

Simeon and Anna

Listed Scriptures

Lk 2:25-38; Is 40:31; Lam 3:25-26

Lesson Aim

- 1) To learn the importance of waiting for the Lord.
- 2) To learn about leading a quiet and reverent life.
- 3) To imitate Simeon and Anna's life-long devotion to God.

Memory Verse

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined."

(Isaiah 9:2)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Isaiah 26-30

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



The Promise of the Messiah

Luke 2:25 describes Simeon as waiting for the "Consolation of Israel." In Luke 2:38, Anna's prophecy describes it as those waiting for the "redemption of Jerusalem." "The consolation of Israel" or "redemption of Jerusalem." are the different ways of referring to the Messiah. "Consolation" refers to the restoration of Israel as a nation; the word comes from Isaiah 40:1; 49:13; 51:3; 57:18; 66:10-11. For centuries, the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah ("the anointed one") who had been foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament. They believed that the Messiah would rescue them from their Roman oppressors and establish a new kingdom and rule the world with justice. What the Jews did not comprehend was that the king would come as a suffering servant who healed the sick, preached about the kingdom of God and died for the sins of mankind.

Jewish rites

Jewish families went through several ceremonies soon after a baby's birth:

1. Circumcision—every Jewish boy was circumcised and named on the eighth day after birth (Lev 12:3; Lk 1:31,59-60). Circumcision symbolized the Jews' separation from gentiles and their unique relationship with God.
2. Redemption of the firstborn - a firstborn son was presented to God one month after birth (Ex 13:2, 11-16; Num 18:15-16). The ceremony included buying back—"redeeming"—the child from God through an offering. Through this, the parent would acknowledge that the child belonged to God, who alone has the power to give life.
3. Purification of the mother— for forty days after the birth of a son and eighty days after the birth of a daughter, the mother was ceremonially unclean and could not enter the temple. So when the time came for Mary's purification, the family went to the temple to present Jesus to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law. Mary and Joseph were to bring an offering— a lamb for a burnt offering and a dove or pigeon for a sin offering. The priest would sacrifice these animals and declare the woman to be clean. If a lamb were too expensive, the parents could bring a second dove or pigeon instead. This is what Mary and Joseph did.

Prophet/prophetess

Prophets not only predicted the future, but their primary function was to call the people to obedience and dependence on God. Prophesying was not restricted to males. Examples of female prophets include Miriam (Ex 15:20), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Isaiah's wife (Is 8:3) and the four daughters of Phillip in the New Testament (Ac 21:8-9).

W A R M U P



What is hope? Name something in your life that you have hoped for a long time. How did you wait for it? Was your hope realized?

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Simeon

The Bible devotes just thirteen verses to depict Simeon and Anna. They are not prominent characters in the Bible and there is no mention of any of their great heroic acts. The Bible introduces them not in their prime but in their later years. Despite this, their presence in the Bible is significant. Both Simeon and Anna were people who in their very plain and ordinary lives were able to cultivate extraordinary faiths. They both possessed a faith that withstood the test of time. A successful person is not defined by his/her glorious achievements, but by the steadfast faith and hope that people such as Anna and Simeon possessed. Throughout their lives they waited for the coming of the promised Messiah and only at the sunset of their lives did they see this hope realized. Their quiet, reverent and hope-filled lives are models for us today.



As He Understood God's Will

Before the coming of the Lord Jesus, the Jews were under the control and oppression of the Roman government. They eagerly longed for the coming of the Messiah whom the ancient prophets had spoken of long ago. Simeon, whose name means "one who hears and obeys," was a righteous and devout man. His hopes rested on the coming of the Messiah and not on the things of the world. Through reading and examining the Scriptures, Simeon gained spiritual insight. As a consequence of his deep communion with God and his desire for God's salvation, the Holy Spirit revealed to him that before his death, Simeon would see the Messiah.

Today we need to imitate Simeon's thirst and desire to know the things of God. Ephesians 5:15-17 remind us to "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Our purpose in reading and studying the scriptures is not just to gain knowledge. Through the Bible, we learn how to live a righteous life according to God's will. The key to understanding His will lies in spiritual renewal in Jesus Christ. Those who conform to the world cannot understand the will of God (Rom 12:2); only those who renew themselves in

the image of Christ understand the matters of God.

