

## Appointed For the Rise And Fall Luke 2:22-40

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Simeon lived in Embarrass, and it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Vikings win a SuperBowl. At the appointed time, Mary and Joseph brought the newborn Jesus into the temple to fulfill what was required of the law, the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

When they came into the temple, Simeon took up the infant Jesus in his arms and blessed God. He said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." Having held in his own hands, the very incarnate Son of God, his salvation, Simeon was ready to leave this earthly veil of tears.

Simeon, by faith, knew that Jesus was the very Son of God. By faith, Simeon saw this normal looking child as God's salvation. By faith, Simeon trusted that this infant, frail and helpless though He may have appeared at the time, was going to purchase for him forgiveness of sins and salvation.

But those weren't his only words. For after blessing and thanking God, he turned to Mary and Joseph. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "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, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Simeon prophesied about the kind of death Jesus would suffer, it would cut through Mary like a knife. She would see her own son put to horrific death on the cross. Yes, here it is in the midst of the Christmas season, the time we are to be celebrating Jesus' birth, and we *have* to discuss His death?

Jesus is only 40 days out of the womb. That is the time appointed for this ritual sacrifice - the purification of the mother and the presentation of the first-born male. According to Simeon's words, this child was born for one purpose - to bring salvation - for Jews and Gentiles alike.

It is in Christ alone that there is salvation. There is salvation nowhere else – in no one else – and in no other way. He alone is born without sin and fulfills the law of God perfectly. In fact, in our text we see Him fulfilling the law of sacrifice by His parents.

But let us further consider Simeon's words, that this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many. Jesus was given by God as the Savior, given as the perfect sacrifice for sin. He died for all mankind. Unfortunately, many will fall because of God's Christ. They will not enjoy eternity because Christ will be their downfall.

Dear friends, there are three basic ways that this happens.

First, there is the most obvious way that Christ will cause the fall of many people into the eternal pits of hell. All those who will not believe that Jesus is God will be eternally lost. They follow their own religious beliefs that are devoid of anything that comes from God in Christ Jesus. Many have made up their own religion, and still others follow one of a multitude of false religions, everything from A to Z, from Atheism to Zen Buddhism.

While Jews and Muslims all claim the testimony of the Old Testament, they deny that Jesus is the Christ promised in it. In denying Jesus, they lose all that was promised in the Old Testament. They deny unto themselves the very blessings of God which they fervently cling to, for they deny that Jesus is the One whom God had promised to send. In denying Jesus, they deny the One who sent Him, and who made the promises throughout the Old Testament.

Also falling into eternal death because of Christ, will be those who mock Christ's death with their willful impenitence. These are those who believe they do not need to repent, for they do not believe that what Scripture calls sin, is sin. Some believe that the times have changed and things are much different than in Bible times. They throw out large portions of God's Word.

Oh, some will say that they have a few sins, and for *those* Christ died. But, the other things? Those are not sins! They do not need to repent of them, nor do they need to amend their sinful life - after all, it isn't sinful. They deny that what God Himself has called sin, is. Indeed, their impenitence is a bold proclamation on their part that they have no need for Christ. In believing they are not sinning, they deny their need for Christ's sacrifice, and in denying their need for it, they deny Christ. Without Christ, they are lost! If they continue in unrepentance they are in danger of falling into eternal death and torment.

Finally, there are those who will fall because of Christ, for they reject Him in another way. There are many who cling to their own works in some way, and in doing so, make their works as important as Christ's sacrifice. Some out and out point to their own works. But just as sinful is those who wonder if they have done enough, if they are good enough to get into heaven. They may not point to what they have accomplished as earning salvation. But by wondering if they have done enough to get into heaven, they deny Jesus' own works from the cross, "It is finished!" Either it is finished and Christ accomplished it all, and gives eternal life as a free gift - OR - there is still something left for us to do? If we think there is something that we need to do, then we make Christ a liar and deny His work of salvation.

Another group relies upon their own works when they believe that their faith is their own doing. These believe their faith is at least in part, their work. They do not believe that it is solely Christ's work through the Holy Spirit. Many believe that Christ died for their sins and rose to proclaim victory and life, but ultimately it is up to them, they have to make a decision for Jesus. They make it their own work to believe! Faith they think is their own work, their decision, to accept and believe in Jesus. These reject Christ as the author and perfecter of faith, and so these too will fall, eternally lost, for trusting in themselves and not in Mary's infant Child.

Lest we get to depressed, Simeon informs us that Christ is also appointed for the rising of many. Who are those who will be raised up? What sets them apart? What makes them different?

Those raised up are the ones like Simeon. They do not see the infant Jesus through human eyes, but through eyes of faith. They are not offended when the crucifixion of Christ is mentioned in the same context as His being laid in a manger. They are those who have rejoiced in the Word which has been revealed to them, for they see that the Babe of Bethlehem as their Redeemer. This infant is their Savior.

As Simeon was in the temple that day. Many were the mothers who came with children. What made this one Child different? Was there a halo around His head as we sometimes see in pictures? Was there some angelic sign? We are not told anything of the sort. All we know is that Simeon was guided to the temple that day by the Holy Spirit, and was led to recognize Jesus as God's Christ, even though He was hidden in the form of a small child. He realized His own sinfulness and the need for a Savior. Guided by the Holy Spirit, He sees in this one child, Christ His Savior! He rejoices! He is raised up to life eternal.

You are gathered today by that same Spirit of God. You recognize the infant Jesus as your Salvation. In believing He is your Salvation, you are confessing your own need for a Savior - you are confessing your sinfulness - and you believe that the Babe of Bethlehem is here for your rising.

Christ raises you up, moving you by His Spirit to trust the Words you have heard, that your forgiveness and salvation have been revealed to you in the utterances of peace made by His servant. In a Word, faith is built within you.

In a moment, you will join Simeon in the song of praise he sang, blessing your God for His gracious visitation. As Simeon held God in his hand, hidden in the form of human flesh and the garb of an helpless child, so you will hold in your hand, God. Hidden under the forms of bread and wine, you will eat the very flesh of the Child of Bethlehem and drink the very blood of Him who Mary carried into the temple that day.

God's salvation has visited us! Christ gives you Himself and raises you up to life everlasting, granting you His Spirit and strengthening your faith.

Let us rejoice and bless our God for all His bountiful gifts to us. With eyes of faith He has given us, we see our salvation. Amen.