

# Sabbath School.

## BIBLE LESSONS.

Adapted from *Expositor's Bible*.

SECOND QUARTER.

Lesson II. July 8 Luke 2: 25-38.

PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."—Luke 2: 32.

THE SECTION OF HISTORY.—Luke 2: 20-38.

THE OUTLINE.—(1) The birth of Jesus. (2) The angels' song. (3) The presentation in the temple. (4) Simeon's hymn of praise, the *Nunc Dimittis*. (5) The wise men from the east.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.—*Va. 21-24.* When Jesus was forty days old the Holy Family went up from Bethlehem to perform two ceremonies required by the Jewish law. The first was that of the ceremonial purification of Mary, described in *Leviticus 12*. The other ceremony was the redemption of the first-born, commonly in the case of Jesus called the *Presentation in the Temple*, because in his case the ceremony was performed in the temple, though this was not necessary.

CONSECRATION OF CHILDREN.—Parents should, in their hearts and purpose, consecrate their children to God from their birth. For they are the gift of God's love. In them are vast possibilities for good or for evil for themselves and for others, for time and for eternity.

II. THE PICTURE OF AN AGED SAINT.—*Va. 25-28.* "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon." (The name is Simeon.) Nothing is known of this aged saint except what is here revealed; but his present holy state must have been the ripened fruit of long years of true living, and of communion with God.

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel." The comfort, consolation, and hope of relief from evil and deliverance from enemies, which were to come through the expected Messiah. He was one of many who at this time hoped that the Messiah, the Deliverer, was soon to come. In its general use the word translated "consolation" included the idea of counsel as well as comfort. The child of whom Simeon spoke called himself the Comforter, and promised his disciples to send another, who should bear the same name (John 14: 16).

NOTE.—It is a mark of the Christian spirit to have a faith that is triumphant with hope in the darkest times; that rises above the fog of the valley, and gains clear views of the eternal heavens; that amid seeming personal defeat can see distant victory for the Cause.

WAITING FOR GOD.—The only true way to wait for the fulfillment of God's promises, for the coming of his kingdom, for a revival of religion, for growth in grace and goodness, is to wait as Simeon waited, by a holy life, a devout love and trust, by using every means the Lord is waiting for God. Only they who look for him, use every instrumentality, pour forth earnest prayer, long "as one waiteth for the morning,"—such alone are waiting.

HE WAS FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. Here is revealed the source and the inspiration of Simeon's beautiful and well balanced character.

HE WAS A MAN OF SPIRITUAL INSIGHT. "And it was (has been) revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost." In what way we do not know, but the Holy Spirit illumines the mind, purifies the conscience, gives clearer vision of old truths as well as reveals new truth. The Spirit's presence in the soul is like the full daylight after the dimness of twilight. "That he should not see death"; i. e., should not die; for the only way to see death is by experience. "Before he had seen the Lord's Christ"; i. e., the Lord's Anointed, "the Messiah whom Jehovah gives and sends."

NOTE.—God often answers the prayers of his people for things which are not absolutely necessary, but are full of comfort and blessing. He gives us all the enjoyment consistent with our good, and the good of the world.

HE WAS GUIDED BY THE SPIRIT. "And he came by the Spirit." Guided and influenced by the Spirit, "so that, perhaps, at some hour when he was not usually worshipping in the temple he was constrained to come."

NOTE.—As many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Those who surrender themselves to the Spirit, and are willing to go where he leads, thereby prove themselves to belong to God. But we must remember that mere yielding to impulse and the impulses of the flesh are not the Spirit. The Spirit guides us through reason, the Word, and the conscience, as well as through the feelings.

"The parents brought." The word parents is simply used to indicate the character in which Joseph and Mary appeared at this time in the temple and presented the child. "To do for him after the custom of the law"; i. e., to redeem their first-born, according to the law given in *Num. 18: 15, 16*. (See under "Presentation to the Lord," above.)

28. "Then took he him up in his arms." Recognizing that this was the Messiah he had been waiting for, according to the promise. "And blessed God." Gave him thanks and praise. There was here the wonderful insight of faith that could see the future Messiah in a six weeks old babe, as we see the oak tree in an acorn, or a garden in a handful of seeds.

III. HIS SONG OF PRAISE. THE *NUNC DIMITTIS*.—*Va. 29-32.* The song of Simeon is called the "Nunc Dimittis," from the first words of the Latin translation. The hymn should always be printed in the poetical form as in the Revised Version.