Reflection:

1. How can we find out God's will in our lives?
2. Was there a time when you were confused about God's will? How did you deal with it?



B • He waited For God's Deliverance and Fulfillment of Hope

We all have dreams and hopes. Some dreams become reality within a short period of time, while others take a little longer. Simeon's desire was to see the coming of the Messiah, but he had to wait for a long time. His wish only came true in his old age. Throughout this time, Simeon was willing to endure all things because he recognized the importance of the Messiah. Waiting involves a psychological, emotional and physical strain so the things we desire need to be worth the wait. Simeon waited for the Lord. What things are we waiting for?

Reflection:

1. What things should we wait for?
(The second coming of Christ (2 Pet 3:12-13)
The fulfillment of God's promises and blessings (Jer 29:10; 33:14)
The down pouring of the Holy Spirit (Ac 1:4-5)
God's deliverance (Is 33:2; Is 40:31)
Justice (Prov 20:22)
Salvation (Gen 49:18; Mk 13:13; Jer 3:25-26)
Marriage (Ruth 3:18)
For God to fulfill our plans and petitions (Ps 20:4)
For Christ to form in us (Gal 14:19; Ps 25:5))
2. What things will prevent us from waiting to the end?
(Can't see the solution to the problem
Focus on the environment
Peer pressure
Lack of faith in God)
3. What are some of the common behaviors of those who need to wait?
4. Share an experience where you had to wait. What lessons did you gain from it?



C • He Had Complete Joy in God's Salvation

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus Christ into the temple to be dedicated, Simeon was moved by the Holy Spirit to recognize the Lord. On seeing the Lord with his own eyes, Simeon proclaimed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." To see Jesus Christ is to see God's salvation and deliverance. For Simeon that was enough. Habakkuk 3:17-18 reads, "Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Would we be happy and content with Jesus Christ only? Like Simeon, apostle Paul recognized the value of knowing the Lord. Although Paul gave up everything for the Lord, yet of his life he says, "As having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Cor 6:9-10). Indeed, when we have the Lord we have eternal life and the source of all blessings.

Reflection:

1. How important is salvation to you?
2. What things would cause you to exchange your salvation?



Part 2

Anna, the Prophetess



A • She Overcame Her Circumstances

Anna's name means "grace." She was the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. The tribe of Asher does not stand out in Old Testament history, and is one of the so-called "lost tribes" (Cf. Gen 30:12-13; 35:26). The Bible continues to say that Anna had been married for seven years and was widowed until she was eighty-four years of age. This meant that Anna had spent about 77 years of her life as a widow. To a young woman the death of a husband is a tragic loss. Anna could have reacted in several ways to her plight: she could have succumbed to sorrow, lived a life without hope or she could have remarried (Deut 25:5-6; Ruth 4:1-10; Mt 22:23-30). Anna's life however took a completely different turn. While we know nothing of Simeon's occupation, we are told that Anna was a prophetess. Instead of murmuring or dwelling in the past, she spent her years in the temple, occupying herself with God's work and turning to God for consolation and hope. How have

we dealt with death, sickness or other tragedies of life? We can react to these circumstances in two ways: we may choose to complain to God about our fate, become discouraged and lose faith. Or, like Anna we may use these circumstances as a means to draw closer to God and give thanks in all things (Rom 8:28; Jer 29:11).



B She Led a God-Centered Life

- a. She did not depart from God's temple
After the death of her husband, Anna turned her hope and trust in God. She devoted herself to worshipping God in His temple day and night. Anna knew the sentiments of the Psalmist when he said, "One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple." (Ps 27:4). In Solomon's dedication prayer, he prayed that God would listen to the people's prayer when they came before Him in His temple. God's temple was thus a place in which the people could call on His name and the place where God could be found. Today, there is a myriad of different denominations and churches in this world. But we have to go to the place that God has designated, the church that He has chosen, because only there can we find Him. Consequently, many brothers and sisters who live far from church willingly travel long distances each week to attend services at the nearest True Jesus Church. One such example is of an elderly couple from Buffalo N.Y who had to make a 2.5 hour drive each week across the U.S-Canadian border to attend services at Toronto church in Canada. On their first trip, they were stopped by customs at the US-Canadian border and asked the reason for their trip to Canada. Upon hearing that they were going to attend service at the True Jesus Church, the customs officer asked why they couldn't simply go to their neighborhood church. The couple explained that they only worship in the True Jesus Church, the church that God has chosen and where His Spirit dwells.

