

## Waiting for the Hope of Heaven Luke 2:25-35

### Introduction

All of the great spiritual leaders of the Bible have at least one thing in common; Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, the Judges, the Kings, especially King David, Esther, the prophets, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, and Paul – all of the people greatly used by God throughout history -they not only heard the call of God, they said YES to God! They were not just hearers of the Word they were hearers and doers. They personally got involved and demonstrated their faith in God.

Have you ever given any thought to God choosing you to be a blessing for Him in some special way? What if God wanted you to represent Him and speak through you? Have you ever considered doing something above and beyond your normal activity just to honor God? These are the indicators of true devotion is and they are the best place to start as a true follower of Christ. Focus on becoming devoted to God, and develop a habit of obedience and service to God's Word. When you do, you will find that is God is able to reveal himself more fully to you.

In Chapter 2 of Luke's gospel we find an example of the kind of obedience, patience and faithfulness that God uses to empower people to do great things. Luke writes, "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. (Luke 2:21 NKJV) Verse 22 says in obedience to God, "when the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons." Then verse 25 says, "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. (Luke 2:25 NKJV)

Simeon was waiting for the hope of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Verse 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. 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." (Luke 2:26-32 NKJV)

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 through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many

hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:33-35 NKJV)

## **I. God Calls Us to Obedience**

God calls us to be obedient followers! As clear as scripture makes it, sometimes we forget that Jesus was born into a very Jewish family. Joseph and Mary were devout in keeping all the Jewish laws. One of the Jewish laws was that all male babies were to be circumcised on the eighth day. According to the law of Moses, purification from childbirth for Mary would occur 40 days after Jesus' birth. That would be followed by the consecration of the firstborn, in recognition that the firstborn son belonged to the Lord.

Verse 21 says, "On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived." (2:21) The Jewish ceremony of circumcision on the eighth day after birth represented the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. It was how each male child became a part of the nation of Israel (Genesis 17:11; Leviticus 12:3).

Circumcision did not have to be performed in Jerusalem at the temple. It could have been performed by any village rabbi. Why Joseph and Mary chose to go to Jerusalem instead of to the rabbi at Bethlehem we are not told. Some writers suggest that perhaps, like Hannah, who brought the prophet Samuel to the temple recognizing him as a special gift, Mary and Joseph did the same. Others have suggested that Jesus could have been born during the pilgrimage feast of Tabernacles and since Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem, just five miles from Jerusalem, they decided to attend the feast. What we do know is that at his circumcision, Jesus name was entered into the Jewish register at the temple in Jerusalem. What's noteworthy here is that this is something Joseph did for Jesus as his adopted son! Mary would not have been present because of the laws of purification. A blessing would have been given before the circumcision and the ceremony closed with a prayer over a cup of wine. The name "Jesus" or in Hebrew *Yeshua* means "salvation."

After childbirth, mothers were considered ceremonially unclean for a period of forty days for a male child and 80 days for the birth of a female child. Women who lived a great distance from the temple might not even attend the purification ceremony in person. But since Bethlehem was only about five miles south of Jerusalem, Mary accompanies Joseph to the temple for the final two ceremonies of Mary's purification and the presentation of her firstborn.

Mary and Joseph were considered to be at the poverty level, so Mary brings a pair young pigeons or turtledoves as her sacrifice. That was all they could afford. However, they didn't let being poor get in the way of their obedience to God. Some people think if you're poor, God won't bless you because it's your own fault you're poor. Some think that if you're poor, you ought to get a special exemption and shouldn't have to pay for the sacrifices. But Mary and Joseph didn't let being poor get in the way of their obedience and devotion to God. Not having much money should never be an excuse for being disobedient to God.

Mary was very conscientious about her obedience to God. She went through her 40 days of purification and then came and made her offering to God of two turtledoves or two pigeons since she could not afford to bring a lamb. However, when you think about it, she actually did bring a Lamb that day. In her arms she held the One who would purify her from all sin. It's somewhat ironic that she couldn't afford a lamb to purify herself from the uncleanness that had resulted from bringing the Lamb of God into the world, who would purify the world from all uncleanness!

Then, after Mary's ceremonial cleansing, Joseph and Mary offer the price of redemption of the firstborn. According to Exodus 13 the firstborn male of humans and animals belonged to God (Exodus 13:1). All firstborn males were dedicated or consecrated to the service of God; that is they were reserved for God and God's service."

Every firstborn male belongs to God. Firstborn animals were sacrificed to God. However, in the Old Testament, Yahweh was very clear that he abhorred the child sacrifice practiced by the surrounding pagan nations and religions. So, "The Lord said to Moses, 'I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman."

The Levites are mine, for all the firstborn are mine. In Numbers 3:11 God said, "When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set apart for myself every firstborn in Israel, whether man or animal. They are to be mine. I am the Lord.'" (Numbers 3:11-13)

The price to redeem the firstborn of non-Levites was five shekels. The ceremony consisted of a formal presentation of the child to the priest. The priest then offered two short benedictions -- the first one for the law of redemption, the other for the gift of a firstborn son. Then the parents paid the redemption money.

