

SIMEON AND ANNA, Lk.2:21-40

Casting Call #7

◆ **Intro:** Know what a God-Thing is? It's when something happens that proves to you that God is real, is listening and answering your cries because it's a clear answer to a need or a prayer that couldn't be anything but God. I like to keep records of them so I have something to share with people who wonder how I can believe in God. Here's a simple one that happened in my last church back in 2009. I wrote the church an email to tell them about it.

◆ "Dear First Family, Well, those of you who were in worship on Sept.5 know that I asked us all to pray together over whether God wanted us to paint a house in the community that coming Saturday. I freely agreed we couldn't do everything and wasn't sure if this was something God wanted us to do, because of the lack of sign ups. You may recall that I told everyone I'd been praying about it and decided that if we didn't have 20 sign-ups we weren't going to do it. We'd just hire the job out for the family we promised to help. That was kinda my "fleece" if you remember Gideon's story. Well, guess what! I went to the sign-up box after church and counted out the salmon-colored slips of paper. THERE WERE EXACTLY 20!"

◆ I love it when things like that happen! I think they are some of God's ways of encouraging us so we can get through the hard times. And God Things like that are happening in our text. And I think that they show us several things.

◆ **1.** There's a glaring reality in Simeon and Anna's Christmas experience. It's the predicted conflict. **The Christmas story**

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tells me that going with Jesus is going to get tough.

Simeon's oracle about Jesus points out that Jesus brings conflict. Following him is not all sweetness and light, for the fallen world is against him, and if you are his follower it is against you and want's to shut you down. Jesus said

◆ *Luke 12:51 Do you think I came to bring peace on earth?*

No, I tell you, but division.

◆ Simeon hints to Mary of the persecution, and challenges, and the disregard Jesus will suffer, as well as his death on the cross. This is going to cut Mary to the core. Remember, she has no concept of resurrection yet. She's never heard of Easter yet. She'll watch the boy named by an angel, gifted by Magi, die by Roman nails before any great "revolution" has happened!

◆ And Luke wants us to know that believing the Christmas story draws a line in the sand. A dangerous, dreadful and serious line. Jesus brings a sword, and like a surgeon, must cut you before you can be healed. It cuts to admit your sin. It hurts your pride to ask for forgiveness. That's why we don't do it. It's a pain to live in this world with our old self and our new self in Christ; where 1/2 of us wants to be pure and holy, and the other 1/2 is really attracted to things God says are immoral. That's a life of fighting all the way to the grave, which is why many rather not. But there is no path to eternal peace without the conflict.

◆ This all means our response to Jesus makes all the difference. We can either rise with Jesus through faith and obedience, or we

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will certainly fall over him in unbelief and end up in eternal destruction. Jesus came as a “light for revelation to the gentiles.” This means Jesus came to show all non-believers the true revelation of God, and what we do with it will determine whether we fall or rise. Is your heart humble enough to trust Christ alone for salvation from sin, or is it so proud you will end up stumbling over him?

♦**2. When the going gets tough, I need to remember God’s Christmas plan is the ancient truth, and nothing will stop it’s fulfillment.** At the point of this story Jesus has been on earth a mere 40 days. On Day 8 he was circumcised because God knew the body does have vitamin K to clot blood until the 8th day, but they didn’t know that information. They were obeying OT law (Lev12:3). Then, as also decreed in the Law of Moses, on Day 40 mom needed to offer sacrifices for the uncleanness of child birth. And firstborn son needs to be dedicated to the Lord so dad, mom, and baby Jesus all go to the temple.

♦**A.** What Luke especially wants us to see, I think, is that everything in the life of Jesus from Day 1 was carefully in line with the ancient laws of God. You can see this in the oft’ repeated statements that they did as the law required.

♦v21 “*when it was time*” refers to the OT law in Genesis 17:12

♦v22 has “*according to the law of Moses*”.

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- ◆ v23 has *"as it is written in the law"* from Exodus 13:2
- ◆ v24 refers to *"what is said in the law"* in Leviticus 12:8.
- ◆ v27 says they came to do *"what the custom of the law required."*
- ◆ v39 tells us they did *everything required by the law of the Lord.*
- ◆ Surprising emphasis, don't you think? This might make sense if Luke was writing to Jews like Matthew did and wanted to show them how Jesus was keeping their own law, but Luke is writing to Theophilus, a Roman official who doesn't care about cultic Jewish law. So why does he keep showing us that Jesus life is carefully following the laws of Judaism? Hint; it shows these are devout people for sure, and more!
- ◆ **B.** The same question comes up in Luke's account of other "God Things" that take place at Jesus' birth. Luke tells us about the aged temple priest Zechariah and his old, barren wife Elizabeth who meet an angel and are told they'll have a son who prepares the way for the Messiah! Whoa! "God Thing" for sure! Here's what he records about them.
 - ◆ "Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years." Lk.1:6
- ◆ So they're old, but devout, and followers of the law! Luke in our text emphasized that Simeon was also a "righteous" and "devout"

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man, ready to die (old) but longing to see the Messiah first as God has promised him. (That's who the "Consolation of Israel" is, as promised by the prophet Isaiah.) Next Luke tells us about a 105 year old prophetess, Anna (Jewish girls married as early as 13 or 14. Anna was married 7 years and then a widow for 84. Do the math and she's at least around 105). What else about Anna? Well, Anna was always at church! Anna was constantly in prayer and even fasted so as to concentrate on talking with God.

