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The Point of Christmas: Salvation for All Peoples

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When Jesus was born, most Jews did not understand the divine plan and work God was performing to bring salvation into the world. The Jews were under the misapprehension that Jesus was coming to judge the Gentiles and to give Israel a political kingdom. Even Jesus' own disciples were bewildered about this plan, but they ultimately began to embrace the truth that Jesus came to bring salvation to all peoples.

In our series, *Christmas: What's the point?* we have learned that Jesus was born to reveal God's glory, to fulfill God's promises, and to save His people from their sins. Now we see from another passage, [Luke 2:25-35](#)^L, through Mary and Joseph's encounter with Simeon, that Jesus also came to bring salvation from sin. This interaction between the young couple and Simeon reveals four crucial things we must understand about the salvation Jesus brought into the world.

First, we need to understand that this salvation is *God's sovereign plan*.

The Lord's plan is clearly seen in the life of Simeon. This man was a godly individual, and a steadfast believer in the Old Testament promises, looking for the consolation of Israel, the Messiah. Simeon earnestly desired the salvation of his fellow Israelites. He also

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had some inside information from the Holy Spirit about the timing of the Messiah's arrival.

We see God's fulfillment of this prophetic word in Simeon, who, being so under the Spirit's power and control, was moved to the physical location of the Messiah, entering the temple as Jesus was undergoing the customs of the Law. When Simeon spots Jesus, he identifies the fulfillment of God's promise to him.

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Simeon's response to God fulfilling His Word is instructive. He calls God "Lord," recognizing a divine timetable and plan. God had promised Simeon that he would not die until the Messiah was born. How could God guarantee that? Because He is the sovereign ruler of the world. Simeon, therefore, recognized that salvation was happening, not haphazardly or accidentally, but in the perfect plan and timing of God. He experienced the fulfillment of the Lord's Word by seeing the hand of God sovereignly bring the Savior into the world.

Second, we must understand that this salvation is found in Jesus.

The salvation that God planned and purposed before all ages and that Jesus came to bring to all peoples is found in Him alone. Notice what Simeon says in verse 30: "**For my eyes have seen Your salvation.**" When Simeon sees Jesus, he realizes he has come face to face with God's salvation and testifies that Jesus is the means of salvation and the way God saves sinners.

Because of this reality, we can say that Christmas is a declaration that there is only one way of salvation, through faith in Jesus of Nazareth. Simeon's inspired testimony demonstrates that Christmas is, in this sense, a very narrow-minded holiday because it rejects the validity of all other paths to God. Christmas unequivocally states that salvation is found only in Jesus because He alone is the Son and salvation of God.

We see tragic biblical illustrations of people who came to God their own way, and they always are destroyed by the glory of God. The sons of Aaron approached worship in a way that the Lord did not accept, and they were destroyed, literally, by the glory of God. These two men stand forever as a reminder that we only come to God on His terms, never on ours. The salvation God has provided to all peoples is found only in Jesus.

Third, we need to understand that this salvation is for both Jews and Gentiles.

After acknowledging God's sovereignty and exclusivity in salvation, Simeon makes a revolutionary statement about God's salvation. He lays the groundwork for the aftermath of Jesus' resurrection, proclaiming that God's purpose in salvation is to save both Jews and Gentiles.

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Simeon first makes a statement about God's salvation being in the presence of all peoples. This is probably an allusion to [Isaiah 52:10](#), where the prophet said, **"The Lord has bared His holy arm In the sight of all the nations, That all the ends of the earth may see The salvation of our God."** As a student of God's Word, Simeon would have understood something of the global character of this promised salvation that all peoples and nations will see.

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How exactly does this work with both Jews and Gentiles?

Simeon first describes salvation in relation to the Gentiles. It is **"a light of revelation to the Gentiles."** Jesus and the salvation He brings is a light that reveals the truth to the Gentiles. When God sent Jesus, His purpose was that ignorant, idolatrous Gentiles might see the light, understand the truth of God's revelation, and receive salvation through the Messiah. Amazingly, Simeon understood all of this when he saw the baby Jesus.

Then Simeon highlights how this salvation relates to the Jews, saying that it is **"a light...for glory to your people Israel."** The light that Christ brought into the dark world would reveal the truth to the Gentiles and bring glory to Israel. Jesus, in His discussion with the Samaritan woman, illuminates this point when He says, **"Salvation is from the Jews."** The salvation that Gentiles would receive was not something separate from and unrelated to Israel. Rather, it brought them into and to Israel because the only salvation that exists for any human being on the planet is found in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Israel would find in her Messiah her true glory, that draws all the nations of the earth to worship the God of Israel. The conversion of the Gentiles to Christ, the worldwide salvation brought by Jesus to both Jews and Gentiles, would be a light for glory to God's people, Israel.

Finally, we must understand that this salvation is a source of division and conflict.

Joseph and Mary were stunned at what was being said about Jesus. These two experienced angelic visits, visions, and random shepherds showing up to worship their baby, but this promise of worldwide salvation to all peoples was undoubtedly overwhelming for them to process. They couldn't have fully understood the implications of this, and they were likely wondering about its meaning. That's when Simeon gives them a dark interpretation, that perhaps hung over Mary's heart like a dark cloud for years.

Simeon told Mary that her son was appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel. That's a pointer to *division*. In Israel, some would fall because of unbelief, while others would rise because they would embrace the truth of Jesus. Throughout Jesus ministry, He exalted the lowly and brought down the mighty with His teaching. This division over

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who Jesus is continues to this day. Then, Simeon said that Jesus was for a sign to be opposed, speaking of *conflict*. Decades later, Jesus would give the greatest sign of all in His resurrection from the dead, but still men would oppose Him and His gospel of salvation. This would be gut-wrenching for Mary.

The result of all this division and conflict would be the revealing of hearts, which is still the case today. How someone responds to Jesus reveals the condition of that person's heart toward God. One response is to embrace Him as the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Messiah, the Christ. Another is to reject Him and try to make a separate way of salvation and to God, while attempting to achieve a false sense of righteousness.

Christmas is a call to proclaim this good news of salvation to everyone God allows. Jesus came to bring salvation to all peoples, nations, languages, and ethnicities. Our mission is to do our part to make sure the message gets to all these people.

As we obey this commission, we should expect resistance, opposition, and conflict if we are faithful in telling unbelievers about the gospel. Regardless, though, of the challenges that arise in sharing the good news of the gospel, God is sovereignly working out His plan of salvation. Just as Simeon knew God's plan of salvation was on schedule, so we can trust in a sovereign God who continues to save sinners through the gospel despite the opposition, conflict, hatred, and rejection of the world. Jesus came to bring salvation to all peoples, and as Savior of the world, He will accomplish what He set out to do. This is the point of Christmas.



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