

No Middle Ground

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Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] Take your Bibles this morning and open them to our text, Luke chapter 2, and I'm going to be reading verses 21 through 40.

! Luke chapter 2, 21 through verse 40. The Bible says, And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the child, his name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Now, when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord. And offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. And the Holy Spirit was upon him.

[1:25] 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. So he came by 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, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign which will be spoken against.

Yes, a sword will pierce your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Now there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.

She was of a great age and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity. And this woman was a widow of about 84 years who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

[3:02] And coming in that instance, she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of him to all those who looked for redemption in Israel.

So when they had performed all these things, all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Interesting text, interesting part of the Christmas story. And I would say to you that with Simeon and Anna, we have, so to speak, come full circle in Luke's narration here.

This part of it anyway. Because you see, at the heart of the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke, Luke has informed us of the various messengers and venues that God used to announce the fulfillment of his ages-old promise to send a Savior.

And I say ages-old promise because, really, the first mention of this promise, God's Savior, really was way back there in the very first book of the Bible, in Genesis.

[4:18] In fact, in the third chapter of the book of Genesis, the promise was given there. In Genesis 3, verse 15, God said to Satan, of all people, it was Satan he was speaking to by way of the serpent.

So he made this announcement to Satan. He said to him, and I will put enmity, or we could use the word anger, hostility between you, Satan, and the woman.

Now, he's speaking maybe directly of Eve, but indirectly, ultimately, of Mary, because he says, and between your seed, Satan, and her seed, with a capital S.

He will crush your head. Speaking of the Messiah, the seed of a woman, the one who would come out of Mary. He will crush your head, and you, of course, shall bruise his heel.

So the promise is given there of God's Deliverer, the Savior that would one day come. And we can trace the promise, as we did one Sunday night, I think a few Sunday nights ago, we can trace that promise all the way through the Old Testament on into the New.

[5:30] Because God continues to renew the promise over and over and over again. And with each time that the promise is re-announced, re-stated, re-given, the anticipation grows even more and more among God's people.

So he gives the promise. I think you can clearly say that he gave it and renewed it through Seth, Adam's son, when men first began to call upon the name of the Lord, Genesis 4.26.

And then through Noah, and through Noah's son Shem, and then ultimately to Abraham, a descendant of Shem, to Isaac, Abraham's son, then to Jacob, Isaac's son, then to Judah, Jacob's son, and then to David of the tribe of Judah, and then to Mary, ultimately a descendant of David.

So it's interesting to be able to map that and trace that throughout the Old Testament. The promise that God gave for a Deliverer, a Savior, His Messiah.

And Isaiah, of course, said that He would be born of a virgin, and Jesus was. And Micah said that He would be born in Bethlehem, and indeed He was. And Malachi said that His coming would be announced by John the Baptist, and so it was.

[6:50] And so it's incredible. You can trace that all throughout the Old Testament. And now the time has come. The time has come for the promise to be fulfilled. And as I've mentioned a number of times before, understand that this is after 400 years of absolute silence from God.

No prophetic word from any of God's choice prophets, not for 400 years. No angelic message sent out from God by an archangel or any other angel during this 400 years of silence.

No voice thundering from heaven by God Himself. 400 years of absolute, utter silence from God, and then out of nowhere, suddenly, without warning, without even a hint, God speaks.

He speaks. Galatians 4.4, remember, says, In the fullness of time. When the time was just right. Not just right, and God was waiting for the time to be right, but in the fullness of time, in the sense that God had brought all things to the right time.

In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son. That's Jesus. Born of a woman. Born under the law. Alright, so the fullness of time has now come.

[8:09] And, according to Luke's Gospel, God broke His 400 year silence. He broke that silence in the temple of all places. Maybe an appropriate place for God to break His silence.

In the temple. And more specifically, in the holy place within the temple. And through the archangel Gabriel, remember, God spoke privately, that's a key point, privately to a humble priest by the name of Zacharias, who, when he emerged from the holy place, he could not even speak of what he saw or heard.

And then, according to Luke's Gospel, God then spoke to a young peasant girl, a young virgin by the name of Mary, appearing to her personally, in the privacy of her own very humble home.

Matthew also records a similar meeting with Joseph. That time in the privacy of his own dreams.

