

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Luke 2:25-38

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, December 29, 2013

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, December 29, 2013**, is from **Luke 2:25-38**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the *International Bible Lessons Commentary* website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught and in *The Oklahoman* newspaper.

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Luke 2:25-38

(Luke 2:25) Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him.

Luke continued to describe the moral and spiritual character of those who made comments about or had a significant relationship to the baby Jesus. Simeon was a righteous man, which meant he lived by faith in God. He was devout because he did what God required beyond mere human expectations of what it meant to be “religious.” He lived in faith and the Holy Spirit rested on him. He lived daily with the expectation that the Messiah would come as God had promised him. Because his way of life was consistent with the truth and the law of God, people respected him and saw that he was particularly loyal to God and sought to serve God to the best of his ability.

(Luke 2:26) It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.

The Holy Spirit revealed the truth about the coming Messiah to Simeon. The Holy Spirit also inspired Luke to record God’s assessment of Simeon. Because Simeon lived by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit, God called him to meet Jesus and His parents to encourage them and bear witness to them that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah. They probably needed this reassurance then, because they would soon need to flee to Egypt because of the danger to Jesus’ life (as recorded by the Gospel of Matthew).

(Luke 2:27) Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law,

Luke described the work of the Holy Spirit in Simeon as “rested on him” and “revealed to him” and “guided” him. The Holy Spirit can do all of these things and more in the lives of those who live by faith in the Messiah as Simeon did (he lived with faith in the Messiah who was to come, as did the prophets and people of faith in the Old Testament). The Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers so they can live righteous and devout lives (as He did in Simeon’s life). God arranged the perfect timing for Simeon to meet Jesus and His parents when they went to the temple in obedience to the law of God. All of them obeyed God’s law and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in faith, and they all received a blessing from God.

(Luke 2:28) Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

Simeon was obviously a follower of the Holy Spirit, who devoutly worshiped God in the temple. Because the Holy Spirit rested on him, when he took Jesus into his arms, Mary and Joseph obviously trusted him. Simeon’s response to holding the baby Jesus was praise to God, which is the response of all believers when they hold a baby; they know that every child is a gift of God. But

Simeon's response was more than this because he knew that God had fulfilled His promise to him as he held the baby Jesus in his arms.

(Luke 2:29) “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;

Simeon praised God and then explained that God had fulfilled His promise to him. He was holding in his arms the LORD's Messiah (Luke 2:26). He was seeing the consolation of Israel: God's solution to the slavery of His people – not just the solution to the enslavement of Rome or the enslavement of religious leaders, but also the solution to the slavery to sin that afflicted all people and that would eventually lead the religious leaders to crucify Jesus. Having fulfilled His promise to Simeon, Simeon said that God was also preparing him to die in peace according to His promise.

(Luke 2:30) for my eyes have seen your salvation,

Jesus is God's salvation. Jesus' name means “God saves” or “God is salvation.” Jesus, in His own Person, is God's salvation. Salvation is by and through Jesus and His work. By the very nature of who Jesus is, the Son of God and the promised Messiah, Jesus would do all that God promised and required to make salvation possible for all who would believe in Him as Lord and Savior, as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, as Salvation.

(Luke 2:31) which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

Simeon revealed that Jesus was born in the presence of all peoples in the sense that He was seen by those of lowly and humble estate and He would be seen by the wise and wealthy as Matthew recorded regarding the wise men that came from the east to see the baby Jesus. During his ministry, Jesus (as the salvation of God) would be seen by people of every class and rank, and some would confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior.

(Luke 2:32) a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

God declared that Abraham’s descendants were to bless all nations, which included the Gentiles (all who are not Israelites). Even though the Israelites did not do this as priests to all nations, and even though Jews and Gentiles despised one another, God fulfilled His intentions through one of Abraham’s descendants, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus came to bless all peoples and all nations by revealing the truth about God to the Gentiles who did not have the Scriptures, and by bringing glory to Israel because the Savior of the world was from the tribe of Judah.

