

Christmas 2007

Simeon

Narrator: The prophet Simeon is coming into the Court of the Gentiles. He has just come from worshiping in the Court of the Women in the Temple in Jerusalem. He has been living in the Temple grounds for a number of years because He has an expectation. He believes that God is sending help to rescue Israel from its current condition. Not only are they subservient to Rome, but their Scriptures have been used by corrupt religious authorities to put everyone under the weight of hundreds of rules. Every year they sacrifice their lambs for forgiveness of sin, but their sense of guilt remains. The Jewish people are looking forward to the coming of their long awaited Messiah who will fulfill the ancient promises.

¹ I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. ² Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. ³ Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: ⁴ Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD. ⁵ For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. ⁷ Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. ⁸ For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. ⁹ Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good. Psalm 122 KJV

"My, what a crowd of Gentiles has gathered here in the Court of the Gentiles. Welcome, to the Temple of Almighty God. I don't recognize your dress. Where have you come from?" (Simeon tries to relate the city names with town names he is familiar with.) "I have to get out more and see these places."

"I spend all my time here in the Temple. All my life I have studied the prophecies of the One who is to come. Many of us feel the need to be delivered from the rule of the Romans, but for me, it is even something greater. Very few people understand my heart, but perhaps you Gentiles, who have left the gods of your own land and traveled so far to worship the true God, can relate to my great desire.

Oh, but first let me tell about this wonderful Temple. Herod set about to make it the magnificent Temple it is today. You are sitting here in the Court of the Gentiles. Behind is the great Royal Stoa. That is where our leaders meet to make decisions on matters that affect our nation.

To your right is the Colonnade of Solomon. Please excuse all the merchants. Can you hear me alright? This is supposed to be a house of prayer for all nations, but

these merchants line the walls making it a super wall mart. Many of us believe (whispers) they should not be there. I believe that when Messiah comes this will change. I'm whispering because the ones who profit from this, the Sadducees, might throw me out of here for sharing my opinion. They control everything here. They don't believe in the prophets so they don't appreciate me always quoting the prophets. That is because they make so much money running things the way they do, they don't want someone to come and change things, even if He is the Messiah. They don't even believe in an afterlife. That is why they are sad, you see?

(back to normal voice) The beautiful structure in front of you is the Temple itself. Please do not go past that short wall surrounding the Temple. You will notice the warning sign for Gentiles to stay out under threat of death. It is within the Temple that we make sacrifices to our God, and in the inmost room is the place where God dwells, the Holy of Holies.

But let me return to sharing with you the great burden on my heart. We need a great Deliver to deliver us from what our nation has become, from what we have become. We need Someone to restore us to the purity of our faith.

We remember the great deliverance of God through His servant Moses. We were slaves in Egypt for many generations. We worked hard every day to build the great structures of Egypt. Our backs were scarred with the whips of our taskmasters. In the midst of the suffering and even the murder of our baby boys, one child came into the world to be raised up to deliver us. His parents kept him from death by placing him in a watertight basket, and the currents of the Nile took Him to the place where a princess of Egypt was bathing. She adopted him and raised him as her own. His nurse was his own mother who told him his true birthright.

When the perfect time came, God used Moses to demand that Pharaoh let us go. (Exodus 5:1) God worked miracles through Moses so that all the Egyptians would know that the LORD is God. The creatures and things they considered gods were turned into plagues against them. When we left Egypt, a great number of Egyptians came with us because they realized we serve the one and only true God.

Today we are no less in bondage, but I'm not speaking of the Romans. I'm speaking of the bondage of our sins. Though we follow the Laws that Moses gave us, we long for our hearts to be changed. We long to know that God has accepted our sacrifices. This endless cycle of blood offerings must be leading us to a time when a deliverer will be born, One who will deliver us from the power of sin. Isaiah wrote that a suffering servant would come who would bear our transgressions. (Isaiah 53:11) He promised us that the wounds of this Servant

Commented [notes1]: 1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.'"

Commented [notes2]: 11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied ; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

would heal us. (Isaiah 53:5) Ezekiel said our stone hearts would become flesh. (Ezekiel 11:19)

I have spent my life looking through the prophecies for clues to this One, the ultimate Deliver, not only of the Jews, but of all mankind. The first promise was given to the very first couple. God promised Eve that one of her descendants would crush the head of the great Deceiver. (Genesis 3:15) Just as Moses crushed Pharaoh's authority, the One to come will crush the head of the Serpent. That is the kind of Deliver we need!

Later, God promised the father of our nation, Abraham, that one of his descendants would bless the entire world. (Genesis 12:3) That includes you as well as the Jews. That is why I believe that, just as this court is an area is for all nations, (Isaiah 56:7) and just as many Egyptians left Egypt with Moses, so the coming Messiah will deliver not only the Jewish people but you Gentiles as well. Wouldn't your heart be filled with gratitude if the Great Deliverer could bear your transgressions as the prophet Isaiah predicted?

