

**Reading:** Luke 2v21-40

**Theme:** Meeting the Saviour and Worship.

We know the Christmas story so well and we know of the announcement of Jesus' birth, the angels and shepherds, of the wise men. Yet there are two others who said amazing things about the baby Jesus. Who would have seen Him a lot sooner than the wise men - who probably arrived some months after His birth! Simeon and Anna met Jesus some 40 days after His birth. Let's look at these two this morning. I have 4 points; the first 2 are really setting the scene to consider them in a bit more detail in the 2<sup>nd</sup> two points:

### **1. The Honoured Place**

This meeting, this close encounter of the delightful kind occurred in the Temple at Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus up to Jerusalem (v22) - some 8-10 miles away to the north-east from Bethlehem. In v27 we are told that Simeon was moved by the Spirit to go to the temple courts when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into it. In v 37 we read Anna stayed at the Temple.

The Temple had been built by Herod the Great as a peace offering and goodwill gesture to the Jews. He was a brilliant builder and architect, but a vile man! The tabernacle of Moses had God's glory come to it; Solomon's Temple also had God's glory come to it; Zerubbabel's Temple had none; Herod's Temple now had the infant Jesus in it - the glory of God incarnate full of grace and truth was there and it was an honoured place, especially as He spent time and taught in the Temple over the years of His earthly life.

There's quite a progression of God appearing in the Temple. The Tabernacle of Moses was just a tent, but God's glory was there. Solomon's Temple was impressive and God's glory was also there. Zerubbabel's Temple was not really impressive at all and did not

have God's glory come to it. Herod's Temple was most impressive, but no glory of God had come to it. Yet in the baby, there in Mary's arms, we have God tabernacling, living in a tent of humanity with all His glory concealed as He comes and dwells with men. Have we recognised that? What would it be like to have God among us? Thankfully the Lord Jesus promised to be here as we worship Him.

## **2. The Religious Occasion**

Mary and Joseph were at the Temple to fulfil the Law of Moses and the OT ceremonial laws. They were, as good Jews, obedient to the laws given by God through Moses. God's Word governed and directed their lives, even Mary, who some make out to be sinless (*which Scripture never does*), was still under the law - the 10 Commandments and the ceremonial law!

We read baby Jesus had been circumcised on the eighth day - probably in Bethlehem. Even the incarnate Son of God put Himself under the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic Law and would fulfil all the legal and ceremonial requirements of it. On the occasion v22 is talking about, it was 40 days after Jesus' birth and was the time of their purification as required in Leviticus 12:1-8 - a woman after giving birth to a son was ceremonially unclean for 40 days and for a daughter it was 80 days! To complete this, she had to make offerings and was restored to full unity with the worshipping people of God.

This was the event here and so Mary and Joseph go up to offer the required sacrifices. It is interesting to note that they offer a pair of birds and this was the provision made for those too poor to offer a lamb and a bird! It shows they were not well off as they gave a pair of birds, a lamb had to be offered if they could afford it, (*no gold had yet been received from the wise men!*)

Amazingly they went up to redeem the Redeemer and also to consecrate the Holy One of God. We are told of this v23 - every firstborn male was holy to the Lord, but the tribe of Levi had been accepted by God in place of the firstborn and so there was a redemption fee (*Exodus 13 speaks of it, so does Numbers 3:11ff and especially 18:15 & 16.*) Nothing is said of a fee here, whether or not it was paid we cannot say, possibly the priest had the discretion to waive the fee, or accept less in cases of poverty and hardship.

There is quite a contrast here - the Holy One of God who was consecrated to the Lord from eternity past - undergoes the ritual redemption and presentation to the Lord! All was done to fulfil the Law of Moses and to show Jesus was a true descendant of Abraham and came to establish and keep the law of God totally. It is an amazing thought - sinners had to redeem the Redeemer and yet He was the one who came to redeem sinners! It is a comfort to note that nothing was left undone or to chance in our salvation, but everything needed was fulfilled in every detail and there is no legal loophole that invalidates Jesus' life, ministry and death for us. We should thank God for His precise mercies and complete salvation and aim to walk aright with Him. See:

### **3. The Satisfied Saint**

In using the word "*saint*" I mean a child of God, one who believes and not a so called "*super Christian*" who lives in a stained-glass window and has a special day! Simeon the Satisfied left the temple after his encounter. Until then he'd been noted as a righteous and devout man - the first word refers to his life toward people, the second to his life towards God. He lived an openly godly life and was the same in private too. There was no putting on of appearances as happened in those days, especially the Pharisees.

He was waiting, looking for "*the consolation of Israel*" - meaning the Messiah and Saviour, the One who would bring comfort and consolation to His people by rescuing them from their oppressors, from that which would harm, hurt and even destroy them. In his life he had this expectancy, this looking and waiting for this One; he had a heightened expectation because the Holy Spirit had revealed he would not die until he saw the Lord's Christ.

This was a special blessing, as he had a pre-Pentecost revelation from the Holy Spirit. Never think the Holy Spirit was not at work before **Pentecost**. He was - only by His working would people have been born again under the OT dispensation, He would inspire God's prophets, carry them along to write the words of Scripture. We see evidence of His working in the OT, but in the NT at Pentecost, He was poured out in His fullness on the Church and applied the accomplished salvation work of the Saviour to all peoples.

That same Holy Spirit directed him - either by promptings or by clear revelation to go to the Temple. Did he go there with a sense of anticipation and expectation that the Lord was going to reveal something wonderful to him that day, perhaps even of the Christ? Wouldn't it be great if we all came church with prepared hearts and minds, with the same sense of expectation and anticipation - to see something of our Saviour and we too go away satisfied!

