

What Simeon Saw

(Luke 2:21-35)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Hellen Keller wrote “Three Days to See” in **The Atlantic Monthly** (Jan 1933) in which she made a very telling observation about most of our lives. She said, “Most of us...take life for granted. We know that one day we must die, but usually we picture that day as far in the future... We seldom think of it... The same lethargy, I am afraid, characterizes the use of all our faculties and senses. Only the deaf appreciate hearing, only the blind realize the manifold blessings that lie in sight. Particularly does this observation apply to those who have lost sight and hearing in adult life. But those who have never suffered impairment of sight or hearing seldom make the fullest use of these blessed faculties... Recently I was visited by a very good friend who had just returned from a long walk in the woods, and I asked her what she had observed. “Nothing in particular,” she replied. I might have been incredulous had I not been accustomed to such responses, **for long ago I became convinced that the seeing see little**. How was it possible, I asked myself, to walk for an hour through the woods and see nothing worthy of note?... **Those who have eyes apparently see little.**”
2. But more important is that what she said also applies to our spiritual lives and senses, which carry far greater and eternal consequences.
 - A. Jesus declared that only those who know they are blind will ever truly see (John 9:39-41 – “And Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, so that **those who do not see may see**, and that those who see may become blind.”⁴⁰ Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, “We are not blind too, are we?”⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “**If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.**”).
 - B. And when asked about why he spoke in parables Jesus explained that the handicaps of our spiritual senses are, sadly, self-inflicted (Matt. 13:13-15 – “This is why I speak to them in parables, **because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.**”¹⁴ Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed **see but never perceive.**”¹⁵ For this people’s **heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed**, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.”).
3. So, what we see, or are willing to see, is very important in our secular lives, but more importantly, in our spiritual lives.
4. With this in mind, I want to talk about what an old man named Simeon **saw**, because what he saw is something both old and young truly need to open their eyes to see today.
 - A. For, like Jesus alluded to, what he saw was not so much about what is visible to the human eye but related more to the heart and its effect on one’s eyes.
 - B. With this in mind, let’s talk about what Simeon saw.

BODY:

I. Who was Simeon?

- A. At the time our Lord was born in Bethlehem of Judea every Jew regarded his nation as *the chosen people* of God.
 1. They believed it was destined to see greatness and earthly power again, but also that it would not come by human means alone, but from God.
 - a. Some believed another king of David’s line would arise and restore all the old glory.
 - b. Others believed God himself would break directly into history by supernatural means.
 2. In contrast to that, W. Barclay says there were a few Jews known as “the Quiet in the Land” who had no dreams of violence, power, armies, etc., believed in a life of constant prayer and quiet watchfulness until God would come (**The Gospel of Luke**, p. 26).
- B. From what is revealed about Simeon:
 1. He was apparently one of those “Quiet in the Land” seeing he was waiting in faithful expectation for the day when God would bring about “the consolation/soothing/

- encouragement of Israel” (2:25).
2. He was a righteous and devout servant of God who the **Holy Spirit was upon**, and He had been promised that his life would not end before he had **seen the Lord’s Christ** (2:25-26).
 3. The **Holy Spirit led him to the temple** (2:27) to see the child brought there by Joseph and Mary in obedience to the Law to make the proper sacrifices (Lev. 12:1-8).
 - a. We see that Mary and Joseph were relatively poor, not being able to offer a lamb, but instead *a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons* (Lk. 2:22-24; Lev. 12:8).
 - b. And, while in the Temple, they met Simeon who took the infant in his arms and **blessed, or praised, God** in a beautiful hymn of thanksgiving often called the “Song of Simeon.”
 4. In this song he speaks of things God has done that he now has seen while holding the young Jesus in his arms.
 - a. It is the things he saw that I would like the focus the rest of the lesson.
 - b. For, what a blessed world this would be if all could see Jesus with the eyes of Simeon.