And then Matthew also tells us about the wise men in a faraway country whom God summoned to Bethlehem.

And just how God spoke to them, we don't really exactly know. They just simply followed a star. And then, according to Luke's Gospel, God then spoke to humble shepherds who were out there in their fields in a remote place outside of Bethlehem, watching over their sheep.

[9:31] God spoke to all of these people. Striking, isn't it? I mean, when you think about it. I think it's quite amazing how quietly, how silently, really, how very privately, God announced the fulfillment of, we'd have to agree, the greatest promise ever made.

Silently. Phillips Brooks, famous black preacher many years ago, in fact, we sang Old Little Town of Bethlehem and he was part of the making of that song.

And this is what Philip Brooks said. He says, how silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given.

He came silently, quietly, without fuss, without ruckus, without making a stir or announcing his presence.

He came in the same way all babies come and most of the world paid no attention. And I think you'd have to agree that even today, for the most part, the world is paying no attention at all. Amazing. Amazing. Amazing. 400 long years. And God breaks His silence with little more than a faint whisper.

[10:52] First to Zacharias in the temple. Then to Mary. And then to Joseph. To each one in complete privacy. Then to the shepherds working again out there in some remote place away from all other people.

And now we have come full circle and we're back in the temple. Back in the temple. Not in the holy place this time, but in the court of women.

That's where Luke takes us. In the court of women. In the temple. We know that because Mary was there and women were only allowed in one of those outer courts.

The court of women. And this time, it is not a word from Gabriel, the archangel. It is essentially a word from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit Himself.

Given or spoken through a righteous and a devout Jew by the name of Simeon. Simeon. And God speaks through His servant Simeon.

[11:57] And through him, He gives us one of the clearest and I would even say most complete to date prophecies concerning God's promised Savior.

It's an incredible prophecy. Now, what God speaks through Simeon and later confirms through Anna provides for us a vital connection between three eschatological events.

That is, He links three events, significant events, on God's redemptive timetable. What are they? The birth of Christ.

Or we could say the incarnation. And Simeon's prophecy, his psalm and prophecy, link the incarnation with the crucifixion of the Christ and His subsequent resurrection.

And not only that, but links these two to the coronation of Christ. His crown as King of kings and Lord of lords. It's all here in this very short prophecy coming from Simeon.

[13:16] Through his psalm and through his prophetic word to Mary, the mother of Jesus, Simeon links all of these three things together and it's so very important.

That's why I say that to date this is the most complete and concise statement of the promise. The promise of the Messiah. Now that is what Simeon does.

He speaks first a psalm. I don't know that he sang it, but it is in the form of a psalm. And then he speaks a prophecy. A psalm and then a prophecy. Now in his psalm, understand that Simeon identifies Jesus as the one and only fulfillment of God's promise to send his Redeemer.

That's what he does in the psalm. And really, after thousands and thousands of years of anticipation, the Redeemer has now come. He is here.

That's what he tells us in his psalm. In his prophecy, Simon reveals something quite incredible. He reveals how Jesus will accomplish that redemption.

[14:25] This is why this prophecy is so important. So important to Mary and Joseph, but also all those who may have been around in this kind of semi-public announcement of God's plan.

So in the prophecy, he reveals how the Lord Jesus will accomplish redemption. And even more importantly, he reveals, now listen to this, the two ways mankind will respond.

not just the two ways man must respond, but the two ways they will respond. Receive him or reject him.

Those two are here. And so here's the main thing we should get from Simeon's prophecy. To receive the promise of God in Christ depends on what you do with Jesus.

Are you listening? Depends on what you do with Jesus. That's not only for us to hear and us to understand and hopefully the majority of us, the vast majority of us do understand this and we have done the right thing with Jesus.

[15:43] The world at large, what about them? So let me state this again. To receive the promise of God in Christ, the promise of redemption in Christ depends upon what you do with Jesus.

And I would go a step further. When it comes to how you respond to Jesus, His person, His work, when it comes to that, eternity hangs in the balance, dear people.

And Christmas, I think, is a good time to be reminded of that. So that's the main thing I want us to see. And to get at that, we need to walk through this text.

Let's just walk through it. And I'm not going to emphasize with full weight every part of this portion of the narration, but let's walk through it and get at, I think, the most crucial thing.