When Simeon saw Jesus in His mother's arms, it was shown him that this was the Saviour and he took Jesus in his arms and praised God. We do not have time to look at his adoration and praise, but it is not saying what he thought should be said; but he thanked God from the bottom of his heart for this child who meant so much to him *personally* as well as what He meant to the rest of the

world. Simeon adores God for the Saviour, the Christ, the Messiah.

Simeon took baby Jesus to himself, embraced Him in his arms and near to his heart – a quaint thought, but that is the best thing to do with Jesus as we think of His birth, life and person - to embrace Him to ourselves and to our own hearts. This Saviour is no good to us as a theory, as a nicety, or as a story. He must be received personally as our own Saviour. Have we done that?

Simeon's praise and adoration bursts forth. It was a satisfied Simeon who praised God. He'd been shown he would not die until he saw the Messiah, the Christ and now he's so full of joy, he is satisfied and ready to die! The word "*now*" in v29 is very forceful - NASB places it right at the start of the sentence "*Now, Lord...*" It means "*at this present time, this instant, now*" he was willing there and then to leave his earthly life and be with God. He was totally satisfied. Nothing was greater than this - he'd seen the Messiah and he was satisfied. As he thought of his death it was a peaceful event for him and it was the sweeter as he had seen the Saviour. He goes on to speak of the Saviour being a light for the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. He had this Spirit-given understanding that this One would be the Saviour of the world.

Mary and Joseph marvelled at his words! The events of 40 days ago were amazing enough, as were the events surrounding Jesus' conception. Here is something amazing - that this One would be the Saviour all people. Are we amazed at that? We are to marvel and thrill at the truth that the Son of God came to be the Saviour of the likes of us. Yet do we? It is absolutely amazing.

Simeon also warned of the hurt Mary would feel - as any mother would seeing her firstborn die – as Simeon also touched upon

Jesus' work. We don't hear of Simeon again, but I suspect he told the good news to others! How long he lived, or if he ever saw Jesus again we do not know. Yet he died in peace, satisfied and now in heaven he beholds this Saviour. He saw Him only dimly, as an infant, didn't know of His life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension but he believed in and rejoiced in and adored this One. What about us here - we see of this Christ more clearly - His birth, life, ministry, teaching, His claims, His death and resurrection; do we believe and adore Him?

#### **4. The Amazing Grace**

For some 400 years since Malachi there had been no recorded public prophetic utterances *recorded* from God, but the Lord had not then finished with this way of speaking and old Anna was a prophetess and knew God speaking through her in a remarkable way. This is all the more remarkable as we learn she was descended from Asher - a lost tribe from the Northern Kingdom and she was an old lady. Some say 84 years old (NIV), others and the Greek allows it, says she was married (*about 14/15 probably*), was widowed seven years later and was a widow for 84 years (105 or 106!) NO matter her age, her years had been godly ones and even now in her old age, she was careful in her walk with God. We are never given an excuse or leave to "retire" from the Christian life. She did not use her age as an excuse not to do so, but she disciplined her life, was ever seeking God - to worship and delight in Him. She didn't seem to be bitter or resentful, but served her God with joy and delight. There is fresh grace in old Anna. This lady Anna is quite amazing - her age, her godly life. The name 'Anna' means "grace" so she is truly amazing Grace! Note that there was fresh grace in old Grace and she didn't become harsh and resentful as some do as they grow older. Some commentators think that she had an apartment, in the Temple courts, was a mother-in-Israel; she was able to help and care for all and her

prophetic gift i.e. telling forth God's word was used in helping others, but she guarded it by her prayer and fasting and did not become proud and haughty.

It is a privilege to serve the Lord in whatever way. Sadly, our generation likes the upfront, the glamour and honour grabbing jobs, to be seen to be successful and often be proudly inflated by such, even demanding much honour! The Psalmist would have been quite happy to be a doorkeeper in the courts of the Lord. We are to be Christ-like in our desire to serve the Lord and His people - He was lowly and humble, and His mind is to be in us also. If we feel we are too good for a job, or a church, then we are to consider our Saviour - if Jesus had said He was too good to die for worthless, rebellious sinners, not only would He have been totally right, but we'd have been totally lost! Yet He didn't - He humbled Himself, became obedient even to death on the cross and so He saved us.

Old Anna came to them - possibly Simeon was still there and she may have heard him speaking and she too gave thanks to God, so another time of praise and adoration occurred. Then she went out and spoke about the child *"to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem"* - she knew that the baby who had been redeemed in Jerusalem would be the One to redeem Jerusalem and Israel and all who would trust in Him.

There must have been an excited buzz among the godly Jews - the Messiah, the Saviour has come! I wonder how many were ready for Him 30 years later or how many remembered Him and the words of Simeon and Anna after those 30 years! What will you look back on and remember at Christmas 2049? Some of us will be long gone! Some will be old people, some mature adults, but pause at Christmas of 2049 if you're alive and remember this

Welsh preacher challenging you 30 years previously to believe on the Lord Jesus as your Saviour; also, or if you know Jesus as your Saviour, encouraging you to keep on going on with Jesus and urging you to tell others of this Saviour - to both those who love Him and also those who don't.

Simeon and Anna are an overlooked pair of people who are involved in and around the Christmas story, but they have so much to teach us. May we learn of them - to praise and adore the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, to expect to meet with Him in the means of grace as we come along to church. If we know Him as our Saviour then share the good news about Him to a world that is in ignorance of Him, is against Him and neglects His so great salvation and person.