

# Incarnation & Consolation: The Song of Simeon

Luke 2:25-35

## The Fifth Song

The Song of Simeon is probably the least known of the five songs or sayings that were given around Christ's birth (Elizabeth, Mary, Zechariah, Angels, Simeon). Yet in this Song we see Simeon's full-orbed understanding of the gospel even as he held the infant Jesus in his arms. We know nothing of Simeon other than his "righteous and devout" character as expressed in these prophetic words. In his song and story, we see three things:

**The Humble God** Many note the apparent poverty of Joseph and Mary who provided the cheapest sacrifice of two pigeons for Mary's purification (vv22, 24; cf. Lev. 12:8). Even more remarkable is that the sinless second person of the Trinity grew inside Mary's womb, travelled through the birth canal, and having no sin of his own, identified with and experienced the weakness of our fallen race: the Redeemer was redeemed (v23; Ex. 13:2, 11-16). Jesus did not just suffer on the cross for sins but bore the consequences of our fallen humanity in every way beginning at his birth. In this humble incarnation, Jesus did not despise those he came to serve but received their gifts and blessings (v28). Here, the greater is blessed by the lesser.

**The Consolation of Israel & Simeon** Luke tells us that Simeon was righteous and devout, and therefore was waiting for the consolation of Israel (v25). Modern evangelical Christians are prone to see this consolation exclusively in terms of slavery to sin (Lk. 1:77), but it also addresses the effects of that condition—tyranny and oppression. Israel was ruled by King Herod who was always violent and grasping all the time, but outdid himself at the birth of the true King (Matt. 2:8, 16-18). Simeon's faith caused him to see God's purposes at work even in these chaotic and counterintuitive circumstances. What winning team looks like this? In the baby lifted in his arms, Simeon saw salvation (vv28-30). This was done in the plain light of day, providing light to the Gentiles who had remained in darkness, and *glory* for Israel (vv.31-32). As a true Israelite, Simeon saw his nation in a priestly relationship to the other nations, and now that her King had come, her mission of reconciliation would be fulfilled. In this cosmic work, the baby who would save the world, Simeon found his own consolation and salvation.

**Rising & Falling of Many** As anyone would, Joseph and Mary marveled at the fate of their son (v33). Simeon's *blessing* included the upheaval that was coming to Israel (v34). The sign would be opposed, and even Mary's soul would be pierced, so that the thoughts of many would be revealed (v35).

The birth of Jesus foretold the salvation of world, the end of sin against God and one another. Obviously this process isn't complete, and so we should imitate the faith of Simeon, finding consolation in God's purposes and the unbelievable ways he accomplishes his work. Jesus has been plainly revealed as the savior of the world, and he calls us to believe it and find our consolation. The thoughts of our hearts will be revealed.

Jerry Owen—January 4,, 2009