

December 24, 2005 by Steve Brandon



The Life of Jesus

Luke 2:34-35

1. A Life of Destiny (verse 34a)

2. A Life of Division (verse 34b-35a)

3. A Life of Revelation (verse 35b)

(This message was given as a devotional to conclude a Christmas Eve service that we enjoyed together as a church).

I would like to focus upon two verses of Scripture this evening. They are the words of Simeon, found in Luke 2:34-35. It was "revealed to [Simeon] by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (verse 26). In verse 25, we read that he was "looking for the consolation of Israel." He was anticipating the day when the Lord would come to Israel. We can only imagine of the anticipation that he would have as he came into the temple day after day, wondering if indeed this would be the day when he would see the Christ. I'm sure that many days he returned home a bit disappointed that it didn't yet happen.

But, there came to be a day in which it did happen: the day when Jesus was brought into the temple to be dedicated to the Lord (verses 22-24). We aren't told how Simeon knew that Jesus was the Christ. Perhaps the Holy Spirit told him in the morning as he went to the temple, "Simeon, today is the day! This morning, around the third hour of the day, you will see a couple coming in to dedicate their first born. The child's name is 'Jesus.'" Perhaps the Holy Spirit told him only when he was helping Mary and Joseph with the dedicatory sacrifices. "Simeon, this is the one! Simeon, this is the Christ!" We don't know exactly how the Holy Spirit identified Jesus, but it must have been something like this.

In verse 28, he speaks forth praise to God. At that point, he was ready to die. He had seen the "light of revelation to the Gentiles" (verse 32). He had seen the "glory of ... Israel" (verse 32). And then, Simeon turned to Mary and told her, ...

Luke 2:34-35

Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed--and a sword will pierce even your own soul--to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

These words were prophetic words. They anticipated what the life of Jesus would look like. From the beginning of the life of Christ, it was known what course His life would take. His life was ...

1. A Life of Destiny (verse 34a)

Even from the start of the life of Christ, many things were destined for Him. You can see it there in Simeon's words. He said, "This Child is appointed." As the NIV says, "This child is destined." It simply means that the life of Christ had a plan in this world, which was determined beforehand. The stage has been set for Jesus to carry out His purpose. The table has been set for Jesus to sit and eat.

On the one hand, it's astonishing to think that even as a child, Jesus was destined for these things. But, really, it comes as no surprise. For years, the prophets had told of how Messiah would come. Daniel even gave the time-frame of the Messiah. The Jews were long expecting Him to come. It's no surprise that God had determined what the Messiah would do when He actually did come.

In the rest of the prophecy, Simeon will tell us of many things that Jesus will do in His life. And as we read through these things, some of them have good effects, and some of them have bad effects. His life was ...

2. A Life of Division (verse 34b-35a)

Look closely at verse 34 and you will see the things that are destined for Jesus. Simeon says that He will cause "the fall and rise of many in Israel." I believe that these words indicate what would take place as Jesus would encounter the many people during His life. Jesus had an amazing effect upon people. He polarized them. You either loved Jesus, or you hated Jesus. There was no middle ground with Jesus. There were those who came to embrace Him with their whole hearts. There were those who opposed Him with their whole hearts.

I think about the disciples that Jesus called to Himself. How many of them left everything that they had to follow Christ. In Matthew's gospel, the story is told of how Jesus was merely walking along a beach one day and spotted some fishermen. He told them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). "They immediately left their nets, and followed Him" (Matt. 4:20). They didn't give any two-week notice. They quit their fishing profession on the spot. James and John, left their father in the boat by Himself (Matt. 4:21-22)..

I think of Matthew, the tax collector. One day, he was sitting in his tax office, doing his work. Jesus came to him and said, "Follow Me!" (Matt. 9:9). Matthew tells us that he "rose and followed Him" (Matt. 9:9). We almost get the sense that he left everything in the office as it was and

followed Jesus.

So committed were His disciples, that Peter's own confession to Jesus was "Behold, we have left everything and followed You" (Matt. 19:27).

