

## WHAT WILL YOU SAY?

Luke 2:22-40 Text: 30 *"My eyes have seen your salvation."*

The phrase *"My eyes have seen your salvation"* is a powerful statement. It's in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2, verse 30, spoken by the humble and faithful old priest Simeon at the Temple in Jerusalem. Simeon had been holding onto a promise given to him by the Spirit of God that he, Simeon, would live to see Israel's true Messiah. Think of that! Of all the claims of salvation Simeon had seen, the most important would take place in his lifetime. One of the biggest mistaken beliefs about salvation was, that it's a list of do's and don'ts. People often thought that if they just followed all the rules, they were saved. That mistaken concept is what's known as *legalism*. Salvation by keeping religious laws.

Then, there was salvation attempted by *idol worship*. Certainly, in his lifetime Simeon had seen efforts of salvation reaching into the bizarre, such as sacrificing children, adults, and animals.

Now, when Jesus was 40 days old, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem for the Jewish Ritual of Redemption. A required religious ceremony according to the Law of Moses. On the eighth day of Jesus' life, He had been circumcised. The Bible does not require circumcision for salvation, but it was a rite of passage marking an important stage in life that every descendant of Abraham was required to go through as a sign of the covenant. (Genesis 17:9-14) *Now*, as a firstborn son, He was to be dedicated to God. Redemption for the first-born son. It's a *mitzvah*. A command. *"You must redeem every firstborn son, and every firstborn male of unclean animals. You are to pay the redemption price for a month-old male according to your valuation: five shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel, which is twenty gerahs. But you must not redeem the firstborn of an ox, a sheep, or a goat; they are holy."* (Numbers 18:15-17)

A shekel was 12 grams of silver. And based on a price of \$24.50 USD per gram today, the approximate value of one sanctuary shekel would have been \$122.50. The Redemption Ceremony involved the father handing his son to a priest who, according to Jewish law, was required to be a direct descendant from Aaron, who was the brother of Moses, and be directly related through the male line to the newborn son's father. After giving the priest five silver coins as Redemption money, the priest accepted the coins and declared the baby boy redeemed by transferring unholiness into an animal, that would be sacrificed on the altar with the priest dabbing the blood onto the horns of the altar and splashing the blood against the sides of the altar. When Jesus was presented, Mary and Joseph offered a pair of doves as the sin offering, because they were not wealthy enough to afford a larger animal.

But 33 years later, Jesus would be sacrificed on a cross outside Jerusalem to die on Golgotha's hill for *your* redemption!

Then, following Jesus' Redemption in the Temple, Mary received the Jewish religious ritual of Purification, or Cleansing, since she had recently given birth. Her form of Purification Ritual was to submerge herself in a *mikveh*, a source of flowing spring of water, kind of like a baptistry seen in some churches today.

After that, Simeon took the child into his arms, took one look at Jesus, and broke into joyful praise to God saying, *"Now I can die in peace, because my eyes have seen YOUR salvation."* A testament to the faith and hope Simeon had in God's promise. It's also a reminder that salvation is not something you can accomplish by yourself. Salvation a gift from God. And you must receive it with an open heart and mind. Years later, Jesus would tell who He was by using a shocking Gospel-truth which was in perfect keeping with what the angel had announced to the shepherds in the field at His birth, and what Simeon saw in the Temple: *"I am THE way, and THE truth, and THE life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6 ESV)

Now, we have just celebrated Christmas. We were reminded that God's gift of salvation given to us through His son Jesus Christ. We were reminded that salvation is not just a one-time event. It's a lifelong journey of faith. It's a conversion. The sinless, only begotten Son of God came into this world as a baby, to be your Redeemer. And the Redeemer needed to be redeemed. The Law of Moses was carried out so *nobody* could ever accuse Jesus' parents of violating the Law of Moses, because Jesus came to fulfil the Law. That means to fill up the Law of Moses. To make it whole. He received redemption by being dedicated to God.

So, what is redemption for you? Redemption for you means, Jesus has satisfied your sin debt. He has paid for your sin. He has redeemed you from your sin. It means you don't need to live in misery. You don't have to make up for your sins. You can now live in happiness and peace. Redemption means you can love your enemies. You can help bring them to God's love. Redemption means *"buying back."* Releasing from sin. The act of redemption is buying something back you already own. Or paying a price. Or a ransom, to have returned to you something you own.