II. What Simeon saw:

- A. Simeon saw something **great** promised by God (Lk. 2:29, 26).
 1. It was so great that he could then *depart, or be released*, from this life in *peace*.
 - a. This was language used of freeing a slave.
 - b. God’s servant’s here speaks of the shackles of his mortal existence being happily shed. His life was complete!
 - c. How poor this world looks to one who has Christ in his arms and salvation in his view!
 - i. For see here how comfortable the passing of a righteous person is.
 - ii. He departs in peace with God, peace with his conscience, and in peace with death.
 2. Have you ever wondered what you could see that would do this for you, if such a thing exists for you, if you have seen it already, or whether it is yet to be seen?
 - a. Simeon saw it in the form of the baby Jesus he held in his arms.
 - b. If you are willing to see, God has promised you to see the same thing. That is because...
- B. Simeon saw **salvation** (Luke 2:30 – “For my eyes have seen Your salvation”).
 1. Though Jesus would have only been 40 days old according to the Law, Simeon recognized Jesus as the salvation of mankind.
 2. Note that this salvation was a **person**—not just any person, but a **person**.
 - a. Sometimes it’s tempting to think that our salvation lies in a medicine, a better job making more money, government policy, military operation, or a hundred other things.
 - b. But we need salvation from **ourselves** and the **judgment** our sin has brought upon us.
 - c. That salvation is only found in the person of Jesus, as was announced by the angel to Joseph concerning Mary’s child (Matt. 1:21 – “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for **He will save His people from their sins.**”).
- C. Simeon saw the **fulfillment of prophecy** (Lk. 2:30-31 – “For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹ Which **You have prepared in the presence of all peoples**”).
 1. The salvation he saw had been prepared historically and providentially by God Himself.
 - a. That is vital seeing that any salvation we can trust must originate with God.
 - b. The world was prepared for the coming of the Messiah through the Old Testament prophecies and God’s working out of His purposes through the Jewish nation.
 - i. I think we underestimate the impact the Jews had on the world.
 - ii. Jews were spread about the world and their religion was far different than all the rest and stood out, when properly lived, among the Gentiles!
 2. Simeon saw in the baby Jesus the initial step of God toward the fulfillment of His *consoling, or comforting Israel* (Isa. 40:1-5 – “**Comfort, O comfort My people,**” says your God. ² “**Speak kindly to Jerusalem;** and call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” ³ A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴ “Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made

low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; ⁵ Then the **glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together**; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”).

- D. Simeon saw “a Light of revelation to the Gentiles” (Lk. 2:32)
1. Prior to the coming of Christ, the world was in the darkness of ignorance, sin, and misery.
 2. Christ, however, would bring light to all nations (Isa. 49:6 – “He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a **light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**”).
 3. Christ shined this divine light upon the world (Jn. 1:1-5, 9 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and **the life was the Light of men.** ⁵ The **Light shines in the darkness**, and the darkness did not comprehend it... ⁹ There was the **true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.**”).
 - a. That light is shining before your eyes right now in the gospel message if you will only open your eyes and heart that you might understand and see it.
 4. And there is a warning concerning how you approach this light that all must consider (Jn. 3:18-21 – “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ This is the **judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.** ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God”).
- E. Simeon saw “the glory of Your people Israel” (Luke 2:32).
1. Israel was glorified in Jesus because God chose them as the people by which His Son would enter the world.
 2. They were glorified because it was through them that God would bring eternal salvation to all. For as Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22).
 3. But the Jews squandered this glory for the most part, rejecting the Christ to their own destruction and loss.
- F. Simeon also saw a warning that should be considered by all who are privileged to hear the gospel (Lk. 2:34-35 – “And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”).
1. How you are willing to see Jesus will determine whether He is for your rising to eternal life or falling to condemnation in your sins.
 2. The thoughts of your heart will be revealed by how you respond to Jesus today.

CONCLUSION:

1. Simeon was truly privileged to see Jesus and hold him in his arms. But that is not why he stands out as a servant of God.
 - A. Many, many people saw Jesus and interacted with him, but it resulted in nothing being received, no better life, no glory for them.
 - B. Simeon stood out because of what he saw in Jesus, what his heart made it possible for him to see.
 - C. And he was so blessed by what he saw that it meant he was ready to depart from this life, to shed the chains of mortality and enter the great and eternal peace of God in heaven!
2. But I want you to know that your privilege in this life does not have to be inferior, for in John 14:23 Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him and make Our abode with him.**” Yes, God can live in your life today!
3. But it all comes down to if you are willing to open your eyes and see Jesus.

- A. Will you open your eyes and choose to see Jesus and the salvation He offers to you today?
 - B. Will you see Him and trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior (Acts 2:36), repent of your sins (Acts 2:38, 3:19), confess your faith in Him (Rom. 10:9), and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 22:16).
 - C. For, to those who will truly see Jesus, who hold Him in their arms, “to die is gain” and to “be with Christ...is very much better” (Phil. 1:21, 23).
4. Will you come today as we stand and sing?