

Called to Ministry Class 5

The Call of Simeon to Confirm

Luke 2:25-35 The Call of Simeon is a powerful call narrative and challenges our preconceptions and estimates of value and power. A couple of observations first, Simeon, is the Hebrew form of the given name of one of the Apostles, we know as Peter. He is often referred to as Simon, the Greek form of Simeon, or as a couple of Israeli Prime Ministers have been named Shimon. In fact, we see Peter refer to himself with this Hebrew form in 2 Peter 1:1 and Luke refers to him as such in Acts 15:14. Simeon, was the second son of Jacob by Leah, see Gen 29:33 and his name is linked to the verb meaning heard..."Because the Lord has heard..."He is the patriarch of the tribe bearing his name.

This Simeon, is a righteous man who was waiting in expectation for the coming of the Messiah, the Anointed One who would inaugurate the Rule and Reign of God upon the Earth. There was evidently a group or remnant who waited around the Temple in Jerusalem expecting the Messiah to arrive, see Mal 3:1. In fact, Simeon had had some kind of visitation by the Holy Spirit...It is an unusual thing to hear a message from God. Some people seem to experience this more than others...often it may come as a thought or impression...which in retrospect seems like a prompting by God to see something or do something or be something or go somewhere. Sometimes others seem to have 'words' for us...they may not fully understand the 'word or words' they have for us...and we may not fully understand or frankly understand at all the 'word' they bring to us.

Simeon seems to have been a part of this expectant group who believed the Prophets of old and anticipated that they lived on the threshold of the changing of the Ages. The word that the Holy Spirit brought to Simeon was, despite the fact that he was old and nearing death...he would live to see the 'Consolation of Israel'. What do you think Consolation might mean?

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Consoling is a ministry to those who have known loss...it is a ministry to the mourning. Israel is pictured in mourning but not as those who have no hope...as Paul says it in 1 Thess 4. Israel mourns but keeps a Promise of God in view, that Israel's mourning will end. Israel mourns because the glory of the Lord has departed. Recall last week, we spoke of the two children who epitomized Israel's life in blessing Immanuel (God with us) Is 7:14 and Ichabod (The Glory of the Lord has departed) 1 Sam 4:21. Is 40:1-11, especially v.5, is the promise.

Luke's mention of the Holy Spirit is consistent with the other call narratives...and Luke speaks more of the Holy Spirit than the other Evangelists/Gospel writers with the possible exception of John.

Mary and Joseph go to the Temple to present the child and to make atonement for her ceremonial uncleanness following childbirth, see Lev 12:2-6. We see that though Joseph is of the royal family, they have little. How do we know that?

Simeon, it would seem has been prompted by the Spirit to go to the Temple that day...and he did. The Spirit had revealed to him that though he was old, he would not die until he had seen Yahweh's Messiah! Apparently, prompted by the Spirit he recognizes Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus as the Holy Family...and he took Him up in his arms and blessed God!

Let's go back and look at our format for a call narrative.

Entrance of Divine Epiphany the Divine messages of Simeon and Anna

Empowerment by the Spirit Lk 2:25 "The Holy Spirit was upon him..."

Endowment with Self Consciousness Lk 2:32 "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel."

Explanation of Mission Lk 2:34 "The child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against."

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This is now the 5th song Luke records for us in these first two chapters. Go back and look at the verses in these two chapters that are written in poetic form...can you see the five songs?

The Song of Simeon is known as the Nunc Dimittis...Latin for Now let me go. We should notice both here and particularly in the OT how frequently prophecy is delivered in verse, lyrically. Second we should notice, how imbued with the Bible these people are...and how little we are. Their thoughts, view of the world, insight into their life and the meaning of things were all influenced through the lens of Holy Scripture. Notice as well, that Simeon's prophecy stands on the shoulders of the prophets who have gone before him...notice 3 different references to Isaiah's prophecy Is 52:10; 42:6; 49:6. Let's look those up. See also Is 8:14.

Is 52:10 The promise of God's return to rescue

42:6 God gave Israel to be a light to the nations or Gentiles

49:6 The promise of restoration for the remnant of Israel to be God's vehicle to bring his salvation to the nations to the uttermost parts of the earth...through his Servant. Most of the NT ties Jesus to the Servant passages in Isaiah 40-66 in terms of His suffering and humiliation but here Jesus is tied to the glory and salvation and victory of God through the Servant.

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Simeon and Anna were too old to be thought significant in their society...but God thought they were significant! They were not influential in government or business or in the Temple. They apparently were not wealthy or thought important financially...but they were known by God and were seen as significant by him...they were important to Mary and Joseph and later to Jesus as either Mary or Jesus was the source of this story...likely Mary. They were influential in prayer, they were influential in the Temple, they were influential as witnesses, who had eyes of faith, who had lips of faith to testify to what they had heard from God and seen God do in keeping his promises. Anna is called a prophetess and like Simeon prophesies of Jesus as the one bringing redemption to Jerusalem. She serves as a second witness...significant because she is female. Women were not allowed to testify in a judicial matter but God calls her to testify. In Jewish tradition 7 women are called prophetesses, Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah and Esther. The OT portrays Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah this way along Naodiah in Neh 6:14 and Isaiah's wife in Is 8:3. Anna is portrayed as a vessel of God's words about the Savior. Luke more than any other Evangelist emphasizes the role of women in the work of the Kingdom.

Their witness should be a reminder that our time of greatest influence in the Kingdom may not be in our years of vitality and strength but in years of weakness and age. Simeon's and Anna's stories and witness suggest that Yogi Berra was right, "It ain't over til it's over." If we are here we should keep our ears open, keep our eyes open and keep our hearts open...because our most significant contribution to the King and the Kingdom may still be in front of us no matter what our chronological age. Another observation is that these old people were interested in the lives of younger people and they sought ways to be a blessing to those who would come after them.