

Appointed for the Rise and Fall of Many

Luke 2:33-35

In the previous weeks we have seen what Simeon said about Jesus. First, he identified Him as the Lord's Christ (v. 30). The name Jesus means *"He shall deliver,"* and *Christ* (Messiah) is a title which means *"Anointed One."* Jesus was no ordinary boy; He is Emmanuel, *"God with us."* He came to *"deliver us"* from the bondage of sins, including the just penalty due them. Jesus is the only Deliverer for *"all the people groups of the world"* and all *"nations"* (ethnos: Gentiles). Simeon sees Christ and declares he is now ready to *"depart."* Then Simeon says something amazing to Mary in the verses in today's text.

I. Jesus is a stumbling-block for many -*"This (He) is appointed for the fall of many"* (v. 34).

To the Jews a *"stumbling-block"* (see I Cor. 1:2 σκάνδαλον skandalon) means anything in the way over which one may fall. It is something *"scandalous"* that gives people *"offense."* No doctrine was more offensive to the Jews than that their *"Messiah"* was to be put to death. Modern Jews even call Christians *"followers of the man that was hanged"* to deride Christ. For many the scandal continues.

- (A) There's nothing wrong with desiring a temporal Prince; a material Messiah, just as the Jews did.
- (B) But until you see *"the death of Christ"* as the death of *all death* in your life, you can't be free.
- (C) People by nature tend to think of themselves as *'deserving'* of God's best efforts for them.
- (D). God loves **sinner**s. *"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst"* (I Tim. 1:15)

"Christ is appointed for the fall of many" (v. 34). The Bible says that *"Surely the judgment of God against men brings you praise"* (Psalm 76:10). God is praised for the execution of His holy justice just as He is will be praised for exhibition of His grace. I'd much prefer to praise Him for the latter.

II. Jesus is the Savior for many -*"He is appointed for the rise of many ..."* (v. 34).

What makes you different from one who falls? Why are you hear on the Sunday, singing praises to God and studying His Word? Why are you a believer and others are angry, hostile and offended? *"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"* (I Cor. 4:7). Grace removes boasting. The subject is *"Who"* (*"Who makes you different from anyone else?"*) God is the author if all grace. *"For God who said, "Let light shine," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ"* (II Cor. 4:6). God hears the prayer for grace!

III. Jesus becomes a sign opposed by many -*"a sign opposed ... a sword piercing"* (v. 34-35).

The sign referred to in v. 34 is a reference to Isaiah 8:18 where God's everlasting love for His children is a *"sign"* to the world—spoken against by those who reject Jesus as the Deliverer. A sword piercing the heart is from Prov. 12:18 where *"rash words"* are called sword thrusts. When you proclaim your faith in Jesus Christ and your testimony of God's unconditional, eternal love for your soul, this will be opposed and many will use their words as sword to pierce your heart.

IV. Jesus is the Sovereign over all - *"the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed"* (v. 35).

To what does this refer? It seems that on the Day of Judgment, the *"hearts of men"* will be exposed. An examination will take place and every *"idle word,"* every impure thought will be judged by the Creator (Matthew 12:36). That person who has refused to *"Kiss the Son"* will be judged according to the standard of God and sentenced. Love your enemy. God judges. Turn things over to His judgment.