Reflection:

1. Do you believe that the True Jesus Church is the church that God has designated to be His church?
 2. What makes the True Jesus Church unique among all the other churches?
 3. Have you made a commitment to yourself to always remain in God's church?
- b. She led a life of fasting and praying
1 Timothy 5:5 says, "She who is a real widow, and is left all alone, has set

her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day" (1 Tim 5:5). By reducing her physical and earthly pleasures and needs to a minimum, Anna was able to focus on God. Fasting in the Bible means to go without food and drink for a period of time (Est 4:16). Although fasting is not mandatory in the New Testament, there are occasions where it becomes necessary and very effective. Fasting can be for various purposes:

To seek scriptural understanding

Daniel fasted in order to understand the vision given to him. During the time of fasting he prayed to God for enlightenment. After three weeks, God sent His messenger saying, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words" (Dan 10:1-3, 12). If we desire to comprehend the deep mysteries of God, we may, in addition to research, fast and pray to ask God for spiritual understanding.

To propagate the gospel

In the church at Antioch, many prophets and teachers fasted and prayed for the growth of the church. When we ask God to open a door of grace to the gentiles, we must pray with fasting as well (Col 4:3; Ac 14:27).

To increase in spiritual strength

There are times when we are spiritually low and our prayers become ineffective. Under such circumstances, we ought to fast and pray for power and strength from above (Mt 17:20; Mt 4:1,2; Ac 13:1-3).

To confess, repent and request the forgiveness of sins

We should especially fast when we need to seek the forgiveness of God for sins that we have committed. This manifests our contrite heart and desire for God's mercy (Jonah 3:5-10; 1 Sam 7:3-6; Neh 9:1-4).



C She Was a Thankful Person

Upon witnessing the salvation and redemption of Israel, Anna gave thanks to God. Despite her unfortunate circumstances, she was able to give thanks because of Christ. Apostle Paul says, "Give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess 5:18). It is not easy to give thanks, particularly when things are not going well for us. But by giving thanks, we set aside our own problems and complaints in order to celebrate God's generosity, love and mercy. We have to adopt the attitude of gratitude know-

ing that whatever comes our way, it is permitted by God and everything is in God's almighty hands. We will find that when we focus on the positive things in life and give thanks, our load seems lighter.

Reflection:

1. List several reasons why thankful people are usually happier people.
2. How do you think it makes God feel when we are thankful and when we complain?



Do *She Was a Grateful Person*

When Simeon saw the Savior, his deepest desire had been fulfilled, and he was willing to die. Anna on the other hand began to tell others of Christ. She not only gave thanks to God, she went out to proclaim the glad tidings that the Messiah had come. Some news is so good it simply must be shared. This was how Anna felt about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The advent of Christ was good news which concerned all people (Lk 2:10) and she knew how important it was for people to know this. Have we spoken of Christ to our friends and family? Are we eager to share the good news of the gospel?

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



Due to the nature of this lesson, the Check For Understanding questions can be found after each Bible Study section under the heading "Reflection".

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Waiting For God

We live in a world where speed counts - fast food, fast cars, and fast service. We have grown used to things being done quickly and promptly, that even when we pray to God, we demand an immediate or swift answer. The art of waiting has become lost to this generation. To be able to wait is vital. There are characters in the Bible such as Joseph and Isaac who were able to perfect the skill of waiting for God's time. Because of this, God richly blessed them. However, there are also characters like Jacob and Saul who could not wait for God and suffered as a consequence. Read the following scenarios and identify some of

the common errors we commit while waiting. Then look up the Bible verse(s) to find out the correct attitude we should have and the things that we should do while we wait.

Scenario 1

Last week, Penny had a misunderstanding with Lily over some minor issue. No matter how much Penny tried to explain her intentions, Lily refused to listen. Penny was very hurt. She prayed to God to help her resolve the conflict. In her prayers she could sense that God understood. As Penny waited for God to clear the misunderstanding, she shared the incident with another sister in church. Then that evening, she poured her heart out again to someone else who inquired about the incident.