First of all, Luke begins here with a very brief word about the circumcision of the Lord Jesus Christ. A very brief word about that. And I believe that it is clear that this took place in Bethlehem, though Luke does not tell us that.

[17:00] But look at verse 21. And when eight days were completed, what does that mean? It means that Jesus was eight days old. When Jesus was eight days old, what happened?

His circumcision. Completed for the circumcision of the child. All right? So Jesus, by the law, by the Mosaic law, the law of the Lord, he is circumcised on the eighth day.

All right? And his name was called Jesus. And we knew that was going to happen because the name was given to them by the angel before he was even conceived in the womb. All right?

So Luke tells us about the circumcision of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I believe that that likely took place when Mary and Joseph were still in Bethlehem.

then Luke gives us a brief word concerning Jesus' presentation in the temple there in Jerusalem.

[17:58] And verse 22 says, Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, that means we're now forty days out from the birth of Christ because this was according to the law, that mothers who have given birth need to come forty days from the birth into the temple to present the child and for another reason we'll get to that in just a minute.

So it's forty days now after Jesus' birth and so Mary and Joseph have brought the child forty days old to the temple and they brought him to Jerusalem to present him, Luke says, to the Lord as it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.

Alright, so his circumcision, his presentation and then third as we kind of walk through the text here and move toward the stage being set for this great announcement concerning the Redeemer.

Third, then Luke gives us a word about Mary's purification there in the temple. Again, it's forty days out and all of this is being done according to the law of Moses, the law of the Lord.

Luke is very deliberate to make sure we understand that over and over again. He repeats that because, listen, what kind of Savior would we have if He didn't even obey the law when He was born?

[19:26] He would have never been heard. He would have never been given a hearing. And so all this is done according to the law and so now here's the purification of Mary because she's ceremonially unclean and so now she needs to do the rite of purification, verse 24, and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.

Now, that's just Luke's way of telling us that Mary and Joseph were poor people. They were poor. And so they were either going to bring turtle doves or a couple of pigeons.

And we know they're poor because the normal way, normal sacrifice according to Leviticus 12, 6 would be a lamb. That would be a lamb. But the law made provision for those who could not afford a lamb.

And so, according to Leviticus 12, they could bring either a pair of turtle doves or they could bring two young pigeons and that's what Joseph and Mary did.

Now, we don't know which they brought but that's what they brought because they were poor.

Evidently, I think this marks chronologically that the wise men had not yet visited with Mary and Joseph to open up their treasures to them because they were very poor.

[20:48] And so here they are. So, the stage, here's what I want you to get as we focus on this text. The setting of the stage for the announcement of the promise, God's promise to send a Redeemer or that the Redeemer has come.

The setting of the stage is now taking shape. We have Mary and Joseph and Jesus. They're present now in the temple. God has brought them there.

Two more characters are needed and that would be Simeon and Anna. So, verse 25, And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.

Simeon. Now, Simeon is a very common name among the Jews. You might remember one of the apostles, Peter. Before Jesus changed his name, his name was Simon.

That would be the shorter version of Simeon. Very common name. And the name itself means God has heard. God has heard.

[21:51] I think that's important, though that's not crucial to our understanding of what Scripture is telling us here. Really, what we need to see is what Luke says about Simeon.

What he tells us about him. Verse 25, And this man was just, well, you might have the word righteous in your translation.

Just, or righteous, and he was devout. Those two things. And those two words tell us a great deal about who Simeon was. Spiritually, both in his standing before God, he was just. Justified by faith. Righteousness was imputed upon him according to his faith, by the grace of God and through his faith. That is, we could say he was saved. That was his position before God. His standing before God. But then, Luke adds this word devout, and that tells us everything about his devotion. Simeon's devotion to God.

[22:49] So not only his position, which would be under the term justified, but his devotion, his practice, the practice of his life.

He walked in righteousness. He walked righteously. That is, who he was on the inside, came out on the outside, and he lived according to who he was before God.

That would be a good lesson for all of us. And then Luke tells us something else. Again, verse 25, Simeon was there in the temple and all throughout his life he was doing what?

Waiting. Waiting for the consolation of Israel. Consolation of Israel. Now, the word consolation is a translation of the Greek word paraklesis.

