

Hope

Simeon and Anna - Waiting for what God had Promised

Foundation

Bible passage : Luke 2.22-39

The word “hope” in the Bible can be used in both a weak and a strong way. For example, Paul told the Christians in Rome that he hoped to see them and stay with them for a while on his way to Spain (Rom 15.24). It was his desire and what he was planning to go, but he didn’t know for certain. This is how people more often use the word today. But when it comes to talking about our hope in Christ much more definite language is used. Hope is described as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast (Heb 6.19). whilst faith is assurance of things hoped for (Heb 11.1).

“if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience”
Romans 8.25

God had made various promises in the Old Testament, particularly about the Messiah who would one day come. Devout Israelites knew these promises and were waiting for them to be fulfilled. They were sure that one day the promise would come true and the Messiah would come. They had a strong hope, though they did not know when it would happen.

Thirty days after Jesus’ birth Joseph and Mary went with him to the Temple where various offerings were made for Mary’s purification in accordance with God’s commands. It was now hundreds of years since God’s promises about the Messiah. As they were in the Temple they were met by Simeon,

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a “righteous and devout” man who was “waiting for the consolation of Israel” (v25). The Greek word translated as “consolation” is related to the word used to describe the Holy Spirit as one who comes alongside to help. The people were therefore waiting for God to keep His promise and help them.

Simeon lived in hope believing that God would keep His promises even though he did not know when that would be. But at some point the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Messiah (“the Lord’s Christ”). When Simeon saw the 1-month-old baby Jesus he somehow knew this was the one for whom he was waiting. Taking the child in his arms, he blessed God. He spoke words that are sometimes called The Song of Simeon, also known as Nunc Dimittis (the opening words in Latin).

Anna was an 84-year-old prophetess who lived in the Temple. Whilst the baby Jesus was in the Temple court she came and spoke to all who were “waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem”. Which again has something to do with God keeping His promises although her exact words are not recorded. It is not just Anna who had hope but all who were waiting for what God was going to do.



Waiting can be hard, but having hope means waiting for God to do what He promised in His time.