◆ Now it's both Simeon and Anna who just "happen to show up" just when Joseph, Mary, and Jesus "happen" into the temple along with the other crowds of people bringing sacrifices that day. They just "happen" to both go straight up to Jesus and they both proclaim that he is Israel's "Consolation", or "the Redemption of Jerusalem". Luke of course is showing us "God Things" that you can't explain any other way. He knows that God's Holy Spirit directed both Simeon and Anna, just as God's angel directed Zachariah and Elizabeth. Now why does Luke take the time to show us that Jesus is attested to by devout, Jewish, temple-frequenting people, and the really old ones at that?

◆ **C.** Understand this. Rome was theologically pluralistic; they allowed for many religions of the peoples they conquered, particularly ancient ones. Rome had sanctioned Judaism. The Jews however, tried to turn Rome against the Christian by calling them a new, strange, heresy. Luke is showing Theophilus and us that Christianity is not a crazy, new, start-up religion but a

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fulfillment of a faith that goes way back. That is, the Christmas story started a long, long time ago, even before Rome.

◆ The TEMPLE servants know him. The OLD temple servants know him. These are not “20 Somethings” who might easily latch on to a new push for socialism because they haven’t lived through much history and haven’t seen that it never works. This is not a new, made up thing like Kwanza, invented in 1966 with no historical roots to African ancestry, and no relation to religion. No, The Christmas Child’s appearance has ancient historical credit! In fact, Jesus’s story goes all the way to Adam! Christmas was first promised in Genesis chapter 3 where God cursed the serpent:

◆ *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Gen.3:15*

◆ **D.** There’s a bit more. Luke wants Theophilus and us to know that God has all along been out to save people of ALL nations and peoples! Simeon proclaims it! He quotes Isaiah who spoke of God’s Chosen One, who would save Israel from their sins, but would also do the same thing for all other nations (*a light for revelation to the Gentiles*) through Israel (*glory to your people Israel*). We should probably look at where Simeon got this notion, as most of the Jews of his day seemed to have missed it.

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♦ *Isaiah 49:6 he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."*

♦ **E.** Ok, time to bring this part of the Christmas story home. So the Bethlehem Babe 1) goes way back and 2) is for all people. In other words, God is calling to you Theophilus! The one *true* God has sent his Messiah to you! (Put your own name in there.) See the Christmas Story is at the core of all human history, and that makes it for all humans in history, for Rome too.

♦ And it's the story America needs to know too, even though we are pluralistic like Rome was. Just because the government allows freedom of religion doesn't mean all religions are legitimate or true! Don't buy into this unbiblical notion. American Christians need to stop hovering around in their own free little places agreeing that Christmas is good for me, but maybe not for you. We certainly don't force it on anyone, but God followers know that *everyone needs this Christmas message of God's son appearing in human history to take our sin's punishment on himself so we can live in heaven's history forever.* So when someone asks "how was your Christmas?" find a way to mention that.

♦ Ok, there's another historical continuity going on in our text that teaches us...

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◆3. When the going gets tough, I need to remember to call on the Holy Spirit to show me the way! Ask!

◆Luke tells us the *Holy Spirit* told Simeon he'd live to see the Messiah. The *Holy Spirit* led Simeon to the temple. Simeon was merely a "man", not a priest or a prophet. Then there's Anna (woman), a prophetess, which obviously relies on God's Spirit.

◆Some Christians think that there was no Holy Spirit in the Old Testament days. The Holy Spirit was poured out in a unique way at Pentecost. Luke will write about this to Theophilus in Acts 2. And since then Jesus actually takes up residence in every believer's soul in a new way (men, women, priests, prophetesses, all). But just as God is not new on the scene, neither is the second person of the Trinity. Just as the Son was present at creation (John 1), and the "Spirit hovered over the deep"(Gen.1), so God's Holy Spirit has been moving and empowering people all along through history. Quick short list?

◆**Samson** was filled with the Holy Spirit and slew hordes of Philistines. *Judges 15:14-15 As Samson arrived at Lehi, the Philistines came shouting in triumph. But the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon Samson, and he snapped the ropes on his arms as if they were burnt strands of flax, and they fell from his wrists. Then he found the jawbone of a recently killed donkey. He picked it up and killed 1,000 Philistines with it.*

◆The Spirit came upon King **Saul**. *1 Samuel 10:10 When they arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him; the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying.*

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◆ **Bazalel!** The Spirit of God gives people talents! "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts– to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. Ex.31:2-5

◆ We could go on and on: The Spirit came over **Joshua**. All the **Judges** were said to be empowered by the Spirit of God. So what are we finding out? That God's Holy Spirit is always at work in human history, that the Spirit leads people, and informs people, and empowers people all the more as we are devout in following him. Don't miss that devout piece either. Simeon and Anna hear the Spirit because they are people paying attention to the Spirit every day! They are both characterized by the words "waiting for" or "looking forward to", which are the exact same term in Greek (prosdechomai).

◆ **Conclusion;** so if you are a worried person, or a wondering person, or a tense person... If you feel intimidated, afraid, or lost... know that you can bow to Jesus as savior and God, and his Holy Spirit will guide you. You can ask for him, he is available to you for he lives in the soul of every believer! The more you seek, and look for, and forward to God's redemption, the more he guides you. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's original plan for humanity. Jesus is available to you through his Holy Spirit. You must face the conflict of deciding what to do with him. One

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choice will cause you to stumble. The other will involve some stumbling, but will always end in resurrection.

◆2 Timothy 4:8

◆Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.