world Jesus brings:

1. Revelation to the Nations
2. Glory to Israel.

And that means of course that Jesus will reveal the one true living God and the one true way of Salvation to the Gentiles who, as Paul says in **Ephesians 4:18**, "**being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.**" In **Isaiah 42:6-12** God puts it like this:

- 6** “I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations,  
**7** To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.  
**8** “I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.  
**9** “Behold, the former things have come to pass, Now I declare new things; Before they spring forth I proclaim *them* to you.”  
**10** Sing to the LORD a new song, *Sing* His praise from the end of the earth! You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it. You islands, and those who dwell on them.  
**11** Let the wilderness and its cities lift up *their voices*, The settlements where Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud, Let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains.  
**12** Let them give glory to the LORD And declare His praise in the coastlands.

So the mission of Jesus to the nations is to open their eyes to Who is truly God and to bring back Glory to Him which has been given to all sorts of created things (**Romans 1:20–25; 15:9–12**).

So Jesus brings Glory to Israel. And just what is the Glory that the godly Israelites longed for? The prophet Zechariah pictured it like this in **Zechariah 1:17–21**:

- 17** Again, proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.’  
**18** Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, *there were* four horns.  
**19** So I said to the angel who was speaking with me, “What are these?” And he answered me, “These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.”  
**20** Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen.  
**21** I said, “What are these coming to do?” And he said, “These are the horns which have scattered Judah so that no man lifts up his head; but these *craftsmen* have come to terrify them, to throw down the horns of the nations who have lifted up *their* horns against the land of Judah in order to scatter it.”

So they are to be delivered from the oppression of all their enemies, and the Covenant Promises are to be fulfilled, so that they may all serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their life. But that did not happen at Jesus' first coming. Israel rejected their Messiah. In fact, God's Purpose was that by means of this very rejection- eternal Salvation might come to the Gentiles. Paul says in **Romans 11:11&12:**

**11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.**

**12 Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!**

So in rejecting their Messiah- Israel unwittingly unleashed a tidal wave of Grace throughout the entire world. But we should not think that God is done with Israel yet. Paul goes on to say in **Romans 11:25:**

**For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;**

Now the phrase "**the fullness of the Gentiles**" means that blindness in part is happened to the Jew until *the full number of Gentiles who have been chosen for Salvation has been completed*. And then Paul goes on to say in verses 26-29:

**26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."**

**27 "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."**

**28 From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of *God's* choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers;**

**29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.**

Now Paul does not mean that every individual Jew will be saved that ever lived. Jesus said the judgment for some Jews in His day would be worse than for Sodom and Gomorrah, and Paul said in **Romans**

**9:3** that his kinsmen were accursed or cut off from Christ. The phrase "All Israel" simply means the nation as a whole at some future time when Jesus banishes ungodliness from Jacob and forgives their sins—probably during the Great Tribulation.

And Israel will be saved just like anyone else and they will join in with the one people of God. And this will be the fulfillment of Simeon's prophesy that Jesus will be a light "for glory to thy people Israel."

### **Luke 2:34-35**

**34** And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—

**35** and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

Now the last part of Simeon's song in verses 34&35 has been implied in what we've said already. God's Plan is to bring the glorious Light of Salvation to the Gentiles *through* Israel's rejection. So here that rejection is predicted. Jesus will not be well received by everybody. For many- Jesus will be a sign to be scoffed at, spoken against, and rejected. And when men speak against Christ- they stumble and they fall.

So this, too, is an application of Isaiah's prophecy in **Isaiah 8:14; 28:16**, which both Peter (**1Peter 2:6–8**) and Paul adapted. Paul wrote in **Romans 9:32b&33** that Israel failed to attain righteousness because:

**32... they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,**

**33just as it is written, “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”**

So the way that God saw fit to bring Salvation to the Gentiles was to lay a Stone in Jerusalem that the vast majority of Israel would stumble over and Simeon knew this, and Luke tells us that he was singing about this to Joseph and Mary.

Now anytime you talk about this issue- it is very important to remember that there is a serious warning that Paul expresses about all this in **Romans 11:19–21**. He says to the Gentile Christians,

**19 You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”**

**20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;**

**21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.**

So when Simeon says that Christ is set for the rise and fall of many and for a slandered sign, *that thoughts of many hearts may be revealed*, we understand that what is being revealed is whether a person has a heart humble enough to trust Christ alone for Salvation or whether the person is haughty and must be brought low.

So is it possible to see any unity in the three parts of our study? I think it is. First, we saw that for Luke- the era or dispensation of the Law and the Prophets has grown old like Simeon and Anna and is passing away. Christ and the message of His Kingdom have come.

Nevertheless we see that Jesus does not come to *abolish* the Law- but to *fulfill* it with and by and through His Own sinless life. So there is continuity with the Old Covenant that cannot and should not ever be broken.

And we saw that the best OT Jewish saints who were the most devout in keeping the Old Covenant are also the ones who are the most receptive to the New Covenant.

Second, we saw that Luke depicts this new dispensation as marked by an amazing outpouring of the Holy Spirit in **The Book of the Acts**. But he also shows that this same Spirit was at work in a similar (though not identical) way under the First Covenant in Elizabeth and Zechariah and in Simeon. So again there is newness coming with Jesus- but also *continuity* between the New and the Old.

And finally, we saw in Simeon's Song that in this new dispensation of the Messiah- that Salvation would spill over the boundaries of an unbelieving Israel and reach out to all the nations of the world. But even in this- the Old is not abandoned because Simeon sings that the Messiah will bring Glory to the people Israel when He banishes ungodliness from Jacob. So again there is newness but also continuity with the Old.

So this is a fundamental Truth that what Simeon sings about here will affect the way we read and understand our Bibles- and that is- that



with Jesus comes a *new dispensation*, but the Old- when properly understood- is not against the New but is in perfect harmony with it.

Let's come and pray.

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 [www.covenantofpeace.net](http://www.covenantofpeace.net)

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.