

*Disclaimer: The following document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*

**Simeon**  
**December 24, 2009**  
**Peter Hiett**

***Intro Video***  
***Text Video & Audio***

### ***Scripture***

An old man walks across the front of the sanctuary, using a walker. As he struggles to make it onto the stage, Susan gives him a push up the stairs.

Thank you! That's the most fun I've had in decades.

I'm so slow... I'm so slow... (How slow are you, Simeon?) I'm so slow it looks like I'm going backwards. 90 BC, 89 BC... I was born when time went backwards.

I'm so old... my social security number is zero.

I'm so old my birth certificate says "expired."

I'm so old if I acted my age, I'd be dead.

I'm so old because the Word of God came to me and said, "Simeon." I said, "What?"

He said, "You will not die until you see the consolation of Israel." The "consolation of Israel" was the Messiah. And we needed consolation, for we were repressed by Romans. The Messiah would set us free.

In my day, a donkey was called an "ass." Look it up – the King James Version. And a tough guy who didn't take anything from his donkey was called "kick ass." We were waiting for a "kick ass" Messiah – sorry to use the vernacular, but I think most of you are waiting for that kind of Messiah. You think your God is better than the next guy's god, because your God can kick his god's... donkey. And you're running and working so hard, for fear that when He comes you might get "left behind," or He might kick you in the "right behind."

So I stood in the temple for years, staring at the sky, waiting for our Messiah, because we knew "The Lord whom we sought would suddenly come to His temple," and kick some donkey. Originally the presence of the Lord dwelt in a tent, and moved with His people. That was what the Lord God wanted, but King David talked Him into a stone temple. It was absolutely immense and thoroughly awesome. It was built on the spot that Abraham prepared to sacrifice his firstborn son, but the

Angel of God stopped him and provided a ram (a grown lamb) to die in His place. Inside the temple was the Inner Sanctuary, where the Glory of God rested, on top of the Ark of the Covenant (like a “messenger” of the Covenant). When Solomon, son of David, dedicated the temple, fire came down from Heaven. It consumed the sacrifices and filled the temple with glory. The glory was so great that the Levites and priests could not stand.

In my day, we were hurting for glory. The Ark was lost; some said the glory had left the temple. The Priests didn’t have much trouble standing at all.

Now you may wonder, “What did the priests do?” “My Pastor only works on Sunday... what did they do?” Mostly they killed stuff and burned stuff - sacrifice. People would lay their hand on an animal, like a lamb, and then that animal would be accepted in their place to make atonement. It means at-one-ment. And nobody really knew how it worked, and it was pretty clear it really didn’t work, but was a picture of something else... for why would God almighty want the blood of lambs and stuff?

At Passover, hundreds of thousands of lambs were slaughtered like the lambs that were slaughtered in Egypt in place of the firstborn sons of Israel. The blood from that sacrifice literally formed a river (like a fountain) that flowed to the Valley of Gehenna. Because at Passover, every firstborn son was to be presented in the temple. And whenever any child was born, sacrifices were to be made at the temple. First a sin offering – that was to take away sin (What God didn’t want). Secondly a burnt offering – that was the gift God required (what God did want). The sin offering was a bird, and the burnt offering a spotless lamb. As if every child cost something, and still required something in order to be completed in God’s image. And that something was a lamb.

If a couple was very poor and couldn’t afford a lamb, they were allowed to offer two pigeons. The sacrifices were offered to the fire, for our God is a consuming fire. Fire, smoke, blood and me, in the temple everyday. And I gotta tell you, usually I was afraid. They say, “Fear is the beginning of wisdom.” I was afraid; never at peace; always running, running from God or to God. I wasn’t sure.

Fire in the temple, and a fire that burned inside me. I was a prophet, so the Word of God burned in my bones like fire. I scared people, and I scared me. Or the Word in me scared me, like 20 million volts of electricity surging through a little copper wire, and I didn’t know what it meant, but if I didn’t speak it, I knew that I’d blow up. And actually, I didn’t usually speak it; I sang it. It helped everybody to relax and remember the words. And actually the words weren’t original with me. Isaiah, Psalms, Malachi... I put it all to these snappy tunes.

(Sings)

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low...

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. (Isaiah 40)

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle (Psalms 24)

I was awesome! Important, powerful, and kind of full of myself, and always afraid.

(Sings)

...and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire.

No doubt He was a kick-butt Messiah, but I wondered exactly whose butts would He be kicking? Roman? Jewish? The Levites, the Priests? "For who can stand when He appeareth?"

(Sings)

...and he shall purify the sons of Levi (the priests)

...that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness (Malachi 3)

And I would usually cap it off with a little original material of my own:

(Sings) Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Sing with me! (Rev 19)

Well, I called my little musical and prophetic ensemble "The Messiah."