The word redeem, or redemption, is part of Christian culture and language. Many just assume someone understands that word redemption and its meaning, because redemption means that something bad has caused the need for redemption. In the case of a Christian, this would be sin. Jesus came and said He would be the one to make redemption for your sin. He's the One, who on your behalf, *"makes up"* for your wrong actions. Wrong decisions. Or bad behavior. All of which is sin. From the cross, Jesus said, *"It is finished!"* And that includes a lot of things. His purpose for being on the Earth. The Old Testament prophecies. His fulfillment of the Law. The payment for sin. All was paid for by His sacrifice on that cross! In other words, Christmas points to Easter!

And that makes the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross the central theme in Christianity. Jesus accomplished three things by dying on the cross. Perfection. Punishment. And price. You can easily commit those three words to your memory. They are the wonderful things Jesus accomplished by dying on the cross. Perfection, punishment, and price! Jesus was perfect in every way. He obeyed God's moral standards in his speech and behavior. He kept to God's standards. He never had a lustful thought. He never attempted to deceive. Jesus never had bitterness, envy, or pride. He was completely, totally, and permanently *perfect*.

Yes, Jesus paid the price. Yes, He was punished for the sins of someone else. Yes, He was punished in your place. That's why the Gospel says, "*The chastening for our wellbeing fell upon Him.*" (Isaiah 53:5) And "*Christ suffered for you. The just for the unjust.*" (1 Peter 2:21, 3:18). He offered His perfect life for your imperfect life, because by yourself, you cannot offer God a perfect life on your own. Jesus was punished on the cross for your sins. He paid the price for your sins, so you could be reconciled with God. The crucifixion of Jesus is a heartbreaking reminder of the ultimate sacrifice Jesus made for you. And it all began at Christmas. Jesus' birth. Think about that. The salvation the angels announced to the shepherds claimed *this savior is not born from you. But to you*. He was not conceived by the effort of any man. It was the salvation Simeon the priest saw when he looked upon Jesus! He said, at last he had seen God's salvation.

What makes God's salvation so radically different is the absence of human effort. But human effort isn't just missing. God *refused* to allow *any* human effort to have any part in it. It's the salvation Paul and Silas witnessed to a Philippian jailer. They had been preaching in Philippi that Jesus was born of a virgin. That Jesus had died as a sacrifice for our sins. Rose from the dead. Ascended back to the heavens. And now, rules as king and priest, forever offering salvation to all who call upon His name.

Paul and Silas had been beaten and jailed for that. And they were singing praise to God at midnight when God opened all the prison doors, and their chains fell off. The jailer knew he would pay with his life if the prisoners escaped. He was preparing to kill himself when Paul and Silas told him not to harm himself. "*We are all here.*" The jailer knew why they were in jail. He knew the message they preached. Suddenly, he blurted out, "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" And Paul and Silas said, "*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.*" (Acts 16: 30-31 ESV)

And that's what Christmas is all about. The kingdom of God has broken into the kingdoms of the earth! And now, you know what the birth of Jesus and His sacrificial death on the cross meant. He died for your sins so you can be reconciled with God. Now, what will you say? The phrase "*Here am I, Lord, send me*" is a start! It's a powerful declaration of faith and willingness to serve God. It comes from the book of Isaiah, chapter 6, verse 8 where the prophet Isaiah had a vision of God in the Temple when he heard the voice of the Lord saying, "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" Isaiah answered, "*Here am I, send me.*" That should be a good example. It shows you must be willing to answer God's call, even if it means going to difficult or uncomfortable places. You must be willing to say with sincerity and humility, "*Here am I, send me.*" But what does it really mean to be sent by God? It means you are called to be His ambassador in the world. To share His love and His message of salvation with others. It means you have been called to be His hands and His feet. It means you're going to make a difference in the lives of those around you. Being sent by God isn't always easy. It may require that you step out of your comfort zone and take risks. It may require you to be bold and courageous. To speak the truth in love. To stand up for what is right. But when you answer God's call, say "*Here am I. Send me.*"

Then you can be sure He will be with you every step of the way. He will give you the strength, and the courage you need to do His work. And by doing this, He will bless you beyond all measure. So, what will you say? Be like Isaiah. Be willing to say, "*Here am I, Lord. Send me.*" Be willing to answer God's call. And to serve Him with all your heart. And all your mind. And all your spirit. And to trust that He will guide you, and bless you, as you seek to do His will. And may God bless you and keep you, always. AMEN