

Songs of Christ's Coming - Simeon's Song

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[0 : 0 0] I am on. Fantastic. Well, good morning. This is our second week in a cheeky little series called Songs of Christ's Coming. A three-week, a short series, but a great series looking at people who have sung songs about Christ's coming. This week we're looking at Simeon's Song, and this one packs a real punch. Three days out from Christmas we are, and that's great. We're playing carols at our house 24-7. We've got Christmas trees everywhere. We've got nativity scenes scattered throughout the house. It's great when you've got little kids at Christmas time. My daughter loves the story of Jesus, Sadie, who's three. She loves the story of Jesus' birth, and she tells us to it. She opens the

Bible and she reads to us. She can't read, right? So just from memory she's kind of telling us a story. Problem is she loves David and Goliath as well. And so the other day she goes, Daddy, I want to read.

Let me tell you a story from the Bible. Oh, it just warms my heart. And she starts telling it, and then she gets to the part where Joseph cuts the head off an angel. And, oh, sweetie, that's, hmm. I feel like I have failed her somehow. Anyway, apart from that, fairly happy time.

And we should be, I'm particularly happy actually, because tomorrow morning I'm flying to North Carolina. My mother-in-law is quite unwell, and so we're flying out early to spend Christmas with her. And my wife flew down a week ago with two kids, two stopovers, took the cheapest flight possible, so it took 12 hours with two small kids. And a very kind person in Amy's family gave me points to fly down, which is nice. First class, they had a few extra points.

So just one stopover by myself in first class. It is a bit of a sore point. That's the only major problem for Christmas right now.

[2 : 2 8] So tomorrow morning at 6.30am, which is when I fly out, think of me, I'll be drinking champagne and eating lobster. I've clearly never traveled first class before. U.S. Airways. Any good? No idea.

So, what am I talking about? Joy. Yes, joy. Joy, joy, joy. Oh, yeah, we should be happy. It's Christmas, right? Fantastic. We're celebrating Christ coming into the world. But we read this this verse, though. Luke 2.25-35. It's got a real edge to it. I hope you heard the edge. I hope you felt the edge. It really comes out in our story. I say it's got an edge because just, I mean, the start's nice, but the end is, wow. Let me read the departing words to you again, what Simeon told Joseph and Mary.

He says this, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed, and a sword will pierce through your own soul also, and the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. Goodness, it's very heavy, isn't it? How is it that this little baby will cause the rise and fall of many, and why is he going to cause such a crisis in our souls? I mean, you might think, I just want Jesus to make me feel nice and happy and peaceful and good, and all of these things, joy and love and peace and hope. That's what I want. Yes, I agree. I want that as well. But first, there is a battle. There must be a battle. Jesus will bring peace and hope and joy into your world.

But it is through the sword. In his departing words to Joseph and Mary, Simeon lets the readers know that. This baby will bring peace. But first, he must do battle with your heart. Your heart. Here's what I mean.

We want to be in charge of our own lives. And Christ reveals this to us. That's what verse 35 says. This is the opposition of verse 34.

[4 : 38] We want to be in charge of our own lives. But this baby has a rightful claim to our hearts. So he comes born into the world and stakes a claim in our hearts. And how do we respond?

How do we respond to the claim he stakes and says, that's mine. Belongs to me. How do we respond to that? Well, how we respond to that will cause our rise or our fall. In verse 34. Now at this point, you might think, this is very serious for Christmas.

Yes and no. The idea of this crisis in our hearts that the baby Jesus brings is actually scattered throughout the Christmas hymns.

But because we're quite familiar with them, I think it just kind of washes over. For example, the Hallelujah Chorus. Do you know the Hallelujah Chorus? For the Lord God Almighty reigns.

That was the voice of a Kiwi angel, people say. Hallelujah, hallelujah. Right, you know this, right? It's beautiful. It's gorgeous. It's uplifting. Fantastic.

[5 : 44] What it actually points to, it's Bible verses, it points to Revelation 19. And you know what, it's referencing the context. Let me read the context to you. Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, the one sitting on it, is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

He is clothed and a robe dipped in blood, in the name of which he is called the Word of God. From his mouth comes a sharp sword, which will strike down the nations, and he will rule them with an iron rod, and he will tread the winepress of the fury, of the wrath of the God Almighty, of God Almighty.

On his robe and on his thigh he has written the name, King of Kings, Lord of Lords. So Jesus comes, he makes that claim, I'm King of King, I'm Lord of Lords, and he stakes a claim on your heart.

Folks, Jesus is not some hippie prophetic teacher. He has come into the world to pick a fight with your heart, with your allegiance, because he wants all of it.

He wants your whole heart. He wants to reign supreme in your life, so that every decision you make is made in submission to him. And it's only through that, it's only through that sword, the sting of that fight, that battle, that we can know peace and joy and love and hope.

[7 : 11] The Christmas promises, the Advent promises. Now let me press pause for a moment, because I went straight to the end of the passage. Let's start from the start, shall we?

Verse 25, and just walk through the story, and work out how we got here. So we are introduced to a man called Simeon. You see there in verse 25, we learn a number of things about him quickly. His home is Jerusalem.

He is righteous, it says, which means he has a good relationship with God and other people. He's described as devout, which is a fantastic word, devout.

It means he takes his religious practices quite seriously, which is good. He has the Holy Spirit on him. Back in the days, God would pour his Holy Spirit on special people who had a special job, and this man had a very special job.

His job was to proclaim, announce that this baby was the Messiah, which he did. We also learn that he's been waiting his whole life for this moment. It says he's waiting on the consolation of Israel.

[8 : 14] What does that mean? Consolation, we immediately think consolation prize. Probably it doesn't sound so good. Consolation, though, it means words of said. It means peace and joy and freedom, but ones that come after a long period of anguish, of drama, of palaver, like slavery.

