



**Bible Study**

# **Luke 2**

## **Simeon and Anna**

## **Simeon (Luke 2:25-35)**

For this Bible study, we look at a character who appears after the birth of Jesus and has been expectantly waiting for the arrival of the Messiah. Whenever Christmas draws near, let us reflect upon our hopes and expectations.

### **A Righteous and Devout Man**

Simeon, we are told, was righteous and devout. He lived in Jerusalem and found himself in the temple courts at just the right time. He had an expectancy of the Messiah's coming and saw this as a great consolation and comfort to God's suffering people. The Messiah would bring real hope! After many false dawns and fraudulent claims, the true Messiah would deliver the genuine hope that Almighty God wanted His people to have.

### **Walking with God**

Simeon is described as a man who the Holy Spirit was upon. Although the prophecy of Joel had not yet been fulfilled, Simeon had a life with God the Holy Spirit. He knew God, he walked with God and he sensed God's leading and direction in his life. God spoke to him and revealed that he would not die before he saw the promised Christ. Here is a man who undoubtedly prayed, waiting on God, desperate to see God's people rescued from their enemies and despair. His waiting was not delusion and he was not just wishfully thinking to avoid death. His conviction was born out of God's voice speaking to him.

### **Moved by the Spirit**

Moved by the Spirit, Simeon comes into the temple courts. He was in the right city, on the very day that Jesus was to be circumcised but he needed to be in the temple. We can be in the vicinity of where God wants to bless us but, unless we are exactly where He wants, we can still miss out. Undoubtedly, there were many babies there on that day but which one was the Messiah? Simeon knew and picked up the right one. Imagine the embarrassment of making a mistake! But Simeon chooses correctly. The baby he holds is Jesus, the Son of God. He knows, not by any human means, but by the leading of God. His song as he holds Jesus, is a well-known prayer today. Meeting Jesus, means that Simeon is now ready to die. Meeting Jesus, is to receive salvation, forgiveness, hope and rescue from a lost eternity and Satan's bondage. Meeting Jesus, is to encounter an eternal God who has planned all things well. Meeting Jesus, is to encounter the God who is the only Saviour for all peoples. He has come for the Jew and the Gentile, religious or pagan. Christ alone saves!

## **Simeon's Blessing and Prophecy**

Simeon pronounces a blessing upon them, together with a prophecy which will remain with Mary especially, for the rest of her life. Jesus will bring division. Some will love and accept him. Some will hate and reject him. But Jesus will see right into the heart. His discernment and penetration will be deep and powerful, not shallow or flimsy. Mary too, will find pain as well as joy in the wonderful gift of God's son. Not least, will be her pain when soldiers thrust a spear into our dear Saviour's side, as he suffers crucifixion and death for our sake!

### **Points to Consider:**

1. Do we seek to be precisely where God wants, when He wants?
2. Could we be missing out on God's blessing and revelation, because we are 'in the City' but not 'in the Temple'?
3. Do we recognise God's blessing or answer when we see it?
4. Are we ready to have God's word come from our lips, when the occasion requires it?
5. Are we willing to speak or receive words that can be painful or challenging?
6. Are we joyfully preparing to enter heaven, having fulfilled God's perfect plan for our lives?

## **Anna (Luke 2:36-38)**

After Simeon's blessing and prophecy in the temple, we are told that there was someone else in the temple that day with a similar mission. This was Anna, who might or might not have known Simeon. However, like Simeon, Anna speaks of the wonderful work of salvation, which begins with this baby, our Redeemer, truly becoming man and entering into our world!

### **Anna the Prophetess**

Anna was a prophetess and she speaks about Jesus to everyone around her. We have no record of any other prophecies that she may have spoken but she is clearly described in this way and we can be sure of this - anyone described as a prophet is not just someone who speaks God's word but is also someone who listens to God. We cannot speak in His name, if we have not spent time in His presence.

### **The Face of God**

Anna's father was Phanuel, whose name refers to the face or vision of God and certainly, one has the feeling that this precious old lady knew something of that experience. Seeking the face of God, enjoying a close relationship with God, glorifying and honouring Him, was indeed a reality to her. Anna came from a little-known tribe, the tribe of Asher, whose people played their part in the conquest of Canaan but then lived peacefully with the Phoenicians and became insignificant.

We do not know for sure but the life of Anna was probably very tough and one cannot help but think that she drew strength from waiting upon God and seeking His face. The Bible talks about God's face being turned towards people, as an expression of His favour and God's glory being reflected on the faces of those who have been near to Him. Jesus was transfigured on the mountain and his face shone like the sun; Moses had to cover his face with a veil, because of the magnificent glory that he had seen; John, on the island of Patmos, had a wonderful vision of the risen Jesus, whose face was like the sun shining in all its strength and the book of Hebrews describes Jesus as the radiance of the Father's glory!

### **Age is No Barrier!**

Anna was old. How important it is, to remember that age is not a barrier to God! His ability to use us and speak through us, is never restricted by our age or human frailty.

### **A Faithful Widow**

Anna was a widow. The figures given, suggest that she had only seven years of marriage before her husband died, so it would appear that she had been a widow for many years. The

loss of a loved spouse is always traumatic and her sense of loneliness and isolation must have been very strong. She was married for long enough to have enjoyed the blessings of a shared life but also short enough for her to keenly feel the sense of loneliness and loss. Emotionally, her heart must have been broken - so much to look forward to - all taken away! Economically, she was probably handling real adversity, as the society of her day had little inclination to care for a widow. However, it is important to realise that her faith was not diminished. She had experienced pain and loss but she still had her God! Her ministry and her ability to hear God's voice, were not weakened by her loss.

### **A Joyful Worshipper**

Anna was a worshipper. She was always in the temple. She probably had lodging there and was in constant attendance, praising God night and day, singing and declaring His glory, offering prayers and from time to time, fasting. This was all part of her life. Anna was not a sad old lady, she was a joyful, worshipping believer, full of faith!

### **Jesus the Redeemer**

Anna knew that Jesus the Redeemer, had been born and she takes the opportunity to tell all who would listen, the good news of this child. Jesus would die in our place, Jesus would pay the price to set us free from slavery to Satan and Jesus would overcome the immense loss that occurred when man fell into Satan's trap and arrogantly opposed God, in rebellion and sin.

### **Points to Consider:**

1. We are taught to care for widows in the church. Do we look after them as we should?
2. Are there things in our past which still hinder us or do have we the victory, like Anna?
3. What is most important to us - to minister in our gifts or to be a worshipper?
4. Do we seek God's face before we speak?
5. How aware are we of Jesus the Redeemer? Do we talk about him easily and readily?
6. Like Anna and Simeon, are we willing to be found in the right place, at the right time, ready to share, simply and humbly, about our hope in Jesus?