

'On the road'

Luke's account of the life and ministry of Jesus

Luke is up front about his intention in writing his gospel record: it was to help a man called Theophilus to have the confidence to trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. He wanted to bolster the embryonic faith of this man in the face of both the hostility he was likely to face and the adversity which almost certainly would be his experience.

The aim of this study of Luke's gospel, therefore, is to help us all "*fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith*", to the end that we "*run with perseverance the race marked out for us*" (see Heb.12.1-2)

You can find the background to this series [here](#).

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1. Luke 2.21-38 [w/b Sunday 21st January 2018]

“.. Simeon took Him in his arms and praised God”

Luke's account of the life and ministry of Jesus begins by introducing us to **the Man** (Luke 1.5-3.38). His concern was to underline that this person Jesus is no less than the Son of God (see 1.35 and 3.38) and that in Him, as he will later narrate the people recognising **“God has come to help His people”** (7.16).

This opening section of his gospel record carefully highlights, therefore, first, that His was **a remarkable birth** (1.5-2.38), and, secondly, that from the outset of Jesus' ministry there were **great expectations** (2.39-3.38).

The passage we look at in this study forms the conclusion to Luke's account of what made the birth of Jesus so remarkable.

[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group! Key questions which you should certainly be covered are perhaps questions 4, 5 & 7. Do try as always to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. **Read Luke 2.21** and **Luke 1.26-37**. The rite of circumcision was administered on the 8th day (see **Gen.17.12** and **Lev.12.3**), and Luke is careful here to highlight the name this Child is given.

‘Jesus’ is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua: what is the significance of His being given this name?

In the angel's message to Mary what else is she told this Child will be called?

Why do you think Luke gives such attention to how this Child will be called?

2. Read Luke 2.22-24 and Lev.12.1-7. Luke notes how the requirements of the Law, as set out in Leviticus 12, are carefully followed by Joseph and Mary.

Why is it important that the requirements of the Law were met from the outset of Jesus' life?

The consecration of the first-born male is required by **Ex.13.2**: why do you think Luke draws attention to this?

3. Read Luke 2.25-26. As Luke's 'birth narrative' began with the record of an older couple, so it now ends with the record of another elderly couple (unlike Zechariah and Elizabeth, of course, Simeon and Anna are not married to one another!)

What do we learn here about Simeon?

What do you understand by the reference to Simeon's "*waiting for the consolation of Israel*"?

Had you met Simeon in the temple courts, what do you think you'd have made of Simeon's claim that the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would see the Messiah?

4. Read Luke 2.27-28. Through the sovereign prompting of the Holy Spirit, Simeon was in the right place at the right time and recognized that the Child being 'presented to the Lord' was indeed the Messiah.

Have you experienced something similar to this when you've been aware of the prompting of the Holy Spirit?

In what ways does Simeon's action here provide a helpful picture of our response to the gospel message?

5. Read Luke 2.29-32. Simeon now completes the quartet of songs triggered by the birth of Jesus. The song expressed Simeon's gratitude and praise in receiving the gift of God.

Why, according to Simeon, can he now 'depart' this life in peace?

How is God's "salvation" described here by Simeon?

In what ways is this such good news?

6. Read Luke 2.33-35. Having gratefully sung the praises of God, Simeon now brings a significant prophetic word to Mary, which from the start defines the impact of the life and ministry of Jesus.

What does Simeon mean by '*the falling and rising of many in Israel*'?

How does this relate to what Mary herself sings in Lk.1.52?

What did Simeon mean by saying that '*a sword will pierce your own soul too*'?

7. Read Luke 2.36-38. Simeon was joined by an elderly lady, Anna, who clearly shared at least something of his expectancy.

Like Simeon, Anna plainly connected this Child, Jesus, with God's salvation: what is meant by the phrase '*the redemption of Israel*'?

We've just ourselves celebrated another Christmas season: how comfortable are you in 'speaking about the Child' to others?