

Luke 2:25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Christmas Playlist - secular and deeply theological - rudolph and O Holy Night. Jingle Bells and Joy to the World. Christmas Card - very Santa - very Gospel. Religious self righteous Christian - get all upset - pagan roots and satan claus - secular irreligious bent out of shape by the Savior born in Bethlehem

There is a tension in Christmas - But I suggest to you the tension is not enough.

Simeon is on Fire - The Holy Spirit is firing on all cylinders in Simeon's heart - The Holy Spirit was upon him, he received revelation by the Holy Spirit - He was moved by the Spirit to go to the Temple.

Simeon's final words give us insight into how divisive, how combative, how the tension felt today, pales in comparison to the tension that should be felt at Christmas.

"Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Christmas is going to cause conflict, pain, division. In Matthew 10, Jesus says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword?"

He also said John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.

Jesus bring conflict and peace both. He brings the peace through the sword. He brings the peace through dividing people, through picking a fight. Jesus comes as the great divider; he comes to cause conflicts

Jesus Christ came at Christmas to stake out a claim. He has staked out every inch of the physical universe he has claimed it as his. He stakes it out and he says, "Mine!" Every inch. Show Himself Prince of Peace - Almighty God

Jesus Christ comes at Christmas to divide people, and then secondly to divide hearts. He comes as the great divider. He causes conflicts between people, and he causes conflicts within people. That's the only way his peace will come.

### **Jesus causes conflicts between people**

"Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel

Jesus Christ came to polarize people. He causes you to rise or he causes you to fall. There's no in between. The word *cause* applies to both rise and fall.

He comes to push you up or push you down. Simeon under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - predicts a radical outcome the advent of Jesus Christ.

What causes some to rise and some to fall? It is a combination of two things, the repulsiveness of His claims and the attractiveness of His life. The claims are extremely repulsive and His life is extremely attractive.

*"I and the Father are one." (John 10:30)*

"The Jews answered Him (Jesus), 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make yourself out to be God.' " (John 10:33)

*"...that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." (John 10:38)*

*"You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am." (John 13:13)*

*"...He who has seen Me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)*

*Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:58)*

*And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' "*

To claim to be the almighty creator of the universe, is to claim to be the ruler and owner of all things - including all of humanity.

If somebody says to you, "I own you. You belong to me," You can't be neutral. You have to either reject or submit to that person, you either rise or fall. You don't limbo, yet that is what most try to do.

The average person doesn't want to outright reject Jesus or outright make Him supreme.

Many people try to reduce Jesus to good teacher to try and sidestep the claims of Jesus, while giving the man who has made the most profound impact on all Human history some form of respect without worship.

The Gospel was written only 30 years after Jesus had died. Mark is not known for teachings of Jesus. Mark's message whea "Who is this man?"

"Who is this man that the winds and the sea obey, that forgives sins, who raises people from the dead? Who is this Jesus?"

Mar 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Jesus said that. How in-your-face is that?

When he talks to the rich young ruler in Mark 10, basically he says "I have to be more important to you than your wealth or anything else you have, or else you're lost."

Jesus requires adoration and allegiance. The Gospel are more about who He is and what He accomplished, and who we are and what we can't accomplish. Which is offensive and repulsive to us all.

That is why Simeon said Jesus will be a sign that will be spoken against.

You will run or you will embrace completely if you get it! You will rise or fall. Wheat and Chaff - Sheep and Goats

**People rise, embrace surrender because of the overwhelming attractiveness of his life. (Revelation)**

Nobody who has ever claimed to be God, and demanded adoration, surrender, commitment followed through with a life of humble, compassionate tenderness, a life of melt-in-your-mouth sweetness and wisdom.

Don't downplay Jesus - He claimed to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords - Jesus' claims compel us to reject Jesus as a sham, liar, or lunatic, which is completely incongruous with the beauty of His life and the Love He proved on the cross.

Therefore the other alternative, is that Jesus is God come to save us, and surrender you life to Him and have your sins forgiven and your life saved.

There are many people on Cape who hate Christianity and Jesus, at least they are consistent with the scripture, and there are many who have given up self-rule, and submitted themselves to the authority of Jesus in their life. Sadly too many are neither. Moderate - in the middle - lukewarm - distasteful to Jesus

Do you either hate and despise Jesus or is he the supreme being in your life so that every area of your life is in submission to him? If you're not one or the other, the Jesus you believe in is not real.

### **Jesus also causes conflicts within the individual heart**

He divides the heart. Simeon says, "... the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." He says to Mary, "... a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Mary represents everybody who loves Jesus, if you love him, if you stand by him, a sword will pass through your heart as well.

When a person becomes a Christian a new peace comes into your life, and at the same time, a new fight comes into your life, new conflict. Peace comes through conflict.

