

**Erlo Stegen:**

**Luke 2:22-40 (read text here)**

Joseph and Mary brought their sacrifice of thanksgiving and the forgiveness of sin. Those who were richer brought a bull and others a sheep, but those who were very poor were allowed to bring a pair of turtle doves or young pigeons, according to the law. The parents of Jesus were very poor but spiritually, they were rich indeed.

This is often the case. Those who are poor materially are often rich spiritually and those who are rich materially are usually bound by their riches and have no interest in the things of God. Jesus even said that it is extremely difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven. It is not impossible (for with God, "all things are possible") and there are Biblical examples of rich people in the Bible, like Job and Abraham, who were also rich in heavenly things.

If you desire and crave to be rich the Bible declares you are desiring the very things which will lead many to destruction (1Tim 6:9). Therefore do not crave after wealth but leave it in God's hands, and seek after Him, His Kingdom and righteousness.

It would be better if we seek to be rich spiritually, to be like Simeon and Anna. What will it profit you if you should gain the whole world yet forfeit your soul? Be content with what you have lest you enter into "various types of temptations" which attack those who set their hearts on becoming rich. Rather, seek spiritual riches, since Jesus has declared, "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt 6:33)

Dr K. Koch, when he was still alive, related the story of the Muslim woman who was about to deliver a child in an Egyptian mission hospital, but wanted an image of the Cross removed from the wall so that her child would not see the Cross when it was born. The mission hospital refused but agreed to her demand that the bed be turned around so that she would not be facing the wall with the Cross. When she gave birth the child was blind. Koch said that God heard her prayer that the child would not see the Cross. What do your eyes seek after?

Although Joseph and Mary had very little materially, they thanked God with the little they had and for the forgiveness of their sin. But now, we no longer need to sacrifice bulls and goats and turtledoves (or any animal) for we are cleansed by the Blood of the Eternal Sacrifice of God's own Son.

While Joseph and Mary were in the temple Simeon entered. Nobody told Him that Joseph and Mary were in the temple or that their Child was the Messiah, but the Holy Spirit revealed it to him.

Joseph and Mary were not there often or for a long time but when they were there for that short time the Holy Spirit spoke to Simeon to go to the temple at that precise moment to see the Messiah of God, the One who would bring consolation to many.

He is called the "Consolation of Israel" for He takes away the sin and burden of people who turn to Him, and so they are comforted and consoled. Simeon was looking forward to see the Saviour his whole life long, communing with God and God had spoken to him. The Lord had promised him that he would not die before his eyes had seen the Messiah. His eyes weren't on other things but on the coming of the "Consolation of Israel". Young people, are your eyes on the coming of the Saviour; that it is more important to you than anything else to meet with the Saviour?

If you have seen the Salvation of the Lord then you can die in peace but woe to the person who dies not having seen the Lord's Christ.

#### **THE RISING AND FALLING OF MANY**

Simeon also said that this child would be destined for the rising and falling of many in Israel. Amazing words! Many, when they hear the message of Jesus they rejoice greatly and accept His salvation and are saved, while others oppose Him and fall, and will one day cry out to the mountains to cover them to shield them from His face.

Many don't want Him and prefer the world and its pleasures rather than the Lord Jesus and all that He offers.

**Behold, the Child - set for the fall and rise of many**

**Jesus says "forsake your sin and repent", but to many it is so difficult to simply accept this. There are many who are offended by Jesus and choose to fall (and they will fall, right into hell), but those who accept Him will be saved.**

**We also read of Anna, the daughter of Phanuel. It is a blessing when your children are those who understand the mysteries of heaven, but a curse if they only understand the things of this world. She had become very old. Anna only lived with her husband seven years and was then widowed (though there are different calculations by some commentators, which we don't have time to delve into). She served God in the temple night and day with fastings and prayers.**

**Do you know the fellowship of the Holy Spirit? Does He reveal Heavenly mysteries to you, with such intimacy that you can speak to Him and He can speak to you? May the Lord find such people and raise up such men and women in our midst.**

**Be counted among those who "rise" with Christ. Otherwise, you will be among those who "fall" and stumble because of Him?**