So in verse 27, God orchestrates that Simeon arrives at the temple at the same time as Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus. It was a protocol. It was the law that when you'd had a child, you'd present it at the temple.

So Mary, Joseph, bring baby Jesus to the temple. Simeon arrives there at the same time, and at that moment, on seeing Jesus, the Holy Spirit speaks to Simeon and says, this is the one.

And what a moment for him. And then he says these amazing things. He says a lot of things about Jesus. I'll pick three. He says this child is salvation.

He says this child is a light to the Gentiles. This child is division. I want to talk about the first two quickly and then come back to the division part at the end.

[9 : 23] Firstly, this child is salvation. What's that mean? What's he talking about here? Well, he's talking about the baby, isn't he? He's holding the baby. This child, this is salvation.

Not an idea. Not a concept. It's this baby. This is salvation. This is where Christianity differs from all the other great major religions.

The other great faiths will say, do this practice, live this way, and you'll be saved. Saved. Whatever salvation looks like there. Do this, do that, and you'll be saved.

Christianity says something very, very different. It says salvation is not what you do. It's about this baby. It's about this man who grew up and lived the perfect life we couldn't and was punished for the sins we committed.

Salvation is not just a way of life. It's a person. It's Jesus. So that's the first thing that Simeon says, which is a pretty mind-blowing thing. The second thing Simeon says, this child is a light to the Gentiles.

[10 : 36] Now, light has a double meaning in Scripture. It means salvation and judgment. It means salvation in terms of light. If you just think about what light is.

Light is life. So that's why it looks like salvation. White points to salvation. But light exposes. And so that's why light means judgment as well.

It's a wonderful thing. What an incredible revelation. What an amazing thing for Simeon to say. This is light for the Gentiles. It just means that, you know, Christianity is not some strange messianic Jewish sect that exploded internationally by historic fluke.

This was always God's plan. Christianity, Jesus, was always for the whole world and is. Third, and ground we've sort of talked about already, this child is division.

This child will cause division in your heart. It's a good thing. Now, I talked about this at the start, but I want to sort of move towards the end of the sermon by applying it to two groups of people.

[11 : 38] Firstly, I'd like to apply it to you if you are here and you're a Christian. Secondly, I'd like to apply it to you if you are here and you're not a Christian. Firstly, if you're a Christian, here's a good question to ask yourself.

The passage says that Jesus will reveal our hearts. Yes. As Jesus reveals what's happening inside of you, can you say, my heart belongs to him?

Is Jesus supreme in your life? Because that is his rightful place. I mean, how would you answer that question? How would you begin to think about that question? There's lots of ways to think about this.

One of the ways is through the example of Simeon. I think he gives us this wonderful example, almost like a litmus test. Verse 29. Let me explain that more. Verse 29.

Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation. It's like he's saying, I can die now.

[12 : 42] I've seen the Messiah. Simeon here represents the best of expectant Israel. Those who held on to the promises of God.

So as an example, to answer this heart question, to answer the question, does Jesus rule in my heart? The passage says, do you have an expectant heart? A heart like Simeon's, a heart that trusts in a God who acts, who intervenes, a God who will come again.

You see, your ultimate hope, or has that hope, as it so easily can be, be hijacked by the material, by the temporary? Have you set your hope on things which can't deliver what you really desire in life?

Now I said I wanted to apply this passage to two groups of people. Firstly, if you're a Christian, I think that's a good application for you. Secondly, for those of you who are here today and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, perhaps you'd say you're on a journey or you're spiritual, but you wouldn't say you're a Christian.

I want to apply this passage to you and in a way, address a misbelief about Christianity that you may have.

[13 : 57] One that I think I've already touched on. Let me start like this. Broad-minded people may say yes.

Faith is for people who are good. Any nice, moral person can find God no matter what they believe and that sounds very nice. However, it's actually very exclusive because it says God, it says faith is only for the good.

That's not what Christianity says. That's not the message of Jesus. Christianity believes that salvation is for people that aren't that good. It's for people that aren't very disciplined. It's for people who don't live the perfect West Coast life.

Folks, to come to Jesus, all you need is nothing. You need nothing. But most people don't see that. Most people look in their hands and they see self-belief and they see a record of their own achievements.

Folks, if you're here and you're not a Christian, Christ wants to bring a crisis in your heart and he wants to expose that. He wants to put a sword to that idea and that's going to hurt.

[15 : 09] Jesus says, let those things go. He says, stop trying to run your life and stop trying to prove yourself to me. Just come to me. Come to me and find rest and peace and hope, joy and love.

But as I said, that peace will come after the sting of a sword and in this case, the sword that brings the sting is called repentance. And it's an acknowledging that no matter how good your CV or your resume is, it's not good enough.

The sting, the crisis is an acknowledgement that there is darkness in your heart that you need to say sorry to God for and you need to receive forgiveness for and that hurts. That will hurt but it will bring peace and it will bring a relationship with God.

Folks, if you're here and you are not a Christian, I'd like to invite you to become one. That means praying and asking God to forgive you and asking God that your ultimate hope in life would be Him and not a stellar career or perfect children which are wonderful things.

You should hope for those as well. But if they occupy your greatest hope, you're setting yourself up for failure, for disaster. You're setting yourself up for fall and Christ wants to raise you up.

[16 : 25] I finish now. This was Simeon's song and like my daughter's story of the Christmas beheading, right? It's not a typical Christmas message but I want you to know this is central to the Christmas message.

The Christ child came into the world to pick a fight with your heart and even if you are a Christian, it's an ongoing fight. Every day we come and we bring our hearts to Jesus that push against His sovereignty.

Folks, it's best if Christ wins those fights. Amen and Merry Christmas.