

NUNC DIMITTIS by SIMEON

This Christmas we have been studying the following five hymns recorded in Luke 1 and 2. All of these have Latin titles.

- Eulogium by Elizabeth (1:42-45)
- Magnificat by Mary (1:46-55)
- Benedictus by Zechariah (1:69-79)
- Gloria in Excelsis Deo by angelic choir (2:14)
- **Nunc Dimittis by Simeon** (2:29-32)

Luke gives an outstanding tribute to the spiritual character of Simeon. He mentions four spiritual characteristics of Simeon in 2:25 – “*And behold, there was (eimi/ imperf.a.ind/ super grace status) a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous (dikaios) and devout (eulabes), looking for the consolation of Israel (prosdechomai paraklesis tou Israel); and Holy Spirit was (eimi/ imperf.a.ind/ OT) upon him.*”

Simeon was part of a pivot of spiritual mature believers anticipating the coming of Christ in their lifetime. Most of the leadership of this pivot were part of super grace historic impact and are mentioned in Luke 1 and 2.

Luke records two prophetic announcements associated with the historical birth of Jesus Christ. Simeon delivered them at the presentation of Jesus Christ at the temple.

The first announcement was delivered to the Lord and associated with the birth hymn of Jesus Christ (2:29-32).

The second announcement was delivered to Mary and associated with the death of Jesus Christ (2:34-35).

It is interesting to me that the first was made into a hymn but the second wasn't. Yet both of them had the same Greek formula of a hymn (eulogeo/ a.a.ind./ praise, bless) (2:28, 34).

<p>This lesson will study FIVE aspects of the fifth Christmas hymn entitled, “Nunc Dimittis.”</p>
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1. In Latin, Nunc Dimittis means permission to depart.

“The hymn of Simeon has been called the Nun Dimittis from the first words of the Latin Vulgate translation, [you] now dismiss.” (NIV, Luke 2:29-32)

“*Now (nun) Lord (despotes), Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart (apoluo/ p.a.ind/ dismiss) in peace, according to Thy word (to rhema).*” (2:29/ 25-26/ nun apoluo)

It became the hymn associated with the death of believers (2:25-29). The doctrinal point was that dying grace dismisses the believer from earthly service to the Lord (2 Tim.4:7-8; Psa.116:15).

2. This hymn is the result of the inspirational ministry of the Holy Spirit of the Scriptures.

Three times the ministry of the Holy Spirit is mentioned regarding this hymn (2:25-27). [Note the three ministries related to the plan of God by the Holy Spirit in this hymn.]

2:25 _____

2:26 _____

2:27 _____

3. This hymn took place at the temple during the purification service of Jesus Christ (2:21-27).

“After the birth of a son the mother was ceremonially unclean for 7 days until the circumcision and then had to remain home for a further 33 days; she then offered a sacrifice on the 40th day at the Nicanor Gate on the east of the Court of Women (Lev.12:1-8).” (Luke Commentary by Marshall)

“Following the birth of a son, the mother had to wait 40 days before going to the temple to offer sacrifice for her purification. If she could not afford a lamb and a pigeon (or dove), then two pigeons (or doves) would be accepted (Lev.12:2-8; Lev.5:11).” (NIV, Luke 2:22)

“The animals were sacrificed, but the human beings were to serve God throughout their lives. The Levites actually served in the place of all the firstborn males in Israel (Num.3:11-13; 8:17-18).” (NIV, Luke 2:22)

4. Mother’s purification from Levitical defilement was because of AOS curse upon the birth womb (Gen.3:16; Lev.12:1-8).

The woman’s womb carried the curse of AOS as well as the hope of redemption (Gen.3:15-16; 1 Tim.2:14-15).

This ceremony was completed with the birth of Jesus Christ (Rom.10:4; Heb.10:1-10; Isa.7:14; Luke 1:26-35). This is why it was held in the Court of Women and why the temple and shadow Christology is out of service during the church age.

5. The purification of the firstborn taught the doctrine of grace redemption from AOS under shadow Christology (2:22-24 law) (salvation to all people/ 2:30-31).

Firstborn birthrights played a role in Jewish messianic genealogy (Matt.1:1-17; Luke3:23-38).

The Exodus placed a new perspective on the firstborn. It included the firstborn of man and animal (Ex.11-13). “When Israel was constituted a nation, God established the principle that every firstborn belonged to the Lord (Ex.13:2-15).” (Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, pg.281)

“In memory of the death of Egypt’s firstborn of Israel and the preservation of the firstborn of Israel, all the firstborn of Israel, both of man and beast belonged to Jehovah (Ex.13:2-15; 12:11-15).” (Unger, pg.367)

Jesus Christ fulfilled the laws of the firstborn and redemption among mankind. He holds preeminence as firstborn among creation (Col.1:15); God’s firstborn son (Luke 2:7); from the dead (Col.1:18; Rev.1:5); among the brethren (Rom.8:29); and among those enrolled in heaven (Heb.12:23).