



What Child is This?

Luke 2:22-38

- ❑ Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem. Read Luke 2:22-38.
- ❑ Mary and Joseph went to the temple in obedience to Jewish law (2:22-24, 27). Their purpose was to offer a sacrifice for Mary's purification,¹ and to dedicate their firstborn.²

Simeon's Answer

- ❑ "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon" (2:25), who met Joseph, Mary and Jesus in the temple courts (2:27).

1. What do we know about Simeon? What was he looking for, and why? (2:25-26)

- ❑ Simeon was "waiting for the consolation (comfort) of Israel" (2:25) – the hope that God would come to rescue and comfort his people. This hope was tied to the promised Messiah (Christ).³ Furthermore, God had revealed to Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the Christ.
- ❑ The Holy Spirit led Simeon into the temple courts where he met Jesus' family. Simeon took the child Jesus in his arms and praised God (2:27-28).

2. What did Simeon say to God? (2:28-32) What did Simeon's words indicate⁴ about God?⁵ What did his words indicate about Jesus?

- ❑ Simeon said, "For my eyes have seen your salvation" (2:30). Seeing "salvation" is directly linked to seeing Jesus – the Savior (2:11).

3. The coming of the Christ was good news! (2:10) For whom did he come? How could people know and understand God's way of salvation?⁶ (2:31-32) How can *we* know and understand?



📖 "I will make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (*Isaiah 49:6, NIV*).

¹ According to Leviticus 12:2-4, 6-8, which applied to mothers after childbirth. 'their (*autōn*) purification' (*Luke 2:22, ESV*) suggests that Joseph also needed purification, perhaps because of his involvement in the birth process. The offering of 'a pair of doves or two young pigeons' (2:24) indicates that they could not afford a lamb (*Leviticus 12:8*).

² Exodus 13:2, 12, 15; 34:19; Numbers 18:15-16.

³ Isaiah spoke of this promised comfort (*Isaiah 40:1; 49:13; 51:3; 57:18; 61:2*). Simeon's hope was shared by fellow Jews, but he also had a special expectation based on God's revelation that he would see the Christ before he died (2:26).

⁴ 'indicate' – point out, make known or show

⁵ Simeon acknowledged God as sovereign and faithful (2:29a). God is the all-powerful ruler of the universe, and he is faithful to fulfill all his promises, including his promise to Simeon (2:26). In verse 31, Simeon talked about the salvation which God had 'prepared' (*hētoimasas*). This refers to God's plan of salvation through the history of Israel. Having seen the Lord's Christ, Simeon said, 'now dismiss your servant in peace' (2:29b). Simeon had been actively watching and waiting, but now he could rest in peace. The Prince of Peace had come.

⁶ 'all peoples' (2:31, *ESV*) includes both Jews & Gentiles (non-Jews). 'light' (2:32) might apply to both Gentiles & Jews, or else God's salvation may be a light to the Gentiles in particular (*Isaiah 49:6*). In any case, the 'light' is in Jesus (*John 1:9*). Jesus is God's revelation to the Gentiles for their salvation, and Jesus is Israel's glory. He is the ultimate Israel, the fulfillment of Israel's part in God's plan of salvation, for both Jews and Gentiles. Mary and Joseph 'marveled at what was said about him' (2:33) as the revelation kept coming. Jesus was not just Israel's savior but the savior of the world.

- ❑ Not all of Simeon’s words were comforting. He said to Mary, “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too” (2:34-35, *NIV*). This alludes to Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16.⁷
 - 📖 “[The LORD] will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall” (8:14, *NIV*).
 - 📖 “the Sovereign LORD says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic’” (28:16, *NIV*).
- ❑ Peter wrote, “Now to you who believe [is honor].⁸ But to those who do not believe ... [Christ is] a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall” (1 Peter 2:7a, 8a). Those who reject Christ stumble and fall in the sight of God, resulting in shame. They miss God’s way – the way of salvation and life.
- ❑ Simeon knew that Jesus would bring division. Some would accept him while others would reject him. (This is still the case today.) This division would reveal the thoughts of many hearts (2:35).
 4. What do you think Simeon meant when he told Mary, “a sword will pierce your own soul too”? (2:35)⁹



Anna’s Answer

- ❑ After they met Simeon – a devout man, Jesus’ family met a devout woman (2:36-37).¹⁰ Anna “gave thanks to God and spoke to all who were looking forward to the redemption of [Israel]”¹¹ (2:38). Though her words are not recorded, she obviously affirmed that Jesus was the Christ.
 - 📖 “Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem” (Isaiah 52:9, *NIV*).

Your Answer

- You may not be a prophet or prophetess like Simeon or Anna, but *you* have received revelation from God, through the Bible. How do you answer the question, “What child is this?” What kind of “stone” is Jesus Christ in your life? Is he your foundation stone or a stumbling stone?
- Simeon and Anna believed in Jesus as Christ the Savior, and gave testimony of what God had revealed to them. As a believer, are you giving testimony concerning Jesus Christ? Are you sharing with others *your* answer to the question, “What child is this?”

⁷ These verses are conflated (brought together) in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:4, 6-8. Another OT verse is Psalm 118:22, which Peter quotes (1 Peter 2:7) and Jesus quotes, alluding to Isaiah 8:14 (Luke 20:17). Wherever this stone image is used in the New Testament, the rejected stone is always identified as Jesus Christ (also Matt. 21:42-44; Mark 12:10-11; Acts 4:11-12; Eph. 2:20-22). Yet Christ is the ‘cornerstone,’ of greatest importance for this life and the life to come.

⁸ The NIV translates verse 7a, ‘Now to you who believe, this stone is precious,’ but most commentators believe the verse is better translated, “So the honor (*hē timē*) is for you who believe...” (ESV), which is more consistent with the previous verse: “the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame” (1 Peter 2:6a, ESV, NIV). Though the world may attempt to shame believers, honor (*not* shame) will belong to believers when they stand before God.

⁹ Mary experienced deep emotional pain because of the division surrounding Jesus. She experienced great pain as she witnessed his rejection, eventually resulting in his torture and crucifixion. Though not excluding Jesus’ rejection, Bock believes Mary’s pain included the division experienced in her own family (Mark 3:31-34; Matt. 10:34-36, cp. Luke 12:51-53) (Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994], 249-250.)

¹⁰ Her devotion was shown by her constant presence in the temple court. “she never left the temple” does not necessarily mean she actually lived there, but it stresses her life’s passion and occupation during her waking hours.

¹¹ ‘redemption (*lytrōsin*) of Jerusalem’ = the redemption of Israel, equivalent to the consolation of Israel (2:25).