

Bi132 The Gospels

Lesson Bi132-5 Simeon and Anna

Most cultures have rituals. Sometimes they are called ‘rites of passage.’ They are ceremonies which mark significant life events, such as a birth, a holy day, a wedding, or a death. In Old Testament days God directed Moses to institute sacred rituals for a number of holy days and festivals. These became religious ceremonies that are observed by Jews to this day. An even earlier ritual was first given by God as a sign of his covenant with Abraham, saying: “Every male among you shall be circumcised. It will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. Every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised” (Gen 17:10-12).

In Jewish culture a child was not officially named until they were first dedicated to God. So on the eighth day after his birth, when it was time to circumcise the child, Mary and Joseph named him Jesus, the name given by the angel. Then 32 days later, they took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him at the Temple. God had instructed Moses after the Exodus that every firstborn male was to be set apart for God’s purposes. As a sacrifice they offered a pair of doves or two young pigeons. According to the Moses’ Law, every firstborn male was dedicated to the Lord as a response to what God did in sparing the firstborn sons of Israel at the Exodus.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He, like all the Jews, was looking for God’s deliverance for Israel—the comfort the Messiah would bring to his people. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Moved by the Spirit at that moment, he went into the temple courts. When Mary and Joseph brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took the child in his arms and praised God. He said:

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 for all nations,
A light for revelation to the Gentiles,
And for glory to your people Israel (Luke 2:29-32).

The child’s father and mother marveled at what they heard. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel. He will be a sign that will be spoken against. He will reveal the thoughts of many hearts. And as a result, Mary, a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

There was also present that day a prophet named Anna, from northern Israel. She was 84 years old and for many years had been a widow. She never left the temple, but worshiped God night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to the family that very moment, she gave thanks to God. She spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Nazareth in Galilee. And the child Jesus grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

This story is **important** because it shows that the parents of Jesus obeyed God's written law concerning their newborn son. At the same time, God confirmed his plan to save both Jews and Gentiles through the words of two prophets, both a man and a woman. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, each of them prophesied about who Jesus was and what He would do.

The **main truth** of this story is that God uses both men and women who are Spirit-led to speak God's message to those willing to listen. Both prophets confirmed the testimony of the angels concerning the future ministry of Jesus.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. Whom did God send in this lesson to confirm the future ministry of Jesus?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "God sent Simeon and Anna to confirm the future ministry of Jesus," you are correct.
2. Why did Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the temple 40 days after his birth?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "Every firstborn Israelite male is to be set apart for God's purposes," you are correct.
3. What qualities did Jesus have, growing up as a young man?
A. [Pause.] If you said, "He grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was on him," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to this story until you are able to tell it from memory. Then tell it to someone else who has never heard it. After telling the story, ask, "Why do you think God had Simeon and Anna in the temple that day? Was this message just for Mary and Joseph or for others also?" In answering remember that other people visiting the temple, as well the parents of Jesus, heard the message of these two prophets of God.