30. "Lord." The usual *Agnus Dei* but *Despoles*.—Master. "Now." At last, after long waiting. "Lest thou." Not a prayer, but a statement of fact. "Now thou art letting." Thy servant depart in peace. He released,—discharged from his long service by death. Simeon represents himself under the image of a sentinel whom his master has placed on an elevated position and

charged to look for the appearance of a star, and then announce it to the world. He sees this long-drawn star; he proclaims its rising, and asks to be relieved of the post he has occupied so long. In the same way, at the opening of *Ecce Homo*, when the sentinel, set to watch for the appearing of the fire that is to announce the taking of Troy, beholds at last the signal so impatiently expected, he sings at once both the victory of Greece and his own release. "In peace." In the fullest sense of happiness, blessedness. "According to thy word." The revelation mentioned in verse 26.

"An old age serene and bright, and lovely as a Lapland night Shall lead thee to the grave."—*Wordsworth*.

"The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed, Lists in new light through chinks that time had made."

30. "For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Not so, the usual form of the adjective *salvator* (savior), denoting "an apparatus fitted to save." Simeon sees in this child the means of deliverance which God is giving to the world. The word "prepared" (*v. 31*) is connected with this sense of *salvator* (salvation); we make ready an apparatus.

JESUS OUR SALVATION. (1) He brings from God the news and the promise of salvation. (2) He lives a perfect life, showing us how salvation is. (3) He instructs us as to salvation and the means by which to attain it. (4) He makes an atonement for our sins. (5) He urges upon us every possible motive for seeking salvation. (6) He sends the Holy Spirit, who changes our nature, and thus works out the salvation in us.

31. "Which Thou hast prepared." Ever since the fall, God had been preparing this salvation. The whole previous history of the world, with its training of the Jews, the education of the nations, the experiments men made for themselves in religion, was a preparation of this salvation. But it was especially prepared in what we have studied in the life of Jesus. "Before the face of." As lying open to their acceptance. "All thy people." "All the peoples." The conception of the gospel as a provision, not for the Jewish nation only, but for the whole world, is evidently not a later idea, developed by Paul. It belongs to, and is seen in, the germs and buds of Christian truth.

32. "A light." This is in opposition with "salvation" in verse 30. "To lighten the Gentiles." The nations. In *Lev. 23: 7* they are represented as enveloped in a thick mist, and covered with darkness. This covering is taken away by the Messiah.

"And the glory of Thy people Israel." The light that shines the farthest is brightest at its source. Christ, who enlightens the distant nation, must shine with the most glorious light on his own nation. That the Messiah, the world's Redeemer, was a Jew, glorified that nation. If they had only received him, He would have made them the centre of the world's religion, the greatest and most influential nation that ever existed.

IV. THE AGED SAINT'S BLESSING.—*Va. 33-35.* "And Joseph and his mother marvelled." They were wondering at what he was saying, both as coming from a stranger, and because of the boundless extent of benefits which he predicted. New light kept coming, and new views of the promises.

34. "And Simeon blessed them." Pronounced a blessing upon them. FIRST BLESSING. "This child is set for the fall and rising again, or rising up. If the fall and rising refer to the same person, then the fall is that of consciousness of sin, a feeling of need, of helplessness, a low estimate of one's goodness; and the rising again is into new life, into divine favor, into higher hopes, into the family of God. Or the fall is disappointed hopes, as Christ's coming into poverty not as a king; as that the transformation of character is slow, that Hills of Difficulty and Doubting, Castles come so soon after the joy of conversion. But from all these is a rising again into better things.

SECOND BLESSING. "And for a sign." The word translated sign is one of the names applied to a miracle, pointing to its design as an evidence, a divine token (*chap. 28: 8; John 4: 48*).

Jesus was a sign of God's love, of God's power, of the new era of righteousness, of the fulfillment of God's promises, of the strong feeling of God's love, of the strong feeling of God's love, of the strong feeling of God's love. This sign is a great blessing, even though some speak against it. "Which shall be spoken against." Jesus was spoken against by the Jews, for his life and example reproved them, his teachings overthrew their traditions, his kindly plans and customs, and built up a kingdom which would leave them out unless they repented.

35. Yea: rather, "And." This sentence should not be in parentheses. "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." All these wondrous blessings given to Mary in her Son should not be without great trials and tortures to her own soul, culminating when she sees Him crucified. Even the mother of Jesus cannot wear the crown without first bearing the cross.

THIRD BLESSING. "That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Jesus as a sign, a miraculous token from God, would produce this effect and it is a blessing, for (1) Jesus brings out the latent good thoughts, hopes, desires of the heart. Animations for better things, longing for a truer life, hopes that God will pardon sin, secret love to God, are all revealed when he presents himself to the soul. The poor, the common people, the weak, and the unkind are made manifest by their love and service of Jesus, who will publicly say to them, "Well done." Unconscious talent is developed, unknown saints are made manifest. (2) Jesus is the test which reveals the latent evil of the heart. Animations for better things, longing for a truer life, hopes that God will pardon sin, secret love to God, are all revealed when he presents himself to the soul. 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