Do you know the result of their lives? They rose in Israel. They became the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20), which is God's plan of redemption at this time. So high did they rise that their names will forever be inscribed upon the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem.

The word here that Simeon used to say that many would "rise," is the same word used to describe the resurrection. Whether Simeon was speaking of literal resurrection from the dead is difficult to know exactly. But, it is true, that those who embraced Jesus and followed Him will know of a final resurrection some day. Those who have repented of their sin and followed Christ will conquer death in the same manner as He did. They will rise from the dead to live with Christ forever. This is your destiny if you believe and trust in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

But not everybody will be raised to life on that day. Remember, His life was a life of division. Through the ministry of Jesus, many would fall (verse 34). I believe that this is talking about those people who have encountered Jesus and have rejected Him.

During the life of Jesus, there were many who rejected Him. The Rich Young Ruler came to Jesus and turned away from Jesus because His demands were too high (Matt. 19). The cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum turned away from Jesus, because they didn't believe him (Matt. 11:20-24). Those who knew Jesus in Nazareth rejected Jesus, because of their unbelief (Matt. 13:58). In fact, the very first time that Jesus ever preached in His hometown, those who heard him were filled with rage and sought to kill Him (Luke 4:16-29).

Of course, the Pharisees and Sadducees rejected Him. They hated His healing power, and yet demanded that He perform signs, so that they might trap Him. They despised His teaching, and yet they asked Him questions, so that they might trip Him up in what He said. After years of hatred and animosity, they finally schemed to kill Him.

I believe that all of this is what Simeon was referring to when he said that Jesus would be "a sign to be opposed" (verse 34). Though Jesus spoke as no man spoke, though Jesus taught as no man taught, though Jesus could heal as no man had ever healed, though Jesus was all righteousness, though Jesus was perfectly kind and gracious and compassionate, ... yet, He was opposed by the Pharisees and Sadducees. He was a sign of perfect humanity! And yet, he was opposed.

You know the story. When they saw their opportunity, they bribed one of the followers of Christ to be a traitor. They came to arrest Jesus in the dark of the night with multitudes of soldiers. They held an illegal, midnight trial, and found Him guilty on trumped up charges. They brought Jesus to Pilate and bullied him into handing Jesus over for crucifixion. And so, Jesus died upon the cross. His life was a life of division Jesus had a way of dividing people. You either loved Him or you hated Him.

You can even see this division as Jesus hung upon the cross. One thief hurled verbal abuse at Jesus. While the other repented and trusted in Christ. The souls of the Pharisees were hardened against Him as they continued their mocking of Him, even as He was dying. But, others would continue to minister to Him during and after His death, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are but two examples. Certainly, Mary's soul was crushed in sorrow as Jesus hung on the cross.

In verse 35, Simeon warned Mary of how difficult things would be for her. He said that "a sword will pierce even your own soul." We can hardly imagine how difficult things must have been for Mary when so many hated Jesus without a cause (John 15:25). But then, to see Jesus being crucified while being completely innocent, must have wrenched the heart of Mary deep. And yet, today, should you be able to talk with Mary, she would assure you that it all was worth it. Her son upon the cross was the means of her salvation. And today, her spirit rejoices in God, her Savior (Luke 1:47).

Finally, the life of Jesus was ...
3. A Life of Revelation (verse 35b)

Here, I'm speaking about the exposing work of Christ. When people encounter Jesus, they often have one of two responses. They either despise Him or rejoice in Him. At the end of verse 35 we read, "To the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

I believe that Simeon's prophecy was indicating how Jesus would bring the thoughts of people out into the open. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that the "word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Jesus was able to do this.

In fact, Jesus is still able to do this. When people encounter Jesus Christ, their heart is revealed. They will either have hearts that embrace Him as the lovely One who will redeem them. Or, their hearts will reject Him, either by simply ignoring Him or by actively resisting Him.

May this Christmas find us embracing the Lord, Jesus Christ, who came to us as a baby.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 24, 2005 by Steve Brandon.
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