And it means really comfort. In fact, some versions of the Bible may have the word comfort there. And that's literally the meaning. And this word paraklesis is the form of the same word that Jesus used in John 14, 16 to identify the Holy Spirit.

[24:02] The Bible says, and Jesus said, I will ask the Father and He will give you another comforter or helper. will be a way to translate that. A helper that He may be with you forever.

A tremendous promise by the Lord Jesus Christ. His gift. The comforter, the Holy Spirit, the parakletos. Same word. Just a little different form.

Only here in Luke 2, verse 25, the comforter of which or for which Simeon was waiting. This consolation of Israel is a direct reference to the Messiah, not the Holy Spirit.

This is a reference to the Messiah. And it takes us back to Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 1. And this is a familiar passage, especially if you have ever heard Handel's Messiah.

And here's the verse. Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. And then later he says, the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord.

[25:08] Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. See, this is a reference to the Messiah. The comfort of Israel, the consolation, if you will, of Israel.

And Simeon was eagerly, expectantly, believingly, if that's a word, waiting for the Messiah. expecting him to come at any day.

William Barclay, in his commentary on Luke, I don't necessarily recommend the commentary, but I will commend to you this quotation. Barclay provides, I think, an important information about Simeon that would be, I think, good for us to know.

And not only information about Simeon, but also many other Jews like him. And here's what Barclay said. The greater number of Jews believed that because they were the chosen people, they were bound someday to become masters of the world and lords of all the nations.

To bring in that day, some believed that some great celestial champion would descend upon the earth. Some believed that there would arise another king of David's line and that all the old glories would revive.

[26:27] Some believed that God Himself would break directly into history by supernatural means. But in contrast to all that, there were a few people who were known as, quote, the quiet in the land, end quote.

The quiet in the land. They had no dreams of violence and of power and of armies and banners. They believed in a life of constant prayer and quiet watchfulness until God should come.

All their lives they waited quietly and patiently upon God. Simeon was like that. In prayer, in worship, in humble and faithful expectation, he was waiting for the day when God would comfort His people.

Alright, so Simeon was just and devout, one of the quiet in the land, looking for the Messiah to come as were many others in his day.

In fact, I'm sure there were many others who said, like Simeon or similar to Simeon, that I'm praying I'll see the Messiah before I die. Now, Simeon not only prayed that, but he was promised that.

[27:41] And that's what makes Simeon different. Makes him special. Last part of verse 25. And the Holy Spirit was upon him 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.

His promise. And a pretty special promise. And Simeon believed God for it. He had full faith in that. He knew this was going to happen. And verse 27 says, So, he came by the Spirit or in the Spirit into the temple that day.

That is, he was led by the Holy Spirit that particular day. Now, I'm sure he made many visits to the temple. I don't think we necessarily have to believe that Simeon went to the temple every day. Maybe he did. Maybe he didn't.

But on that day, he did. And it was because the Holy Spirit led him there. And not only did the Holy Spirit lead him to be in the temple at that very moment, but he also inspired him to speak God's revelation.

And so, verse 27 says, he came into the temple in the Spirit that day. And I think we can assume that Anna had the same expectation.

[28 : 55] Same expectation. Same messianic expectation that Simeon had, though maybe she did not have the same promise that Simeon had because the Bible says that she actually took up permanent residence in the temple.

And they had provisions for that. Probably one of the living quarters for the various priests that would come and do their service. And they allowed Anna to live there.

And really, when you delve into the original language, it's pretty clear that not only was she an old woman, but she had been in the temple, lived in the temple for 84 years.

And doing what? Fasting, praying, looking for the Messiah, looking for the redemption of Israel that had been promised just like Simeon was looking for.

The same one he was looking for. Alright, so, the stage is set. The stage is all set. Everything is in place. All the players are in their places.

[30 : 04] And we can kind of picture maybe the whole scene. The Bible says in verse 27, look at it, just picture this.

When the parents, Joseph and Mary, brought in the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he, now look at this, Simeon, took him up in his arms and blessed God.

And he said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word for my eyes have seen your salvation.

Isn't that incredible? How did he know? Let's just stop right there and think. How did he know?

Well, the Holy Spirit told him, I guess. We don't know any other way. The Holy Spirit told him.

[31 : 11] He took one look at that child, took him in his arms. My eyes have now seen your salvation. Were they, Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus, were they what Simeon was expecting?

