

# Sentinels and Mission

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## Luke 2.21-38

v. 21 And when the eight days were fulfilled to circumcise him and he was named Jesus, the name by the angel before his conception in the womb

v. 22 And when the days of their cleansing were fulfilled according to the law of Moses, they brought him into Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord

v. 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord that 'Every male that opens the womb shall be named holy to the Lord')

v. 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what had been said in the law of the Lord 'a pair of turtledoves or two young doves

v. 25 And behold a man was in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon and this man was righteous and devout expecting the encouragement of Israel and the spirit on him was holy.

v. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the spirit – the holy one – that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord

v. 27 And he came in the spirit into the temple and when the parents of the child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law

v. 28 Simeon received him into his arms and gave thanks to God and said

v. 29 Now you are releasing your slave, Master, according to your word in peace

v. 30 because my eyes have seen your salvation

v. 31 which you prepared before the face of all the people of God

v. 32 a light for revelation of the gentiles and for glory of your people of God, Israel.

v. 33 and his father and mother were astonished at what was being said about him

v. 34 and Simeon gave thanks for him and said to Mary his mother, Behold this one is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is being opposed

v. 35 – and a sword will pierce your soul too – in order that the reasoning from many hearts might be revealed

v. 36 And there was a prophet- Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, from the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in many days having lived with a man seven years from her virginity

v. 37 and herself a widow to the age of eighty four, who did not withdraw from the temple in fasting and prayer night and day,

v. 38 and at that moment, standing ready she praised God and spoke about him to all those who were waiting for the ransom of Jerusalem.

## **Introduction – Sentinels**

The changes in our culture that has caused sentinels to be less valued.

- The vital nature of a sentinel in the ancient world

Characteristics of a sentinel

- Long sight
- Patience
- Ability to recognise and discern what they saw

Simeon and Anna as sentinels

## **The problem of Luke's text about offering in the Temple**

Vvs 22-24 seem to be a little confused – but not quite as confusing as might first appear

vv. 22 and 23-24 are two separate events – circumcision which happened after 8 days and the cleansing of Mary and dedication of Jesus

- After a boy a Mother was unclean for 7 days and then waited 33 days before being purified – then brought a lamb as a burnt offering and a dove as a sin offering (or in the case of poverty two doves)
- Offering of child to the Lord as first-born (though it was not necessary to bring a child to the temple for this)
- May also then have the resonance of Samuel being given to God in the temple

## **Simeon - vv. 25-27**

v. 25 Notice that Simeon – unlike Anna – is not permanently resident in the temple but is sent to meet and proclaim Jesus

- Hence his role becomes very similar to the angels to recognise and interpret for those who would otherwise not have known who he was.
- Righteous and devout – righteous has more of a Jewish resonance and devout a Hellenistic resonance

Lived in a situation of expectation of consolation (direct reference backwards to Isaiah 40) of Israel

- Does this perhaps in some ways give meaning to what living a righteous and devout life means?

Holy Spirit was upon him

- Odd word order here – hard to work out if there is any significance in it
- More important is that it speaks of prophecy and Simeon's role as a prophet – which interestingly ties in the sentinel's role as a prophetic one

v. 26-28

Although Luke does not say explicitly that he is old, the implication is there

- The elderly as sentinels – reflections on ageing and wise perception.

The Lord's Christ

- Issues of the messiah and the expectations of the Messiah – and why Simeon's recognition of him became significant in this context.

Importance of being led by the spirit – Jesus was into the wilderness.

## **Nunc Dimittis**

v. 29 - striking use of slavery image here

- release is what happened to slaves
- slave
- despot

v. 30 my eyes have seen your salvation – but what has he seen that allows him to count it as salvation?

- He has seen the saviour but he seems to mean something more by it than that
  - Possibly the time of salvation
  - In breaking of salvation

Could possibly relate to why he is now content to depart – because God’s intervention in the world has begun.

v. 31 – before the face of all peoples (who is referred to here?)

- Normally used in Luke to refer to the Jews
- But then goes onto talk about the Gentile in 32 so probably the whole of God’s people Jews and Gentiles.

Resonance of passages like is 52.10 - notice the important shift here from the Gentiles who simply observe the salvation to the Gentiles being enlightened by it

v. 32

notice here the intermingling of terms – light, revelation and glory

- The light has the effect of revealing things to the Gentiles
- And of associating Israel with God’s glory...in some way

vv. 33-34

falling and rising of many – connected in some ways to the Nunc. The child’s role as light will reveal the truth in many people, for some this will be falling for others rising, for Mary pain.

### **Anna v. 36-38**

Although words not recorded is as important a character as Simeon – unlike Simeon is clearly marked as old

- 84
- Or in the region of 103
- Simeon is simply righteous and devout, not living in temple; She is a prophet and lived in the court of the women
- We find, in Anna, an answer to the question of why they recognized Jesus – fasting and praying – was able to see God at work even when he appeared in entirely unexpected guise.

All who were looking for the ransom of Jerusalem