



THE SWORD THAT DIVIDES

1. (Luke 2:33–34) “And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to His mother Mary, ‘Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and as a sign to be opposed...’”

1.1. “And Simeon blessed them.” What does Luke mean by this? What is the essence of a blessing? When we sit at the table and bless our food, we are in fact thanking God for the gift He has provided. The food is not something we produced ourselves, but a gift from God who sustains life, and so we are grateful. The word “blessing” does not mean our lives will suddenly overflow with happiness, health, success, and prosperity—as we often tend to think. That is not what Simeon is doing here. I believe his blessing was gratitude to God for bringing into the world, through Mary, the long-awaited Messiah. He blesses Mary for the role entrusted to her in God’s story.

1.1.2. (Luke 2:34) “This Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel.”

With the coming of Jesus and His teaching, humanity is divided: children of God are separated from children of the devil, the righteous from the unrighteous, the elect from the unelected, believers from unbelievers. Jesus Himself says in (Matthew 10:34) “*Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*” The sword here means division. The coming of Jesus among the Jewish people reveals the truth: “*Even though you claim to be Abraham’s descendants—and you are physically—that does not make you God’s children, nor does it guarantee you Abraham’s blessing.*” Paul, in Romans and Galatians, explains clearly: “*If you do not accept Jesus and His teaching, though you are Jews and physical descendants of Abraham, you are still not God’s children*¹.”

¹ Epistle to the Romans 2:28–29; Epistle to the Romans 9:6–8; Epistle to the Galatians 3:7; Epistle to the Galatians 3:29

1.2. “As a sign to be opposed.” Simeon stresses that Jesus and His teaching would not be widely accepted among the Jewish people. On the contrary, His teaching would bring unrest, division, and strong conflict within Israel itself.

1.3. **(Luke 2:35)** “...and a sword will pierce your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

1.3.1. “The thoughts from many hearts.” Confrontation with the truth Jesus brings reveals the true condition of our hearts. A heart that is noble, righteous, and open to God will embrace His truth—that is, the authentic apostolic Gospel.

1.4. On the other hand, a selfish and greedy heart, driven only by its own interests, will reject the truth. To such a heart, Jesus will be offensive—today they might call Him a myth, a fairy tale, an outdated story with no relevance. And it is precisely then that Jesus becomes the sword that divides, exposing the reality of man.

1.4.1. On the other hand, we can intellectually understand everything, even acknowledge that it is true, but if we do not allow that truth to transform our lives—we remain in darkness. This is precisely what Simeon is foretelling: within the Jewish people, some would accept Jesus, while for others He would become a stumbling stone².

1.5. “And a sword will pierce your own soul.” We know the story of Mary’s life. Her journey was filled with reversals, doubts, fears, and in the end—the loss of her own Son. Surely it was not the life she envisioned when she first heard the angel’s words about the kingdom of the Messiah. She believed she would see it with her own eyes—that her Son would establish Israel’s kingdom, and that she, as His mother, would have a special place. But it turned out so differently: from His birth to the cross, her life was one great drama. Can we imagine what it was like for Mary to watch her Son on the cross?

1.6. All the prophetic voices she heard—that He would be King, Deliverer, Messiah—now seemed to collapse before her eyes. The irony is crushing: instead of saving His people, her own people handed Him over to death. Her King, her Messiah—on a cross.

1.7. That is the “sword” Simeon spoke of: an incredible test of faith. Mary must have asked: “*Was the angel wrong? Have I believed a lie all my life? How can my Son, the King and Messiah, now die on a cross?*”

1.7.1. Although Simeon likely did not know in detail what that sword³—the trials of Mary herself—would look like, he was in fact prophesying this to her: “*Mary, you will have to accept that the words*

² 1 Peter 2:4-8

³ Hebrews 4:12

of the angel will be fulfilled, but in a way you cannot understand right now. Even when you watch your Son die, know that God's promises will still come to pass."

1.8. The same is true for us. All we need to do as Christians is proclaim the truth about Jesus and watch how people respond. The Gospel reveals the true state of the heart. A person can pretend outwardly—to be merciful, righteous, spiritual—and deceive everyone. But before the apostolic Gospel, no one can hide. It is the power of God that cuts through the façade like a sword and shows who we truly are.

- Before the Gospel, there is no hiding. -

PROPHETESS ANNA

2. (Luke 2:36–38) *"And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She did not leave the temple grounds, serving night and day with fasts and prayers. And at that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak about Him to all those who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem."*

2.1. Why does Luke call Anna a prophetess? That depends on how one defines the role of a prophet. Personally, I believe a prophet is anyone who has grasped the truth of God's promises and from that moment boldly proclaims it publicly. In the Old Testament, prophets often received revelation supernaturally, directly through the Holy Spirit, and then delivered the message to the people. In Anna's case, the text does not tell us clearly how she received her revelation. My suggestion is that Anna was a woman who, throughout her life, studied the Torah, and the Holy Spirit helped her piece everything together and believe in God's promises. Once she recognized the truth, she spoke it openly to everyone who would listen. Ultimately, the role of a prophet lies not primarily in how the revelation is received, but in whether what you have received—by whatever means—you faithfully and courageously proclaim to others.

2.1.2. (Luke 2:37) We also read that Anna was married only seven years. If we take into account that women in those days were usually married at 15 or 16, that means Anna became a widow very young, around 22. Why she chose to remain a widow for the rest of her life we do not know. What we do know is that being a widow at that time meant being left without any social or economic standing. Widows were completely dependent on the society in which they lived. This is why most women remarried—for protection and status.