*God's peace comes after the sting of repentance.* Repentance is like antiseptic. You pour antiseptic onto a wound and, at first, it always stings, but it heals.

Christianity is a way that says if you come to Jesus Christ, even if you aren't good and decent, even if you aren't wonderful, and even if you don't have a good record, anybody through Christ can find God.

Jesus Christ lived a perfect life and died a perfect death, now God treats you, when you believe in Christ, as if you have done everything Jesus has done and you have suffered everything Jesus has suffered. God treats believing sinners as if they had done everything Jesus has done and suffered everything Jesus has suffered.

That means when you believe in Christ you're adopted not on the basis of your record, but on his record. You're adopted into the family and treated as if you'd accomplished everything Jesus accomplished.

The Gospel is that salvation, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, God coming to live in your heart, to be filled with the Holy Spirit are all received as a gift, they are not earned by merit. Sounds easy?

What makes it so hard is that you have to receive it through repentance, and that's what's not easy at all. The only way to get to that peace is through paying the pain of repentance. All you need is nothing, but we all have something to prove naturally!

Repentance is a sword in the soul. The only way to get peace is through repentance. What is repentance? It's to admit you've done many things wrong, that you have a selfish, sinful heart, that you can't change it.

Therefore, you need both forgiveness and a power to change. Your only hope is through the sheer mercy of God.

How does that make you feel? Uncomfortable? Repentance is hard, painful, difficult. But it's the only way to get peace.

Repentance is for unbelievers and believers, All of life is repentance. Real Christian repentance always brings healing after the sting. Sometimes not immediately, not five minutes after the sting, not even five days, sometimes, after the sting. But it always brings healing.

Repentance gets down to the sin underneath the sin. The sin underneath the sin is always that Jesus' love and work on the cross is not enough.

A repentant heart talks like this, "Lord Jesus, I did this thing because I didn't believe you loved me. Your love wasn't enough. In this thing, I denied your love. I denied that your death and your love is enough for me. Forgive me." - The reason you and I sin is because you really didn't think Jesus was enough. I haven't believed what Jesus did on the cross was enough. Repentance brings peace. The pain of repentance brings healing peace.

Then there is the *sting of obedience*. There'll be times in life when you are faced with a decision. One decision will result in immediate comfort. The other decision is the path of obedience.

If you obey what the Word of God says, you're going to maybe lose some money, reputation, a friendship, boy friend, girlfriend, and It looks like the road to peace is the disobedient road and the road to conflict is the obedient road.

In this world, the way of obedience in the short term can result in pain, discomfort, conflict, division, but in the long run Jesus promises peace. When you get to the place where you realize God is in control, and you can trust Him, there will be a radiance of Peace in your life.

To obey in the short run is the way of conflict; it's the way of the sword. In the long run it's always the way of peace.

Jesus comes with a sword. He divides people from people and he divides the thoughts and the intentions of the heart.

The conflict and pain of the cross, is how Jesus proved Himself to be the prince of peace. The way of Peace is often through pain and suffering.

The sting of repentance will bring the peace of God. And the sting of obedience is where you experience peace with God.

Phil 4:7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This peace is a living power. "March around the ramparts of your heart like a guard, warding off any attacks."

Col 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts,

This peace rules. The peace of Christ rules. It is not ruled by circumstances; it rules from within.

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ...” it’s literally a word for umpire, by the way. In the ancient days, they had umpires for their great games, and the umpire ruled with an iron fist to keep peace in the games, throwing out the troublemakers, throwing out those who disobeyed.

Mirror - reflects circumstance    Lamp shines from a source within itself. This peace is the peace of Christ. It’s not a peace you develop yourself. It’s a peace that comes from union with him.

Where did Simeon get his peace?

29 “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.”

By the Holy Spirit he saw that his story was part of His story. Every adventure story has some ordinary person like you or I, just going along in life, and then something comes in and takes them to another time, planet, dimension, far away land, and they enter a new narrative. That big story is a conflict between good and evil. At the last minute a hero snatches victory out of the jaws of defeat, by sacrificing their life, and everyone is saved.

Then they come home to their present time, planet, dimension a changed person. They’re brave, sweet, happy, authentic, noble, they have become great. They are able to take on their issues and circumstances.

Why? Somebody gave their life so they could be saved, and now every second is precious. Fearless, because they’ve seen greater evil, and they faced it down. There’s a greatness about their life. Why? Their story is lived in the context of the bigger story.

You don’t get peace that surpasses understanding, that guards your heart, that sees you through difficult circumstances through a method, you get it through living as a child of God, a character in the heroic story of Jesus. You are part of an incredible heroic story, now you can live and die in peace.

We see Jesus Christ was humbled. He became poor. He became a baby. He humbled himself to the point of death on the cross and rose again the victor over sin and death, so we could be saved.