

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



The presentation of Jesus

Rachel gazed at her aged father tenderly. He sat motionless in his chair, his eyes nearly closed. The old man had refused to eat anything for several days. He always fasted when the visions came. Simeon had been blessed by God in a manner that Rachel still didn't fully understand. At certain times, her father had the strange dreams of a prophet.

Simeon was still her father, first, and Rachel, as his daughter, worried about him. But he always said, "Be still, my dear child, it is not time for this old man to die yet. I shall not taste death until I have seen the Messiah."

Lately, Simeon seemed even more out of touch with the present. Ever since the strange new star had appeared over Bethlehem, he kept repeating, "O Bethlehem, you are one of the least towns in Judah, but out of you shall come the new ruler for Israel."

"A new ruler?" Rachel wondered. "Would he overthrow the Roman oppressors?"

Simeon stirred slightly, as if he, too, was aware of his daughter's thoughts. Suddenly he stood up and announced, "At last, Rachel, He has come. I go now to the temple to behold the Messiah."

As Rachel watched him leave, her eyes misted over with both sadness and joy. In her heart, she knew her father's time was nearly over. But with his passing, all of

Israel's deepest longings were about to be satisfied.

From her vantage point inside of the temple, Anna, an old widow, had watched a family in the outer court for some time. A young woman held a baby, and her husband purchased two pigeons. The baby was, no doubt, a boy, and his parents came now with the child in obedience to the Hebrew law. The law stated that 40 days after the birth of the first boy, he must be presented to the Lord at the Temple and a suitable sacrifice made.

"Two pigeons," Anna thought, "a worthy sacrifice to God from those of little means." But what did the Lord care about great show in the offering? "The Lord will not forget the humble," she prayed as she turned from the window.

"Joseph," the young woman with the child said anxiously, "at least here in the temple we shall be safe."

"Yes, Mary," Joseph replied, "but don't worry. I will protect you both even until death. And the Lord will watch over us all," he added softly.

"I know, and I am not really worried," she smiled. "It's just that he is so tiny."

"And so very beautiful!" Joseph added as he looked tenderly upon the baby Mary held in her arms.

"Perhaps the child should live here at the temple with the high priest," Mary suggested. "Certainly it would be a fitting

home for Him."

"Mary, have you forgotten?" Joseph said, pretending to be stern. "God has chosen you to be His mother. And no one can possibly give Him better care. Besides," he chuckled, "I don't think that you could ever bear to let this child out of your sight."

"Yes, Joseph, you have spoken well," Mary replied as they entered the temple together.

The very moment the family set foot inside the temple, the old widow fell back in a trance-like state. Someone called for one of the temple priests.

"It will pass," he advised. "Anna is a good and holy woman. She lives in constant prayer and fasting here at the temple. The Lord is speaking to her in a vision."

As soon as Simeon reached the temple gate, he knew deep in his heart that the child was within. Never in his life had he felt such joy and peace.

When Simeon entered, he saw several families waiting to present their new babies to God. But as soon as he saw Mary and Joseph, he was certain. He rushed over to them and it seemed as though they realized it, too. Here in the temple in Jerusalem, a woman held in her arms all of the hope of the world.

Mary gave the baby to Simeon, who prayed: "Now, Lord, you can let me, your servant, die in peace as you said. I have seen your Salvation with my own eyes. You prepared Him before all people. He is a light for all Gentiles to see. He will bring honor to your people, Israel."

Joseph and Mary were amazed at Simeon's words. Simeon placed the baby back in His mother's arms. Then Simeon blessed the family and said to Mary, "In time, a sword will pierce your heart because

of this wonderful child. For he will be rejected by many of His own people in Israel. But, at the same time, He will be the greatest joy that many others have ever seen."

From another area of the temple, Anna stood up, sensing something. Then she saw Mary, across the room, holding the child. Even from a distance, she recognized the Messiah's presence and began praising God. To everyone who entered the temple that day, she proclaimed, "Israel's consolation has come at last. The Savior has been born. Here in Jerusalem, this very day, is the redemption of Israel."

As soon as Mary and Joseph had completed all of the observances of the Hebrew law, they departed. Joseph did not take them back to the region of Judea, because God had warned him in a dream about danger there. Instead, he brought Mary and Jesus to an area in Galilee, where they settled in a town called Nazareth.

Another prophecy had been fulfilled about the Messiah: "Jesus will be called a Nazarene."

For discussion:

- 1) God spoke to His people many times through such prophets as Simeon and Anna. How does God speak to us today?
- 2) When Simeon and Anna saw the baby Jesus, they began praising and thanking God. How often do I thank God for sending Jesus?
- 3) Simeon waited all his life for just one look at Jesus. Do I act as though Jesus is present in my life every day?

For further reading:

- 1) The story of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple is found in Luke 2:22-40.
- 2) The prophet Micah predicted the birthplace of Jesus in Micah 5:2.

Benefit concert scheduled for Rochester theater club

A gala benefit concert featuring Nik and the Nice Guys will take place on Saturday, January 17, at the newly opened Renaissance Theater Club, 50 Liberty Pole Way, Rochester. Proceeds from this event will benefit Junior Achievement of Rochester

and Community Partners for Youth, Inc., the Big Brother, Big Sister program in Rochester.

Free parking will be available at Sibley's ramp garage and the Stilson Street garage. Tickets are \$6 in advance and \$6.98 at the

door. The event will be co-sponsored by WPXY 98 FM. Tickets are available through Junior Achievement of Rochester at (716) 232-6950 or Community Partners for Youth, Inc., at 454-2292.

Tickets may also be purchased at the House of Guitars, Record Archives and all Old West locations.

Appreciation dinner-dance nears at Corpus Christi

The annual parish appreciation dinner-dance of Corpus Christi parish has been scheduled for Saturday, January 17, at 7:30 p.m. Details will be forthcoming.

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