I was an important and powerful prophet in the Temple. A big shot, like your pastor in the capital. For years and years, I sang and prophesied, sang and prophesied... and He did not come. I was running out of steam. I was tired, almost nothing. I felt like I was counting down to zero: 4, 3, 2 BC, 1BC. I would have quit and found another profession, but what would I do? Drive a camel?

Along about zero, I was washed up. I was so slow and so old and so weak. I was so poor in spirit, and so mournful, and so meek. I was like "the last and the least of these." They said I was mentally ill and that I had "issues." I was at the end of myself, when the Spirit said to me, "Blessed are you Simeon, now get up off your... donkey... and go to the temple. Today is the day."

So I went and waited and worried... I was checking the sky for the Messiah coming in glory on the clouds of Heaven, when the Spirit of God said to me, "There He is!" I gasp and look up and say, "Where, oh Lord?" He says, "Over there, oh Simeon." And I say, "What? Behind the pitiful little peasant family, oh Lord?" And He says, "No, IN the pitiful little peasant family, oh Simeon." I says, "The baby? Oh Lord?" And He says, "Yeah, oh Simeon."

Now it's very hard for me to explain what happened next. It was an apocalypse in me – a revelation. My therapist calls it a paradigm shift. Everything stays exactly the same, and yet everything changes. Everything old becomes new.

Like this picture: You know this picture? See the old lady? (that's her nose, her eye, her mouth) Now see the young lady? (that's her chin, her ear, her necklace) It's like the whole world was a tired old lady and God said, "But look Simeon, my bride coming down."

Like this picture of the New York Marathon. Everybody's running in this direction, for the finish line up here. But what if the King and judge of the marathon said, "Behold, you have all believed a lie. The finish line isn't here in front of you, it's here behind you." Paradigm shift. All at once, the first would be last and the last first.

All this time, I thought God was saying, "Try harder and run faster." But He was really saying, "You're running in the wrong direction. You're running to be first and best, but I'm calling you to be last and least. You're running to save your life, but I'm calling you to lose your life."

You see, it wasn't just that the King of Glory chose to be born as a weak little baby to a poor peasant family who placed him in a food trough in a barn with stinky shepherds. It wasn't just that – it was what they did that day in the temple that changed everything. Ready? Brace yourself. I watched it: They went to the priest and handed him two pigeons. Two pigeons, and I thought... "Why sacrifice for the sinless Messiah unless He's got somebody else's sins?" Simultaneously, I thought, "These poor people can't afford a lamb. But maybe He is a lamb. The lamb." For simultaneously I thought of Isaiah 53, "All we like sheep have gone astray, everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all... when His soul (His life) is made an offering for sin." And simultaneously I thought of the firstborn, and the Passover lambs and Abraham's lamb. And simultaneously I remembered Zechariah 12 (12:10, 13:1) "They will look on me, the one they have pierced... (says the Lord) On that day, a fountain (like a river) will be opened to cleanse them from sin."

Paradigm Shift! I foresaw His death. "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Because... He wants to. Paradigm Shift. While the whole world and everyone in the world was running to be powerful and important, first and best, here was God, running to be last and least, while the whole world sought to save their life, God set everything up so that He could give His life.

In an instant I saw it. I saw Him: God is love, and love was kickin' my butt. Kickin' everyone's butt. "For all we like sheep have gone astray, everyone running his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." He is the sacrifice to end all sacrifice; or maybe the sacrifice to begin all sacrifice. For true love is the perfect sacrifice. When only one sacrifice, it looks like a cross. When two sacrifice, it looks like a great marriage. And when everybody sacrifice... Hello! Welcome to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Just then I heard the Spirit say, "Behold this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce the young mother's heart as well.) So that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." The child is love in flesh, and the child is judgment. For love runs in the opposite direction of this world. The world runs for power; love runs for weakness. The world runs for importance; love runs after meekness. The world runs for temples and capitals and resort hotels; and love runs to tents and manglers and the slums of Calcutta. The world runs from fear (that's the beginning of wisdom); love runs into fear and casts it out. Fear is the beginning of wisdom; love is the end of fear. Love in flesh, lifted up on a cross, and pierced for the sins of the world is Good News of Great Joy for all people, and it is the sign that is opposed.

Look at this picture.

You see, if someone was running the opposite direction, He would be a "sign that is opposed." And if he was yelling, "The finish line is behind you," well that would be good news to these people (the last and least), for suddenly they would be first and best. It would be good news to tax collectors and sinners, shepherds and fishermen, people that knew that they were losing.

