

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 78 – Jesus, the Long-awaited Messiah

By Sharon K. Griffiee

The good news of the coming of Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, was prophesied long ago through God's faithful prophets in the Holy Scriptures. God's people had been waiting expectantly for the "Messiah" (which means "Christ"), the anointed one, to come and deliver them and give them release.

When Jesus was born, the Jewish people were living under the rule of the Roman government, with an emperor who had set himself up as god and demanded worship. These forces and powers were impinging on their very lives. The hungry, the ill, the lame, the blind, the enslaved all longed for freedom from their oppressors. Many had their hopes set on a leader of military might that would one day come in and crush their enemies.

But, not everyone was looking for military might, for armies with banners. Some were waiting quietly and patiently, with prayerful expectation for the *fulfillment of prophecy*; for they believed in their heart that the Lord's Messiah would one day come to comfort His people. One of those dear ones was a man by the name of Simeon.

The Prophecy of Simeon

Luke 2:25-32 (NLT) – At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he has seen the Lord's Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the Law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God saying,

Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel! [Underlined emphasis is mine]

Simeon stated in his prophecy that the Lord had prepared salvation for all people, and all nations. That would include the Gentiles as well as Israel. Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, were amazed at what Simeon had spoken about Jesus (Luke 2:33). Of course, they knew their son, Jesus, was the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one, but to hear Simeon speak of the scope of Jesus' ministry to the world, surely required some contemplation on their part. Yet, Simeon did not hold back, but frankly told Mary what her son would be facing as he grew to manhood.

Simeon told Mary that Jesus was destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He revealed that her son had been sent as a sign from God, but that many would *oppose* Him. Her grief would be so great, because of the opposition, that she would literally feel like a sword had pierced her very soul (Luke 2:34-35).

Simeon prophesied the truth, that the only way to the Kingdom of God would be through Jesus. The ones who received salvation, who responded in love by following Jesus, are the ones who would "rise". The ones who did not believe, who responded in cold opposition to Jesus, would not receive salvation. They would "fall". Simeon also said that, "The deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed" (Luke 2:35a). It would become obvious what people really thought about Mary's son. Brothers and sisters, when confronted, there can be no neutrality with Jesus. We either surrender to Jesus or we oppose Him.

Anna, who was a godly woman and prophet of God, was also in the Temple when Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph. As she walked up to them and saw the child Jesus in Simeon's arms, joy overwhelmed her, and she began praising God. The anticipated time had arrived!

The Prophecy of Anna

Luke 2:36-38 (NLT) – Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter

of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshipping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem. [Underlined emphasis is mine]

Though Anna’s husband had died after they had only been married a few years, living as a widow to a very old age, instead of becoming bitter with things as they were, she had unshakeable faith, waiting expectantly for the promised Messiah. How could Anna stay so upbeat? It was her intimate, day by day, relationship with God that kept her strong throughout the years. She could not help but praise God for this blessed child Jesus, the Messiah, sent from heaven, now resting in Simeon’s arms.

Jesus reveals that He is the Messiah

During Jesus’ ministry he had an encounter with a Samaritan woman in the village of Sychar, at Jacob’s well. (You can read their conversation in John 4:3-30) Jesus had become tired that day because of his long walk, and was in much need of rest. While sitting by the well a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Please give me a drink.” (John 4:7, NLT)

The woman was surprised that Jesus asked her for a drink. Jews typically refused to have anything to do with a Samaritan. When questioned why he was asking her for a drink of water, Jesus replied, (John 4:10, NLT)

“If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.”

The Samaritan woman said,

“Please, Sir, give me this water! Then I’ll never be thirsty again...” (John 4:15, NLT)

As the conversation advanced, with Jesus revealing many things about her personal life and how she had been living, the woman believed Jesus to be a prophet, so she confided in Him,

John 4:25-26 (NLT) – “I know the Messiah is coming – the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus told her, “I AM the Messiah!”

Messiah, Christ Jesus, gives spiritual release

The Spirit of the Lord was upon Jesus to do all the things he was anointed to do. Jesus knew all about human suffering and why he was sent.

Luke 4:18-19 (NKJV) – “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” (See also Isaiah’s prophecy, Isaiah 61:1-2)

God brought a mighty salvation through Jesus!

Colossians 1:13-14 (NKJV) – “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

Jesus, our faithful, loving Messiah brought to us the forgiveness of sins, taking away from us the load of guilt, which gives us the freedom to reach the potential God created in us. Praise our Jesus!

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Questions for personal or group study

1. What conditions were the Jewish people living under when Jesus was born?
2. Explain Simeon’s prophecy that Jesus was destined to cause many in Israel to “fall” and many to “rise”.
3. How did the prophet Anna stay so upbeat while waiting for the promised Messiah?
4. What did Jesus, our faithful, loving Messiah bring to us through His mighty salvation?