

Ancient Words—Simeon and Anna

Mary and Joseph have accomplished the law of circumcision for their newborn child on the 8th day and now are back in Bethlehem making preparations for their return to Nazareth. Before they leave, however, Mary must accomplish the law of purification (Luke 2.22-24) and so waits in Bethlehem until the 40th day when she and Joseph travel back to the temple in Jerusalem for both her purification rite and their presentation of the Christ child to the Lord. A 40 day period is very significant for many bible events and this one is no less. A man named Simeon is waiting in Jerusalem and in the temple court in expectation to see the Lord's Christ. Simeon sees Mary, Joseph, and the 6-week old baby enter the temple court of Solomon. He has been waiting possibly for years for this very event to occur and for the consolation of Israel. Moved by the Holy Spirit, Simeon approaches the parents and takes Jesus in his arms and says: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." Luke 2.29-32)

As Joseph and Mary stood in amazement with the old man's proclamation and blessing upon them, Simeon turns to Mary with his Spirit filled specific prophecy: "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 hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." (Luke 2.33-35)

The divine special greatness of their child, Jesus, has just been confirmed by a stranger in the temple. Simeon has gazed upon the young child, held him in his arms, and announced he has now seen both salvation and light—for all people of the world both Jews and Gentiles. He has seen Jesus, Immanuel! Mary understands this as well and also has been told of the future sorrow that lies in wait for her future.

Anna, a prophetess, is also waiting in the temple for the very same confirmation seen by Simeon. Luke says that Anna was very old, had been a widow for many years, and worshipped night and day in anticipation of Israel's Messiah (Luke 2.36-38). Anna came up to Joseph and Mary giving thanks and praise to God because her eyes had now seen the predicted Redeemer, just like Simeon.

This day in the temple was a dedication of baby Jesus according to the law in Lev. 12.8 and it occurred after 40 days. The proclamations by two senior citizens of Jerusalem—Simeon and Anna—were remarkable testimonies of the future of Jesus, the future of Israel and the future of the world. Leaving Jerusalem that day, Joseph and Mary must have been overwhelmed with the responsibility of raising their son Jesus in order for these future predictions to become reality. Luke states that after everything was required in the law, they returned to Galilee and specifically Nazareth in verse 39. However, it is important to notice this takes place only after their flight to Egypt. The proper chronology of events must include the Matt 2 account of the holy family's escape to Egypt (which happened after 40 days) before they finally settle in Nazareth. When they arrive back in Bethlehem, an angel directs Joseph in a dream to leave immediately and take their child to a safe refuge in Egypt. They remain there until an angel informs them to leave. In the meantime, Herod has now realized the wise men from the east have outwitted him and are not returning per his instruction. In his anger, he orders the slaughter of all boys 2 years old and under in and around Bethlehem to

remove any chance of a new king coming to be and challenging his own throne. Herod dies soon after this and Joseph, Mary, and Jesus return to Nazareth. Joseph sets up his carpenter's shop, he and Mary will have more sons and daughters and the next event recorded in the Ancient Words about Jesus is his trip to Jerusalem at age 12 (Luke 2.40-52).... Sj-1/16