God wanted to make certain that we Jewish people understood that the coming Servant Deliverer would also deliver you Gentiles. Let me read to you from my Isaiah scroll. I think they wrote this scroll in shrinking ink. Every year it is harder to read. ⁵ *And now the LORD says-- he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength--* ⁶ *he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."* Isaiah 49

The end of that prophecy was for you, my Gentile friends. Not only will this Deliverer/Servant restore us Jewish people, but He will be a light for you, and bring you salvation, and not only you, but the ends of the earth. Surely the God that made each one of us desires for us all to know and worship Him.

And now hear how Isaiah said the Lord will bring this to pass. ⁶ *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* (Isaiah 9 (NIV)) A child will be born who will be called *Mighty God* and *Everlasting Father*. This is surely a strange prophecy. How can a child be the Everlasting Father, the Mighty God? You may think it is impossible, but let remind you of what God said to Sarah when she thought it was impossible to have a child at the age of 90. God said to her, 'Is anything too hard for the LORD?' (Genesis 18:14) Just as there came a time when God shaped Isaac in Sarah's womb and Moses in the womb of his mother to deliver His people, so a time will come when the great Deliverer, the LORD himself, will be formed in a

Commented [notes3]: 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Commented [notes4]: 19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

Commented [notes5]: 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Commented [notes6]: 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Commented [notes7]: 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

Commented [notes8]: 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."

womb. How can that be? If the highest heaven cannot contain Him, how could the body of a babe? (2 Chronicles 2:6) And yet, here it is in the prophecies.

Isaiah told us how this would be possible, ¹⁴ *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.* (Isaiah 7 (NIV)) This baby will be the LORD with us, for that is what Immanuel means. He will be born of a virgin, for remember, nothing is too hard for the LORD.

Is this *Wonderful Counselor* not the One our hearts long for? This is why I began this quest. I knew I needed the *Wonderful Counselor*. Isn't it the desire of your heart as well?

When our great King David reigned over us, Nathan the prophet said that one of his descendants would reign forever. (2Samuel 7:12-13) We thought it would be his son Solomon, but Solomon died. Now we hold the records of the descendants of David carefully, watching for the One that will be born. Since Isaiah said the government will be on his shoulders, the coming Deliver must be the descendent of David.

Listen to what Isaiah went on to write. ⁷ *Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.* (Isaiah 9 (NIV)) The Scriptures all point to this baby that will be born who will usher in what we have longed for, justice and righteousness. Even Moses said that God would raise up someone like himself, and to this One that is to come, everyone must listen. (Deuteronomy 18:15) He is coming my friend. In fact, I think He may be here even now.

Let me tell you of the latest rumor to sweep Jerusalem. A few days ago, a Rabbi passed on the story of some kings from the east coming to Herod's court. He said they had followed a star that foretold the birth of a new king. Herod wanted to kill the new king, but pretended to desire to worship him. When the old fox Herod asked the Rabbi where the coming king was to be born, they brought out the prophecy of Micah. ² *'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.'* Micah 5

Let me explain. Judah was the tribe of David. It is the tribe of Judah of which Jacob prophesied the rulers of Israel would come. The hometown of David is Bethlehem, just two miles from here. Long after David was born it was predicted that a ruler would be born in Bethlehem, but not just any ruler, *one... whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.* David was not from ancient times,

Commented [notes9]: 6 But who is able to build a temple for him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him? Who then am I to build a temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices before him?

Commented [notes10]: 12 When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom.
13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

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and his origin was not from old, nor was that true of his sons. Do you see how this fits with all the prophecies? The One we long for will be born in Bethlehem.

A baby will be born who is the LORD. He will be a descendent of our great King David. He will crush the head of the Serpent, the Deceiver. He will bear our sins and thereby be our great Deliverer after the pattern of Moses. He will be born in Bethlehem and reign forever, but most of all... He will remove our transgressions from us, and His wounds will heal us!

I have sensed in my spirit that the help we have long sought has come. I can't leave this place because the Spirit of God has promised me I will live to see the coming Deliverer.

But that is not all! It has only been eight days since shepherds announced that they heard a choir of angels sang of the birth of One that brings good news to all men. Normally we don't believe shepherds. They spend a little too much time with the sheep. The sun does something to their heads. But this time, what they are saying lines up with the prophecies and with the word about the kings of the East. We Jews perform religious rituals on our baby boys eight days after they are born. Since they heard this eight days ago, if all these things are true, He will appear today!

"LOOK!" (Simeon sees Joseph and Mary enter with baby Jesus. He is speechless and falls to his knees with his arms upraised giving praise to God. Then he asks if he may hold the child.)

²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all people, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." Luke 2 (NIV)

(As Joseph and Mary take the baby up to the stage and turn back to look at Simeon he says to Mary,)

"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." Luke 2 (NIV)

As Simeon frantically points individuals in the congregation to the baby the worship team comes forward to lead the congregation in singing, Oh Come Let Us Adore Him.

Simeon gives an invitation to accept the Deliver into their heart to be the Wonderful Counselor.