Peasant family? Obviously poor? Just common people?

Were they what he was expecting? Think about that. Was he expecting the Messiah to come as a baby?

An infant? Frail? Weak? You know, little baby. Not yet two months old. Was he expecting the Messiah to come that way?

I don't know. I don't know what he was expecting. I think it's implied in the text because maybe even through silence that that was exactly what he was looking for.

[32 : 15] That God had revealed that to him. I don't know. It doesn't really matter. But what a dramatic moment. I mean, if you'll let yourself just be immersed into the narration here and visualize this whole scene.

What a dramatic moment. What a precious moment. Really. He took him up in his arms and blessed God.

And he said, now it's okay for me to die now. Because I'll die in peace. Just like you promised, Lord. Incredible. Now, Simeon looked deep into the eyes of that newborn baby named Jesus. And what did he see?

Here's what it all comes down to. He saw two things. Two things. The first part of what he saw has already been revealed to Mary and Joseph and to the shepherds.

[33 : 29] Because he saw that Jesus is the Savior of sinners. Which is exactly what man needs.

Jesus is the Savior of sinners. That's the first thing he saw. Jesus' parents, of course, already knew this about their son. His very name, Jesus, means Yahweh is salvation, remember?

They already knew that. But I would say to you that they were seemingly unprepared for how Simeon expanded upon that. He said to them, for my eyes have seen your salvation.

That part we already know, don't we? But look at what he said next. Which you have prepared before the face of all people.

A light to bring revelation to the what? The Gentile. And the glory of your people Israel.

[34 : 39] translation, this Jesus, this little baby, Mary, Joseph, this little baby Jesus will be a universal Savior in this sense.

He is the Savior of sinners from every tribe, every nation, every tongue. now they should have known this.

Isaiah 42, verse 6 says, and God said, my Messiah will be a light to the nations. That's the Gentiles. A light to the nations, so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

In Isaiah 52, verse 10, the Lord has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations. All the nations, not just the Jewish nations, all the nations that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God.

Isaiah 61, verse 1 and 3, 2-3, Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

[35 : 52] For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people, but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.

The Gentiles shall come to your light, the kings and kings to the brightness of your rising. Now, I think Joseph and Mary were speechless at this point.

In fact, we have an indication of that in verse 33. Look at it. And Joseph and his mother marveled. That is, they were amazed. Utterly amazed. Utterly dumbfounded.

Really, we could translate that. Dumbfounded at those things which were spoken to them. That their son, who is the Messiah, they understood that, believed that, but he would be the Messiah to the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

The deliverer, the Savior, to Gentiles and Jews, every tribe, nation, and every tongue. But as Simeon looked into the face of the baby Jesus, he saw something else.

[36 : 58] And this is where we get into his prophecy. He saw something else. And I would say to you, what he saw, Mary was not prepared to hear.

Simeon saw not only a Savior of sinners, but a determiner of destinies. A determiner of destiny. Look at it. Verse 34. This is so crucial. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, so he's speaking directly to Mary, behold, behold Mary, look, this child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign which will be spoken against.

And then in parentheses, yes, and a sword will pierce through your own soul also that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Folks, in this prophecy of Simeon's, we see three things. And I'll name them this way. A stone, a sign, a sword.

[38 : 27] Just put it down just like that. And in this order, we see these things in this prophecy. A stone, a sign, a sword. Now let's take the sword first because that would have been Mary's first experience in all that Simeon said in his prophecy.

A sword. And by the way, it is in parentheses, it's parenthetical, it's almost really kind of a break in the flow, so let's just pull that parentheses out and deal with that first.

A sword. He said, yes, a sword will pierce your own soul also. Someone has said that Simeon prophesied a sword right through Mary's heart.

heart. He took her from the joy of the cradle to the heartache of the cross that her son would endure and everything that led up to it.

You see, Mary was there when cruel people questioned her son's legitimacy. That is, questioned her son's and even made comments about her son's true parentage.

[39 : 41] In fact, the Pharisees in John 8, 41, in a very snide way, in a very cryptic way, but it was very obvious what they were saying. They said to Jesus, we were not born out of fornication, implying that he was.

Mary was there. Mary was there when they accused her son of being mad, of being a lunatic. Mary was there when her son was accused of being filled with demon.