We know from the book of Hebrews that Jesus experienced life in every way just as we do, yet without sin. But His early steps of obedience were dependent upon the faith and obedience of his parents, Mary and Joseph. If Mary and Joseph had not had Jesus circumcised; Jesus could not have been God's spotless lamb. Parents, it's important that you take an active role in teaching your children the Bible and how to obey it, because, to some degree, we are held responsible for our children, and even more so when they are young and cannot make decisions for themselves.

Mary and Joseph were devout in their faith raised Jesus according to God's Word. It's something all Christian parents should do for their children. Parents, don't let your children grow up to become pagans!

## **II. God Calls Us to Faithfulness**

In verse 25 we learn that God calls us to faithfulness. Verse 25 says, "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout ... and the Holy Spirit was upon him."

We learn several significant things about Simeon:

- He is "righteous" (NIV) or "just" (KJV) which means Simeon was a man of high standards. He was upright, just and fair."
- He is "devout," He was God-fearing, pious, and reverent."
- And the Holy Spirit rested upon him.

Simeon was waiting for the Holy Spirit's promise. Simeon had been anticipating this day in the temple for some time. "He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ." (2:25-26)

Simeon has been eagerly expecting to see the Messiah. But what was this "consolation of Israel"? "Consolation" is the Greek noun *paraklesis*, meaning "comfort" or "to call to one's side" for "help or encouragement." Simeon was eagerly looking forward to the time when an occupied, weary Jerusalem would receive comfort and relief from their oppression. Many devout people of faith believed this would be brought about by the coming of the Messiah. We don't know when or how, but the Holy Spirit had made Simeon a promise. The message is that he wouldn't die until he has seen the Messiah. For Simeon, when Mary and Joseph entered the temple, today was that day!

The Holy Spirit nudges Simeon, and moved by the Spirit, he goes into the temple courts. Verse 27 says, "When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God" (2:27-28) If you've ever witnessed an answer to prayer, then you know something of the joy that Simeon felt welling up within him. Simeon takes Jesus in his arms and his heart springs forth in praise to God, saying,

'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.  
For my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the sight of all people,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.'

And Mary and Joseph marvel at what is being said about him." (2:28-33)

God had kept his promise to Simeon and as Simeon looks upon that little child named "Jesus" He cries out, "My eyes have seen your salvation!" Simeon sees God's salvation extending to all people; Gentiles and Jews alike. By the way, this is the same message the angel spoke to the shepherds on Christmas night: "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (2:10).

Then Simeon blessed them and tells Mary that:

- How people respond to Jesus and his message will determine their destiny.

- Jesus is God's sign of hope for the world, but will be rejected and slandered by many.
- The opinions and thought people have of Jesus reveal what they truly believe about God.
- Mary will experience the deep anguish of soul when Jesus is rejected and crucified.

Simeon was waiting for the coming of Christ and his patience paid off. What are you waiting for? There are a lot of good things worth waiting for; that next vacation; getting married; having a child...or a grandchild; finding a job or getting that promotion at work. All of these things are good things to hope for. But what about waiting for the coming of Christ? That's what Simeon was waiting for. And according to the scriptures, we should wait and expect the Second Coming of Christ.

If you live your life believing that Jesus could come today, or tomorrow it causes you to live with the right priorities. It causes you to live with eternity in focus. It causes you to do things that will matter for eternity, rather than just the next few years.

God calls us to faithfulness. In the book of Revelation Jesus tells the church at Smyrna, "Be faithful even unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Rev 2:10 NKJV) That is the blessed hope of the church. That is the hope the Holy Spirit stirs up in the heart of every believer.

## **Conclusion**

The Apostle Paul says we should abound in that hope.

### **Abound in Hope Romans 15:13**

Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for *His* mercy, as it is written: "FOR THIS REASON I WILL CONFESS TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND SING TO YOUR NAME." And again he says: "REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE!" And again: "PRAISE THE LORD, ALL YOU GENTILES! LAUD HIM, ALL YOU PEOPLES!" And again, Isaiah says: "THERE SHALL BE A ROOT OF JESSE; AND HE WHO SHALL RISE TO REIGN OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM THE GENTILES SHALL HOPE." (Rom 15:7-12 NKJV)

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.  
(Rom 15:13 NKJV)

### **Labor in Hope 1 Corinthians 9:10**

For it is written in the law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE AN OX WHILE IT

TREADS OUT THE GRAIN." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. (1Co 9:9-10 NKJV)

### **Rest in Hope**

### **Acts 2:26**

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning Him: 'I FORESAW THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE MY FACE, FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN. THEREFORE MY HEART REJOICED, AND MY TONGUE WAS GLAD; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL REST IN HOPE. FOR YOU WILL NOT LEAVE MY SOUL IN HADES, NOR WILL YOU ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION. YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF JOY IN YOUR PRESENCE.'

(Act 2:22-28 NKJV)

### **Rejoice in Hope Romans 5:2**

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

(Rom 5:1-5 NKJV)

Be obedient and faithful to God and put your hope in Him and you will see His salvation!