(Luke 2:33) And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him.

The more we read and understand the Bible as the Holy Spirit helps us, and the more we learn about our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the more amazed and grateful we feel because we know that we do not deserve the grace of God and our increasing knowledge of God. In a similar way, we can understand how Joseph and Mary felt every time they heard the truth from God's people and learned more about their son and His Father's expectations.

(Luke 2:34) Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed"

Simeon blessed both parents and child. By addressing Mary directly and not Joseph, some believe this indicated that Joseph would have died before Jesus began His ministry or was crucified. Joseph is not mentioned during Jesus' public ministry as being alive and involved in Jesus' life, but some people knew about Joseph as Jesus' father (as they supposed). Simeon told Mary that some would fall from prominence or fall further away from God; others would rise to prominence and rise or draw closer to God as servants of the Messiah. He said that Jesus was a sign from God and as a sign from God Jesus would be opposed by some.

(Luke 2:35) so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Through the Holy Spirit, God wanted to prepare Joseph and Mary for the difficult future for them and Jesus. Life would not be easy for them because Mary had given birth to the Messiah, the Son of God. Living by faith in their Son the Messiah would lead to difficulties for them in this world. For example, King Herod would want to kill and try to kill the infant Jesus because he wanted to kill the Messiah. Mary would suffer grief, but the Holy Spirit did not reveal how or when she would suffer heartbreak because of Jesus. She would stand at the foot of His cross, and Jesus would entrust her to the care of John (which also indicated that Joseph may have died by that time).

(Luke 2:36) There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,

Luke told how the Holy Spirit made some people into prophets. On the day Simeon met Jesus, he may not have been known as a prophet, but he may have told people for years about God's promise to him and then when God fulfilled His promise they knew he was a prophet. Anna was known as a prophet; men and women could both be prophets. She was important enough as a prophet that

Luke could identify her by her tribe and status as an elderly widow. When Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land, he located the tribe of Asher in what became Galilee (where Jesus would live and begin His ministry), but after the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., it became one of the lost tribes of Israel. The fact that Luke recorded that Anna was from the tribe of Asher indicates how important it was to people for them to keep a record of and remember their ancestral tribes.

(Luke 2:37) then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day.

Some commentators believe the original Greek text of Luke is better translated that Anna had been a widow for 84 years (not simply that she was 84 years old). In any event, she was old. “She never left the temple” may be an expression that means she was always seen in the temple whenever anyone went there, or she may have been so old that she simply remained there all the time and made her home there in some way. It may mean that because she was a prophet she in some way lived on the temple grounds and people met her physical needs out of respect for what she said and did as a prophet. She worship, fasted, and prayed which are activities of righteous and devout believers in the God of Israel.

(Luke 2:38) At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The moment Simeon saw Jesus, he praised God. The moment a renowned prophet, Anna, saw Jesus, she praised God. By this time, Joseph and Mary would have moved into a house where the wise men would also praise God when they met Jesus, and where Joseph and Mary would be warned to flee to Egypt to escape King Herod's wrath. Those looking for the redemption of Jerusalem were looking for the Messiah to come and save the city from Roman oppression. From the words of Simeon, people learned that this baby would need to grow up and become a man before this could ever happen. Of course, freeing the Jews from political oppression was not God's plan during the first coming of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus came to redeem God's people from slavery to sin. Jesus began His public ministry about 30 years after He was born. Those in the temple that day learned from these two righteous witnesses that the Messiah had been born and God had given them the opportunity to see Him.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. List five ways that Luke described the type of person Simeon was.
2. Can you think of any others in the Bible (Old and New Testaments) who had some or all of the five qualities that Simeon demonstrated?
3. Can you think of anyone you have known (or have heard about other than those in the Bible) who had some or all of the five qualities that Simeon demonstrated?
4. Why do you think all of these people demonstrated these qualities?
5. What did Anna do that prepared her to speak about the baby Jesus?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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