But for these people (important and powerful people, self-righteous people), the news might not sound so good. But it would be good; for if you're running the wrong direction, you will never reach the finish line, no matter how hard you try. In fact, the gooder you run, the badder you are. And the harder you try, the behinder you get, and the more you would resent the Sign. In that case, the best gift would be for you to run yourself out until you were tired and old, and almost nothing, for then you might be ready to see the Sign and be grateful.

A man was running west through the village at sunset, and the Rabbi said, "Why are you running?" The man said, "I'm running to chase the sunlight." And the Rabbi said, "Silly man, you can't catch the sun, but turn around, face the east, and the sun will catch you. The Son of Righteousness will rise upon you." You don't even have to run, just turn around.

Christmas means the whole world is running in the wrong direction. And that had become Good News for tired old me in 0 BC.

The Spirit of God revealed these things to me and said, "Now Simeon, Go say 'Hi!'" And so trembling and shaking, I walked over and tapped this young mother on the shoulder. She turned, smiled, handed me the baby and I had a vision. I used to think the visions were less real but now I know the vision is real and this world is unreal.

I saw fire – all around me. The temple was on fire. I saw Romans burning it and plowing it into the ground. I saw a man lifted and pierced on a cross. Fire poured out of His wounds like a fountain. I saw people on fire, in the temple, "unable to stand." Instinctively, I held the baby tightly to my chest, crying "God save us!" "Jesus" (That's what the name "Jesus" means.) I looked at the baby and He opened His big, beautiful eyes. He stared me full in the face, then smiled. He knew me. By now my whole body was engulfed in flames, but the baby was unharmed. In fact, the flames came from Him – His glory has set me on fire. Our God is a consuming fire, and God is love. Love is fire. So far from afraid, I was overwhelmed with gratitude and tears of joy. Everything I had tried to change in myself, even my trying, was being burned away by His mercy. And all my waiting, watching, yearning and longing had prepared me to greet the fire with joy, rather than terror. See, I was tired of my once important and powerful self. I had become my own prison. But now, the stone temple of my heart (that prison) was under siege.

This whole time that I was burning and weeping, He stared at me with those big, beautiful, clear baby eyes, smiling in perfect joy. He liked me. No, He adored me. And "every valley was exalted. Every mountain and hill laid low." And "The glory of the Lord was revealed and I saw Him, who is love." And then, "The Everlasting Doors" of my heart swung wide open. And "The lord whom I sought suddenly came to His temple." I am His temple. And "who can stand when He appeareth?" Not the powerful, not the important, not the stone temples, but Simeon, old Simeon. For the Refiner's fire had purified me, that I might receive Him and "offer unto him an offering in righteousness."

The Lord sacrificed and offered Himself to me, so I sacrificed and offered myself to Him. And we communed – as one – in ecstasy. (Sings) Alleluia! Alleluia! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

All my waiting made space for His coming. All my disobedience revealed His mercy. All my afflictions prepared me for His immeasurable weight of glory – Himself. Emptied of me, I was filled with Him. And in that moment, everything old became new. They say that time waits for no man. But all space and time is the servant of that man. It all serves to reveal Him, the slaughtered lamb, on the throne of God. The love of God poured out for you. So everything old became new and I became new. I was not a tired old man, or the old woman. I, Simeon, was the incorruptible, eternal and glorious bride. Paradigm shift. I am His temple.

I handed the baby back to His mother. The vision ceased and I said, "Now I can die, for I have seen the Lord's salvation." He came home to me. So I was ready to go home to Him. Now I can die."

You are on this earth for one reason – to see the Lord’s salvation. So “Lift up your heads, open the gates of your heart, and let the King of Glory come in.” You are His sanctuary. Merry Christmas.

(Simeon removes his hat, suspenders, and costume – Peter)

***Communion:***

And so, on the night that Jesus was betrayed, which was the day that He was crucified, he took bread and He broke it, saying, “This is my body given to you, take eat and do it in remembrance of me. And in the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you.”

This is the Lord’s salvation.

This is the sacrifice

This is the judgment

This is the fire.

This is the glory.

This is love, and this could be Christmas in you - the presence of Christ born in you.

Maybe you feel unimportant, powerless and washed up like Simeon. Maybe you feel dirty and empty like an old manger. Blessed are you, for you are so very attractive to Him. If you want Him, pray this prayer after me: Lord Jesus, cast out my sin, and enter in. Be born in me today. And every day. Amen.

Then come to the Lord’s table, tear off a piece of the bread, dip it in the cup. The dark cups are wine, the light cups are juice – they are both the Love of God for you. And then let the Lord suddenly come to His temple. And worship Him. He really does adore you. Let’s worship and adore Him.

***Benediction:***

And so He is the perfect sacrifice. He is the salvation of the world. He is the judgment. He is the fire. He is the glory. He is the light of the world. And you are His temple. That’s good news by the way. Believe it, in Jesus name. Merry Christmas.