Discuss with students:

Read Psalm 62:1. Here it tells us that we should wait in silence for the Lord. Some people may wait, but in the process, they constantly complain and share their grievances with others. Waiting in silence stills our heart and shows our faith and hope in God.

Scenario 2

Helen is thirty-two years old and she has been praying to God about her marriage. She hopes to find a partner with the same beliefs. Meanwhile, Helen has turned down a friend outside the church who is interested in her. As time goes by, however, Helen knows she's not getting any younger and her friend is still waiting for her. She understands the Bible teachings regarding marrying non-believers, and although she continues to pray, her prayers remain unanswered. Helen decides to take the plunge with her friend.

Discuss with students:

Read Revelation 14:12 and Psalm 37:34. While waiting for God's answer, it is important to keep His commands. God promised Abraham a son, but this promise was only fulfilled 25 years later. During the interim, Abraham and Sarah began to take things into their own hands which resulted in many family conflicts. If we disobey God's commands while we wait for an answer, our waiting becomes futile. Not only will our prayers be unanswered, we will lose out on many blessings and promises. We may also suffer loss and incur God's wrath instead.

Scenario 3

Jim is a fervent youth in the church. He is responsible for hymnal leading and cleaning the chapel. He feels he has potential to do more for the Lord. However, he hasn't been assigned to do "important" responsibilities such as being an RE teacher or

leading the Bible study. He prays and asks God to open up opportunities for him to serve. What should Jim do in the meantime?

Discuss with students:

In Matthew 25:1-13, the Lord Jesus speaks of the parable of the ten virgins. As the ten virgins were waiting for the Bridegroom to come, the five wise virgins prepared enough oil for themselves. They did not sit around doing nothing. They utilized their time wisely to make preparations. While Jim is waiting, he needs to equip himself. When David was called to play the harp for King Saul in his palace, Saul obviously did not know that David had been secretly anointed. But David used the opportunity to serve in the palace to gain firsthand information about running a nation. Sometimes our plans have been put on hold indefinitely. Like David, we can use this waiting time profitably. We need to absorb all kinds of spiritual knowledge, be filled with the Holy Spirit and gain experience in doing holy work.

Scenario 4

Richard earnestly desires to receive the Holy Spirit. He has been praying for almost 20 years. Everyone he knows has already received the Holy Spirit, even children younger than himself. This makes him a little embarrassed. During prayer sessions before services, he mentions it to God each time he prays, but he only prays for a short while before getting up to do something else. He feels God already knows what he wants so he doesn't need to repeat himself too much. As Richard waits for the promised Holy Spirit, what things should he take note of?

Discuss with students:

Read Galatians 5:5. As we are waiting for God, it is important to pray. If we wait without praying, we will grow weak in faith and lose our sense of direction. When a farmer waits for the seeds to grow, he needs to water them daily. Prayers are likened to water that fortifies our faith and hope so that we can endure till that time.

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Anna and Simeon both led quiet and peaceable lives, godly and respectable in every way (1 Tim 2:2). To men, their uneventful lives were nothing noteworthy. But in the eyes of God, their extraordinary faiths were to be remembered till eternity.

Lesson 7

Isaac

Listed Scriptures

Gen 24; 25:19-26; 26-27; 35:27-29; Heb 5; Phil 2:1-18

Lesson Aim

- 1) To learn from Isaac's faith, meekness and obedience
- 2) To learn about conflict management
- 3) To learn to live in peace and harmony with others

Memory Verse

"Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." (Phil 4:5)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Isaiah 31-35

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



The Well

The well was the people's chief source of water and was usually found outside town along the main road. Many people had to walk a mile or more for their water. The wells were generally dug and protected by villages. Some wells were probably more than 200 feet deep. There was a lot of labor involved in digging a well so disputes often arose between villages and/or herdsmen who also wished to claim and use the wells. If someone dug a well, he was staking a claim to the land. Some wells had locks to keep thieves from stealing the water. To plug up someone's well was seen as an act of war and was one of the most serious crimes in the land. When the Philistines ruined and took over Isaac's wells, he had every right to fight back, but he chose not to.