2.1.3. Anna, however, chose a different path. Perhaps her late husband had been a wealthy man, perhaps she inherited some property—we do not know. But one thing is clear: Anna consciously decided to dedicate her life exclusively to God. Luke records that she "served in the temple night and day," which clearly shows that she never neglected the duties she considered her service to the Lord.

It was likely this wholehearted devotion to God that earned her both the respect and the title of “prophetess” within the Jewish community.

2.2. **(Luke 2:38)** Anna was present when Simeon spoke his words to Mary and Joseph. She joined in the praise, glorifying God because before her very eyes the promises she had devoted her entire life to were being fulfilled. Just imagine her joy—decades of prayer, service, waiting, and now she finally sees the child who is the sign that God has not forgotten His people. I am certain Anna bore witness to that event for the rest of her life. Whoever had “eyes to see and ears to hear” surely listened to her testimony and, through it, received confirmation of God’s faithfulness.

A SPECIAL CHILD

3. **(Luke 2:39–40)** “And when they had completed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. Now the Child continued to grow and to become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the favor of God was upon Him.”

3.1. After fulfilling all the ceremonial requirements of the Law, Joseph and Mary returned home with Jesus. Luke records that the child grew—not only physically but also in wisdom. By this, he clearly emphasizes that Jesus was a man like us. He had to learn, grow, strive, study, and come to know God more and more. He was not born with “all knowledge,” but passed through the same learning process as any other child.

3.1.2. **(Luke 2:41–47)** “Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up there according to the custom of the feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it. Instead, they thought that He was somewhere in the caravan, and traveled a day’s journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, looking for Him. Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.”

3.2. The Feast of Passover was one of the most important celebrations for the Jews. It reminded them of their deliverance from Egypt, when the Lord spared the firstborn of Israel but struck the firstborn of the Egyptians—because the Israelites had marked their doorposts with the blood of a lamb⁴. To this day, Jews celebrate that event in the Seder, a seven-day ritual meal filled with prayers, symbolic acts, and a closing blessing: “Next year in Jerusalem.”

⁴ Exodus 12:1-14.21-28; Deuteronomy 16:1-8

3.3. (Luke 2:41–42) At that time Joseph and Mary also went up to Jerusalem for Passover. According to the Law⁵, only those who lived within thirty-two kilometers of Jerusalem were required to attend⁶ annually. Joseph and Mary lived much farther away⁷, which means they were not obligated—yet they went. Jesus was twelve years old, the age at which a Jewish boy became fully accountable to keep the Law and take on his religious duties⁸. Most likely, this was His first Passover in Jerusalem.

3.4. (Luke 2:43–46) Then something happened that may sound almost unthinkable to us: Joseph and Mary lost Jesus for three days. Anyone who has even momentarily lost a child knows the sheer terror of it—your heart races, panic grips your body, and every second feels like an eternity. And here it wasn't minutes, but three days! Some Bible teachers offer a convincing explanation: in those days, women and children often set out first on the return journey, walking slowly with belongings, while the men would follow later and catch up. Mary probably assumed Jesus was with Joseph, and Joseph thought He was with Mary. It wasn't until later they realized He was with neither of them. The first day they searched among relatives, the second among acquaintances, and on the third day returned to Jerusalem—where they finally found Him in the temple. This explanation makes sense, but it still doesn't diminish the unimaginable fear and desperation Joseph and Mary must have felt in those three days.

3.5. (Luke 2:46–47) When they found Him, Jesus was sitting among the teachers, listening and taking part in their discussions. Luke notes that the teachers “were amazed at His understanding and His answers.” What does this mean? Two possibilities exist:

1. The teachers were astonished at His responses to their questions.
2. Jesus listened to their conversations and simply joined in with His own observations.

Imagine a twelve-year-old child contributing thoughtfully to a serious discussion of Scripture—so much so that the teachers themselves marveled: “*Where does such wisdom come from? His insights align with the Word, and His observations are deep and precise.*” Personally, I believe it was this second scenario.

3.6. (Luke 2:48–50) “When Joseph and Mary saw Him, they were bewildered; and His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You!’ And He said to them, ‘Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?’ And yet they on their part did not understand the statement which He had made to them.”

⁵ Deuteronomy 16:16

⁶ In practice, rabbinic tradition limited the obligation of pilgrimage to those living within a single day's walk from Jerusalem (about 32 km).

⁷ Joseph and Mary, however, lived in Nazareth of Galilee—over 100 km away—so they were not obligated.

⁸ In Jewish tradition, the twelfth year marked the transition toward full religious responsibility (the later custom of bar mitzvah). This means that from that time on, Jesus was required to keep the Law and fulfill religious duties.

3.7. At first glance, Jesus' response might sound disrespectful, but Luke immediately adds: *"And He continued being subject to them."* His words weren't rebellious—they were simple, humble, and truthful: *"Everything you have been told about Me—through angels, prophecies, testimonies—points to one thing: I am the Messiah, the Son of God, the Deliverer. So how could you not expect Me to be here—in My Father's house, studying the Torah? For it is through the Scriptures that I must understand who I am, what my calling is, and what it means to be the Son of God. This is personal—I am seeking to grasp My identity through God's Word."*

3.8. **(Luke 2:51–52)** *"And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued to be subject to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and people."*

3.9. Though Jesus was aware of His calling, He remained obedient to His parents. Luke emphasizes again that He grew in wisdom and favor before both God and people. Those who knew Him could see, over time, that He was no ordinary child—not only in knowledge but in character, with God's grace resting upon Him.