Mary was there when they accused her son of sedition against Rome. And worse than that, blasphemy against God. And Mary stood helplessly by the cross of her son and watched her son die an agonizing, brutal, bloody, beyond description, inhuman death.

Mary was there to witness all of that. But Mary, see, will simply experience only a sampling, a kind of prophetic sampling, of what one day all the Jews would experience.

And I would even extend beyond that to all unbelievers one day. A sword. A sword. Revelation 1 7 says, Behold, He, that's Jesus, is coming with clouds and every eye will see Him.

[41 : 06] Even they who pierced Him and all the nations of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. A sword.

And Simeon also alludes to a stone. A stone. He doesn't use the word stone, but it's there. He said, Behold, this child is destined or divinely appointed for what?

The fall and rising of many in Israel. And I believe that this is a reference, a direct reference to the prophecy of Isaiah. Isaiah 8 verses 13 through 15 where the Bible says, The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hollow.

Let Him be your fear and let Him be your dread, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense as a trap and as a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And many among them shall stumble. They shall fall and they shall be broken. A snare. He will be a snare.

[42 : 12] They will be snared and taken. Romans 9 32 Paul said that many will not be saved. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith.

Faith in Jesus. But as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. That's Jesus, right? As it is written, behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone, a rock of offense.

So many will fall. It's come. Many, some, will not fall, but rise. They will rise. Many, by the grace of God, will rise in eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

So Simeon looks into the face of that little baby boy named Jesus, and he sees not only a savior of sinners, but he sees a determiner of destinies.

He sees a sword, and he sees a stone, and one more thing, and this is crucial, a sign. He sees a sign.

[43 : 23] The coming of Christ is a sign. Or we could say, use this word, a miracle. A miracle, a sign of grace.

God's redeeming grace. And so Simeon said, a sign, but notice what he says next, which will be, not may be, but will be spoken against.

Then we take the parentheses out and complete the thought, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. So he will be a sign, a sign of the redeeming grace of God, which will be spoken against.

Spoken against. That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. That is, the true condition of the heart of man is revealed by the coming of Christ.

And never do we see that truth, the truth of this prophecy more clearly than we do this time of the year, I would say to you. Sherry and Jonathan went out driving, Sherry was driving, not Jonathan, driving around the community, our neighborhood, and maybe a little bit beyond, I don't know how far they drove, but they went out, Sherry was telling me about this, and she said, we went out looking for Jesus.

[44 : 51] In search of Jesus, not where's Waldo, but Jesus, looking for Jesus. And you know what?

They couldn't find him. When Jesus was born, there was no room for him in the end. And today, there's no room for him, I guess, in our yards, in our homes, certainly not in our public places, not in our schools, not even in our celebrations of Christmas for many, and certainly not in our hearts and lives.

And that's sad, isn't it? Tragedy. But it's worse than that. It's much worse than that.

You see, it's not possible to be neutral when it comes to Jesus. It's not possible. There's no middle ground.

There's no fence. to sit on when it comes to Jesus. If Jesus is the Christ, as we believe, if Jesus is the Christ, God's only Savior of sinners and determiner of destinies, then only one response will do.

[46 : 34] Only one. Believe on Him. Bow down to Him. and worship Him. There's no in-between.

In fact, I would say and say it with care, this Christmas people have two options regarding Jesus. Two options.

Either join Herod in trying to kill Him, or join Simeon and Anna and the shepherds and wise men, Mary and Joseph in bowing down to Him and worshiping Him.

There is no in-between. There is no middle ground whatsoever. Now folks, listen to me.

I'm about done. For a very brief time at Christmas, the world gets a glimpse at the manger and sees a little baby lying there.

[47 : 54] And what do they do with him? But the manger is empty now. There's no baby in the manger now.

And for a brief time at Easter, the world gets a glimpse of the cross. They still get a glimpse of it even today, of the cross and a man hanging there and dying there.

And they get a glimpse of the tomb and a man buried there. And what do they do with him? What do you do with him?

Well, the cross is empty. The tomb certainly is empty. And one day, in terror, sheer terror and fear, the world will look up into the sky and they will see Jesus coming to judge the nations, to judge the nations.

what you do with Jesus now is a determiner of your destiny then.

[49 : 37] There's no in-between. No middle ground. Thank you.